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Slipstream

SEPTEMBER 2020

BN Survives Partial Ejection



*Paddles (LSO) talking to the Pilot in final stages.
Press speaker to hear (online subscribers only)*

LEUT Gallagher's parachute is entangled in the horizontal stabilizer in the tail of the aircraft, serving as a harness that holds him back in the seat during deceleration as the aircraft traps.

On 9 July 1991, the USS *Abraham Lincoln* was at sea, transiting the Indian Ocean on its way to the Persian Gulf when one of the most freakish accidents in Naval Aviation history occurred. A Grumman KA-6D Intruder from VA-95 was at a stage of flight known by tanker crews as “mid-cycle” when it developed a problem: one of the drop tanks feeding the refuelling system had stopped transferring fuel, even though approximately a thousand pounds remained in the tank.

The pilot, Lieutenant Mark Baden, discussed the issue with his Bombardier/Navigator (BN), Lieutenant Keith Gallagher. The two agreed that

perhaps adding some positive and negative G onto the airframe would coax the tank back into transferring fuel properly. Nothing crazy—just a little jostling!

It was when Baden gently pushed the nose over and got approximately half a negative G—just enough to “float [him] in the seat,” he heard a loud bang and the cockpit instantly depressurized. He expected to find a gap between the canopy and windscreen, but there was none, and as he glanced over at the B/N, everything changed.

In Baden's own words, here's what he saw:

“My scan continued right. Instead of meeting my BN's questioning glance, I saw a pair of legs at my eye level. The right side of the canopy was shattered. I followed the legs up and saw the rest of my

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The KA-6 on Final Approach with LEUT Gallagher partially ejected and parachute trailing behind

Continued from Page 1

BN's body out in the windblast. I watched as his head snapped down and then back up, and his helmet and oxygen mask disappeared. They didn't fly off; they just disappeared."

So here's a breakdown of what happened to cause the problem in the first place.

The Martin-Baker ejection seat in the Intruder is held in place by something called the "Top Latch Mechanism." It is comprised of a spring-loaded plunger which, when locked, extends through a window in a tab at the top of a component called the ejection gun. That part, in turn, is mounted to the cockpit structure. Basically, the Top Latch Mechanism is the only thing keeping the seat in the jet. Under normal operating conditions, the mechanism is locked by spring pressure; the firing of the ejection gun—accomplished when the seat's occupant pulls the handle to eject—presses the plunger from the window, allowing the seat to depart the aircraft in its prescribed fashion.

In the case of Gallagher's seat, the metal in the window had fatigued to the point where it actually cracked, most likely because of repetitive stress of the combined weight of the seat and its occupant(s) over the years during increased G loads—especially negative. So when Baden loaded up the aircraft

with first positive G, and then negative, it simply met its limit because of the crack...and let go completely. The negative G actually allowed Gallagher's seat to move far enough up the rails that it activated the ejection sequence due to inertia—not by anyone deliberately activating the mechanism.

So in the back of the seat, there are two rods that actuate the timer mechanisms that come into play during a standard ejection sequence. Both of those mechanisms are activated when the ejection gun portion is fired, sending the seat up the rails. One of the control rods governs the drogue parachute's deployment and the firing of the rocket motor under the seat to finish getting the crewman out of the aircraft. The other rod dictates when the harness release occurs and the main parachute deploys. Again, both of those functions are completely automatic as a part of the ejection sequence.

If you can imagine, as far as the seat was concerned, Gallagher had ejected out of the aircraft—so those automatic functions came into play and all was well...except for the fact the seat didn't move far enough for the rocket motor to fire. In fact, the seat initially moved far enough that it cracked the canopy and caused the structural failure, then as the other components activated, he got pushed even further out of the aircraft. So with both of the con-

Continued Page 5

Obituary

Rear Admiral Andrew Robertson AO DSC RAN (Rtd)

Rear Admiral Andrew John Robertson AO DSC RAN – the Navy’s most accomplished Gunnery Officer – has died at age 95 in North West New South Wales.

During more than 40 years of service to Navy, Rear Admiral Robertson’s career was full of extraordinary achievements, the highlight of which was receiving the Distinguished Service Cross for his frequent displays of gunnery skill during active service in the Korean War.

In 1939, Andrew joined the RAN as a 13 year old Cadet Midshipman receiving numerous awards for academic achievement, seamanship and sport, culminating with the prestigious King’s Medal as the Cadet Midshipman. On graduation in 1942 he served in HMAS *Australia* and HMAS *Warramunga* in the Pacific theatre.

In 1944 MIDN Robertson went to England for his SBLT’s course receiving seven 1st class certificates. A posting to HMS *Kimberley* followed. After the surrender of Germany in May 1945, Andrew returned to Australia. Promoted to LEUT he joined the HMAS *Bataan* in which he deployed to Japan as part of the British Occupation Force. In 1947, Andrew joined HMAS *Swan* conducting mine clearance operations in Australia and New Guinea.

In 1948, LEUT Robertson undertook the long gunnery course at HMS *Excellent* Whale Island in England graduating top of his class. On return, Andrew was posted to the Gunnery School, HMAS *Cerberus*. However, in 1951 he was posted to HMAS *Anzac* and sent to Korea firing at North Korean targets. Andrew returned to Australia later that year but returned to Korea the following year.

Numerous engagements were had by *Anzac*, the most legendary being on 16 November 1952 when fired on by the enemy from mountain caves. Fortunately, in a spirited fight *Anzac*’s guns found the caves’ entrances. Andrew was awarded the DSC for this and other engagements.

Following the Korean War, he returned to London and completed the RN Staff Course and was promoted to CMDR in 1957. This was followed by command of HMA Ships *Quickmatch* and *Yarra*. Rapid promotions followed and included command of HMAS *Sydney (III)* and command of HMAS *Albatross*.

While Commanding Officer of the latter, now CDRE Robertson was instrumental in the evacuation of 350 Nowra residents from floods in the area assisting in the provision of aircraft for Cyclone Tracey and the development of the Fleet Air Arm Museum.



RADM Andrew Robertson AO, DSC, RAN (Rtd)

Andrew’s promotion to RADM occurred in 1980 when he became Head Australian Defence Staff in the Australian High Commission in London, followed by Flag Officer Naval Support Command in Sydney.

RADM Robertson was made an Officer in the Order of Australia in 1980 for service to the RAN and the Defence Force, particularly as Head Australian Defence Staff London.

Andrew retired from the RAN in early 1982 after 43 years of service. Maintaining a devotion to public service, he became Vice President of the Navy League of Australia and several other organisations.

At age 91, Andrew was the key instigator behind the Windjammer Sailors statue in Darling Harbour and at the time of his death, was a member of 18 organisations and associations., including the FAAA.

RADM Andrew Robertson is survived by his wife Patricia (Pat) and children Angus, Jane, Julia and Bruce.

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More Obituaries Page 18, 19 and 27

**A Fleet Air Arm Tribute
to RADM Andrew Robertson - Page 21**



An Artist Impression of LEUT Gallagher's Helmet and Oxygen Mask being ripped off his face as he partially leaves the aircraft

Continued from Page 3

trol rods activated, he was effectively released from his seat, and the main canopy deployed. The parachute promptly got blown out into the slipstream above the aircraft, and wrapped itself around the tail of the aircraft, promptly locking Gallagher into place, seat half-out of the jet. Thankfully, the chute was pulled tight enough to keep the man in place, but not tight enough to bind the flight controls on the horizontal or vertical stabilizers. No small miracle there.

As if that wasn't bad enough, due to the immediate loss of his helmet and oxygen mask, Gallagher was no longer able to breathe because of the air crashing into his lungs at over two hundred knots. Baden immediately rolled the throttles back to idle and deployed the aircraft's speedbrakes, knowing full well if he didn't, the air pressure and flailing would kill his partner. Baden declared the emergency over the radio and requested an immediate return to the ship, which was approximately seven miles away at that point. The response from the Air Boss (CMDR Air in RAN/RN) was immediate and in the affirmative, so Baden began his approach. Another look at Gallagher told him the man was unconscious and possibly even dead, which made an incredibly dire situation even worse.

Baden had to be careful to keep the aircraft slow—just above stall speed in its dirty (gear and flaps down, tailhook extended, and speedbrakes deployed) configuration as he made his return, which meant he had to manage his sink rate and power in such a way to keep the jet flying, but not so fast it would punish Gal-

lagher even more severely than it already was. Also, the section of canopy that had failed left behind a jagged, sawtooth edge of plexiglass, aimed at Gallagher's torso like Roman spears poised to impale him.

Aware of that horrific possibility, Baden formulated a plan for his approach: settle low over the fantail—lower than what was normally prudent, snag the first wire, and keep the nose-wheel off the deck as long as possible during the deceleration to keep his B/N from getting skewered.

Miraculously, the plan worked as the Intruder snagged the first wire, bringing the jet mercifully to a stop. Baden shut down the aircraft's engines, then set about making Gallagher's seat safe as best he could, and also releasing the man from the fittings on the parachute harness. It was at that moment as Gallagher regained consciousness he asked: "Am I on the flight deck?"

So what began as a normal tanker sortie exploded into chaos and panic, but ultimately ended in a series of miracles. Baden received an Air Medal for his heroic efforts to save his friend's life and successfully returning the jet to the flight deck less than six minutes after the initial catastrophic event. Baden later became a Captain in United Airlines.

Lieutenant Gallagher was severely injured, but none of the damage to his body (his right arm and shoulder especially) was permanently debilitating. In fact, he returned to flight status six months to the day later. After leaving the Navy, Gallagher moved to the south-eastern United States and works in the telecommunication industry. A more detailed account, told by the men involved in the incident and its aftermath, can be found [here](#) on LEUT Gallagher's website (online subscribers only).

RAN Ejection Seat Malfunction . . . Page 33



An Artist Impression of LEUT Baden observing the feet on his BN hanging in the cockpit

Lesson Learnt in Bombing Exercise



Photograph by John Bartels

*First Published in
Touchdown, the FAA
Safety Magazine
By John Siebert*

Operational Flying School (OFS) on the A4G Skyhawk at 724 Squadron saw this, then Acting Sub-Lieutenant, being introduced to the special "pleasures" of night high-angle dive bombing. Towards the end of the OFS I was teamed up with two very experienced ex-helicopter pilots, Lieutenant Jack "Yak Yak" Mayfield and Graham "Vondo" Winterflood, for our first night bombing sortie on Beecroft Range.

During the course we had done quite a few 30-degree bombing and rocketry day sorties, as well as low angle 10 degree strafing and high-drag bombing. As such, joining the weaponry circuit at Beecroft was very familiar to us: running in on the Line of Attack (LOA) of 055 Magnetic at release altitude ~ 2400 ft and breaking up into the downwind leg and levelling off at roll in altitude of 5200 ft.



The circuit was made easy by the geography of Jervis Bay plus the Point Perpendicular light house gave us a very handy cue to achieve the correct roll in point from base to commence the weaponry dive. The delivery pass required the pilot to set 85% power to achieve an acceleration that resulted in 450 kts at release, manoeuvre the aircraft to achieve a precise dive angle, and in aim the aircraft into wind such that the gunsight drifted to the pre-calculated 'sight picture' at the release point.

Immediately after release, a 4g wings level recovery to 20 degrees nose up was the standard drill. The Range Safety Officer (RSO) would radio the "fall of shot" as we would roll out on the downwind leg. For debriefing purposes we had to make some notes on our knee board card about the release conditions and the fall of shot e.g. "11 @ 50 ft shallow." It was all a bit basic in the days of fixed gunsight and the lack of head up display videos! Despite all of this we gradually gained in accuracy and achieved the required 50 ft criteria to graduate.

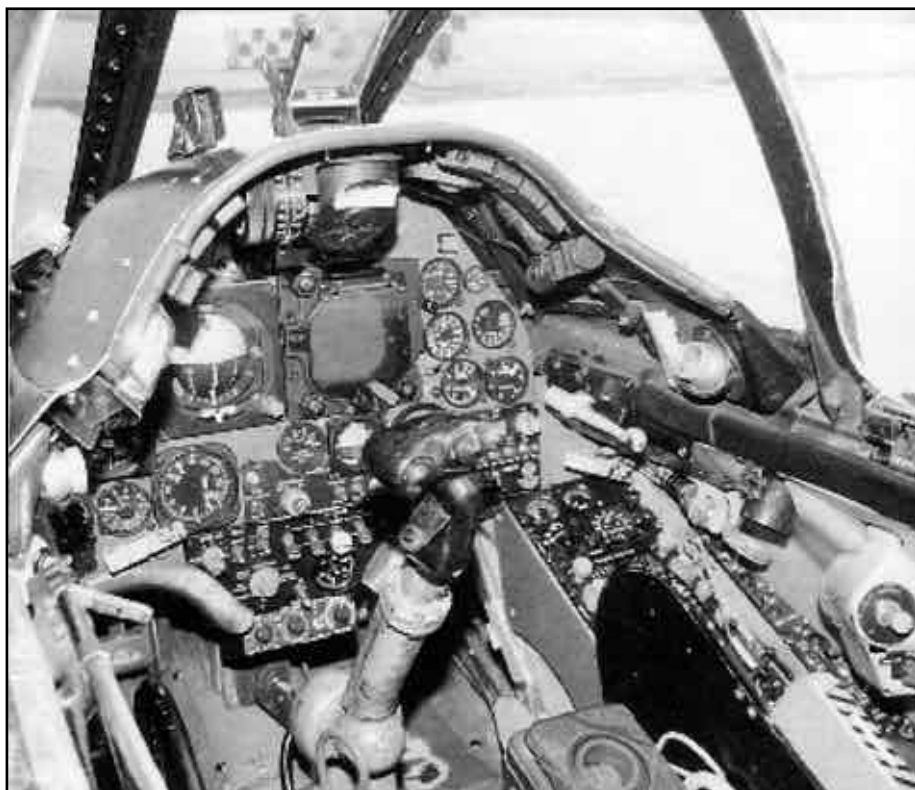
During this time the conflict in Indo-China was at its height and we had several USN exchange instructors who had served in Vietnam. These instructors flew mainly in the light-attack role. The tactics in Vietnam saw the development of high-angle (45 and 60 degree) dive attacks in order to avoid ground fire. Exposure to these tactics was incorporated into our training syllabus. The high-angle delivery involved a roll in altitude of 8500 ft

and "pickling" (release) at 4500 ft. For each dive angle there was a pre-computed guns sight depression angle. This Mili-radian (Mils) setting was dialled in manually to the unlit gunsight.

The aim of the OFT was to train a pilot to lead a division of four aircraft in the air defence and attack roles. After the general night flying brief. Jack (the designated leader) briefed the night 30 and 45 degree night bombing sortie. I was the deputy leader at number three and Vondo plus a staff instructor flew the number two and four slots. Six passes at 30 degree and another six passes at 45 degree was planned with Mk 76 Practice bombs from the outboard wing stations.

The briefing covered the familiar NATOPS format and the sortie was authorised by our instructor. As we were nearing the end of our course we all felt quite comfortable with the planned mission. The weather was quite good as we departed NAS Nowra, we joined up and flew the short distance to Beecroft Range. There was 8/8th of high cloud around 10000 ft generally good visibility below this layer apart from a few rain showers in the distance to the East and South. No moonlight meant that it was very black from the North through East to the South West. The lights of Nowra and Bomaderry plus the Point Perpendicular light gave us fairly good visual references to maintain circuit orientation and spacing by wingmen.

Joining the range was uneventful and the first six passes went quite well. As we transitioned to the



A4G Skyhawk Cockpit

high-angle pattern, as number three I was just entering downwind at 8500 ft and 250 kts tracking South West. Lead was nearing the roll in point and transmitted 'Three, confirm Mils...is it x or y?' (my memory fails me on what the depression settings were). As 45 degree setting wasn't generally used, I didn't have it in my immediate memory.

This question from the division leader caused me to do several things. Firstly, as we didn't have knee board lights I turned on the issue "gooseneck" torch which clipped to my chest (so that it shone onto the primary instruments). I then detached the torch and focussed on the knee pad card and then transmitted the Mil setting in the leader. This all took a few seconds. I switched off the torch and re-clipped it to

my survival gear. Looking at the instrument panel I was bewildered by the AJB3A 'abba-jabba' all altitude/direction indicator. The top was black instead of the usual sky blue colour! The VSI, airspeed and altitude were indicating normal. Instinctively, I pulled back on the control column and my world changed rapidly! The airspeed increased alarmingly and the altitude indicator started unwinding as the aircraft headed for the ocean somewhere near the 'Drum and Drum Sticks'. My training in Unusual Atti-



**Skyhawk
No.6 OFS
June '72
NAS
Nowra**

**Missing Peter Clark
(Inset) injured in
ejection from Macchi
before OFS**

**From L to R:
LEUT Graham
Winterflood.
SBLT John
Siebert, LEUT
Jack Mayfield**



tude (UA) recovery immediately kicked in and I rolled rapidly to wings level and pulled about 3g to recover from the dive. To say that I was scared would be a big understatement.

The problem with my recovery technique was that my inner “gyros” were “toppled” and my sense of balance was totally scrambled. As a consequence, my recovery turned into another UA. This resulted in a very nose high decaying airspeed situation. Again, the primary instrument training kicked in and I rolled to 90 degree: of bank and let the nose ease back to the horizon and then I rolled wings level. I was in cloud and heading East at 200 kts with the aircraft finally under proper control. My body was definitely suffering from a severe case of the “leans” and my mental state was such that there was no way that I could return to the bombing exercise. I called up the leader and told him that I had a case of vertigo and that I would Return to Base (RTB). I called up Nowra Approach and got radar vectors from Shoalhaven Bight for a Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) to Nowra. My instrument scan rate during the approach was certainly much faster than usual and I think that was probably the most accurate GCA that I had ever flown! I’m now in retirement after forty-three years in uniform but this incident has remained quite vivid in my memory. It certainly reinforced the importance of the old adage “Aviate, Navigate, Communicate” in that order. With the benefit of hindsight there are a few other learning points from this incident:

Managing Risk -When the call came from the

lead about the Mil settings. I should have taken a moment to think about the ergonomics of taking the torch to the kneeboard and illuminating the knee card followed by re-stowing the torch. A simple mitigation of the risk to aircraft control would have been increased attitude scan.

Environment -The mixture of a very dark sky in the Eastern sector and some ground feature lighting to the West lured me into a mode of relying more on visual flight cues. The false horizon effect of the conditions that night should have forced me into a more ‘focussed instrument scan.

Task Saturation - The repetitive day weaponry circuit training at Beecroft Range built what I believe to be, a false sense of confidence in my ability to conduct the night bombing serial. The responsibility as deputy leader put unnecessary pressure on me to transmit the Mil setting. In hindsight we were working very close to the limit in a combined visual and instrument conditions in a new, somewhat stressful, high-angle bombing exercise.

Youthful over confidence got the better of me.

Equipment - The cockpit lighting in the A4G was woeful by modern standards. The lack of a kneeboard light (or a dedicated aircraft light focussed on the kneeboard like all airliners) was certainly a factor in my failure to maintain wings level downwind. Afterwards, I obtained a lighted kneeboard from a civilian pilot shop.....I used it up until I ceased civil flying.

Training - The instrument flying training that I received during pilot training at 2 FTS RAAF

Pearce was in my opinion of the highest standard. The UA recovery techniques instilled into us definitely saved me on that night in March 1972! The nose down recovery involved a very rapid roll to wings level (the large ailerons on the A4's can deliver a 720 degree per second roll rate) which probably further scrambled my inner ear balance mechanism. But the recovery got me away from the ocean and the next UA recovery, by comparison,

was a much more controlled affair. The training on pilots course was in hindsight, invaluable.

In conclusion, the lessons learned on that night reinforced the 'Aviate, Navigate, Communicate' priority. The importance of including the aircraft altitude in the scan, even when flying in visual conditions, was certainly highlighted with this incident. Distraction can be a killer!

A Wife Remembers Husband KIA in Korea

From that awful day, 7 December 1951, when Legacy stepped in and looked after me and my 14-week old son Roger, Legacy and London Legacy has been there in the background.

Always at Christmas, they remembered us. When I needed some method of augmenting my pension they gave me the money to buy a sewing machine and I was able to do dressmaking etc, which was a great help.

As for my husband, SBLT Richard Roslyn Sinclair RAN, he was born in Perth, WA, on 14 May 1929. He attended Hale School Perth, and he was a middle distance runner who did very well. His two older brothers had both served in the RAAF as bomber pilots during the Second World War. His father served in the First World War and they had all returned home safely.

Dick joined the RAN in 1948 to train as a fighter pilot for which he was sent to England and, in March 1950, we met in HMS *Garnet* at Eglinton, County Londonderry. I was working as an aircraft engine mechanic in the WRENS. We were the missing halves of each other and we married on 3 June 1950. His time over in the UK was up in July that year and, after much begging and pleading, we were fortunate enough to get berths on the same ship, RMS *Orcades*, arriving in Fremantle in August 1950, where he received orders to stay on board and proceed to Melbourne and Point Cook, leaving me with his parents and brothers in Perth.

He returned to Perth at the end of August on two weeks leave. Then he had to return to Point Cook, for training in how to become an officer, having been raised from Pilot 4th Class to ASLT. I then followed him across the Nullabor Plain, taking three trains by myself for the three-day, 3,000 mile trip. From there it was a room in Frankston, south of Melbourne, before my husband was posted to Sydney. I followed again and we were a month there.

Then we went to Nowra, south of Sydney on the coast, to a caravan in December 1950. In March 1951, he was told that HMAS *Sydney* was going to Korea for six months to relieve HMS *Glory*. From that time he was on board much of the time training on Sea Furies. By then I was pregnant and our child was due on the 18th August that year, the day that Dick came home on embarkation leave, and when

we moved into our first married quarters. The baby however had other ideas and did not put in an appearance until 2.20am.

Sadly, Dick was killed in action, aged 22, on 7 December, 1951. He was heavily strafed, and forced to bail out, only to hit his head on the tail of his Sea Fury. His body was recovered and a burial service was held on HMAS *Sydney* that day. In the letter he wrote the day before he died, he said he was very frustrated at that point as they had just been told that instead of going straight back to Sydney as planned, they would be escorting Princess Elizabeth on her proposed 1951 tour of Australia.

However, the King died the day before I left Australia to return home to live in the UK, and I do not think that tour ever happened. Sorry if I've bored you with this, but it is the background into which Legacy, and later London Legacy, stepped in.

I have never forgotten the verse Dr Morrison told me in 1951. *"To you, from failing hands we throw the torch. Be yours to lift it high. If ye break faith with us who die we shall not sleep though poppies grow in Flanders fields"*. Australian Legacy and London Legacy have not broken faith and I am grateful — 80 years old now and still grateful.

Thank you all.

God Bless

Naomi Sinclair (Naomi died several years ago)

(Naomi's recollection of Dick coming back from the UK and attending 'Officer Training at Point Cook' is incorrect. The SSCO phase was conducted at HMAS Cerberus with short excursions for instance to HMA Ships Watson and Gladstone (according to Fred Lane from the same course.

Fred, who flew the Sea Fury in Korea, said that Dick was doing the "strafing" when he picked up a ground fire round in his vulnerable oil system. He caught fire and lost power, but tried to make the ocean. At about 900 to 1000 feet, with the fire out of control, he tried a risky low level bail out (minimum recommended height 3,000 feet AGL) unfortunately hitting the empennageEd).

This Year Marks 100 Years of Air Traffic Control



The world's first air traffic control tower at Croydon Aerodrome, pictured in 1920

Fascinating archive photos of the world's first air traffic control tower a wooden hut built in south London 100 years ago.

- *The hut was built on the orders of the UK Air Ministry, which stipulated it should be '15ft above ground level'*
- *At the time Croydon Aerodrome, committing of several huts and a grass runway, was London's main airport situated south London.*
- *In the 1920s it was the busiest airport in the world, with around a dozen flights a day to Paris and Brussels.*

25 February 2020

The world's first air traffic control tower was built by the UK government 100 years ago at Croydon Aerodrome, south London.

Fascinating archive pictures of it – and the planes it monitored – highlight just how much the aviation industry has changed.

The structure, a wooden hut, was built on the orders of the UK Air Ministry, which stipulated that it should be 'erected 15 feet above ground level' and with 'large windows to be placed on all four walls'. This building was to be called the 'Aerodrome Control Tower' and at a stroke, the ministry coined both the term that has remained synonymous with air traffic control for the past 100 years and a design that remains instantly recognisable.

At the time Croydon Aerodrome, which

consisted of several huts and a grass runway, was London's main airport and this tower kick-started the development of air traffic control.

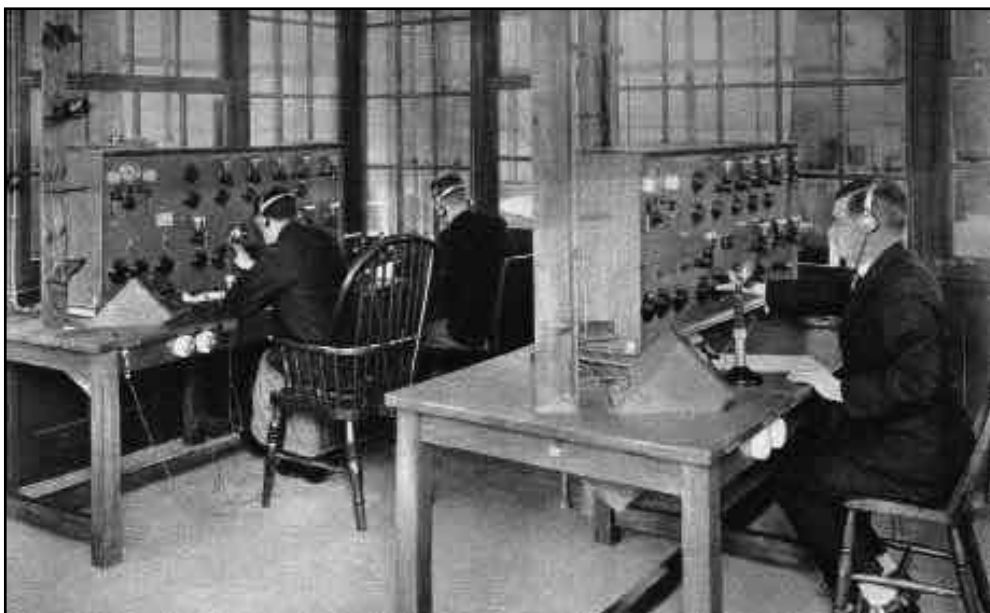
A century later and National Air Traffic Services, the UK's main air traffic control service, manages 2.6 million flights a year carrying hundreds of millions of passengers.

The concept of air traffic control emerged alongside the rise of the world's first airline passenger services and the UK Air Ministry commissioned the Croydon tower on 25 February 1920, to help safely organise growing levels of traffic.

In the 1920s Croydon Aerodrome was the busiest



Croydon Aerodrome pictured in 1925. At the time it was London's main airport



Air Traffic Controllers at work in the 1920's. ATC services emerged alongside the rise of the world's first airline passenger services

airport in the world, with around a dozen flights a day to Paris and Brussels.

Ian Walker, Chair of Historic Croydon Airport Trust, said: 'In 1920 there was no blueprint for what air traffic control or even an airport should look like, so it fell to those early pioneers to develop, test and implement the ideas that would enable air travel to grow safely.

Airfields before this had radio offices and "aerial lighthouses", but nothing with the explicit intent of providing technical air traffic services to aircraft. The "control tower" was described as an "essential" development and its legacy lives on with us today.

The first controllers – known as Civil Aviation Traffic Officers or CATOs – provided basic traffic, location and weather information to pilots over the radio, which itself was still a relatively new invention. The progress of the dozen or so daily flights was tracked using basic radio-based navigation and plotted on paper maps using pins and flags.

ATC has come a long way since the first controllers in terms of the amount of traffic handled and the tools used, but the motivation to harness the latest technology to help make flying safer and more efficient remains at the abso-

lute heart of what ATC does.

In 2019 using real-time satellite tracking to improve the safety and environmental performance of flights over the world, while ATC continues research into the use of Artificial Intelligence to cut weather-related delays at airports.

Technology alone is not the answer if ATC is going to both keep pace with the growing demand to fly and meet the huge challenge of climate change. Modernising our airspace is now essential.

ATC is playing a leading role in cross-industry plans to modernise the world's airspace over the coming years, something that will allow aircraft to fly higher for longer, get more direct routings and enable more continuous descent approaches, something that both reduces fuel burn and emissions'.

The early pioneers of the 1920s laid down the foundations that allowed aviation to flourish in the 20th century and enrich the lives of countless people around the world. Now, with over three million flights a year predicted by 2030, we need to do the same for the rest of the 21st century, notwithstanding the enormous interruption in aviation caused by the COVID-19 virus.



The progress of the dozen or so daily flights was tracked using basic radio-based navigation and plotted on paper maps and using pins and flags

A Naval Aviator Flying the Lincoln



By Norman Lee

*First Published in
Australian Aviation,
October 1991 issue
Website Located [here](#)
(online subscribers only)*

I doubt that there are too many naval pilots who can claim one-hour command time in a Lincoln!

This rare honour came about as a result in a change in policy at Central Flying School (CFS) during my instructor's course, on how best to give an introduction to asymmetric flying. Prior to our course, each student was given two hours dual in Dakotas and two hours in a Lincoln. Someone, to whom I will be eternally grateful, decided that the Dakota flying should be dropped and that we should be given five hours dual and one-hour solo in the Lincoln.

There was no question of us learning the systems, we didn't even have to know how to start the beast. I imagine that what we went through was somewhat similar to the process in the Air Transport Auxiliary during WW2, where pilots were given just enough experience to enable them to get the aircraft from A to B.

Our instruction naturally concentrated on asymmetric handling and the effects of the various engines



RAAF Avro Lincoln Mk30 A3-74 in flight

being "out" in turn. At the same time, since we were to be entrusted with the machine by ourselves it was fairly important that we learn how to get it into the air and back down again.

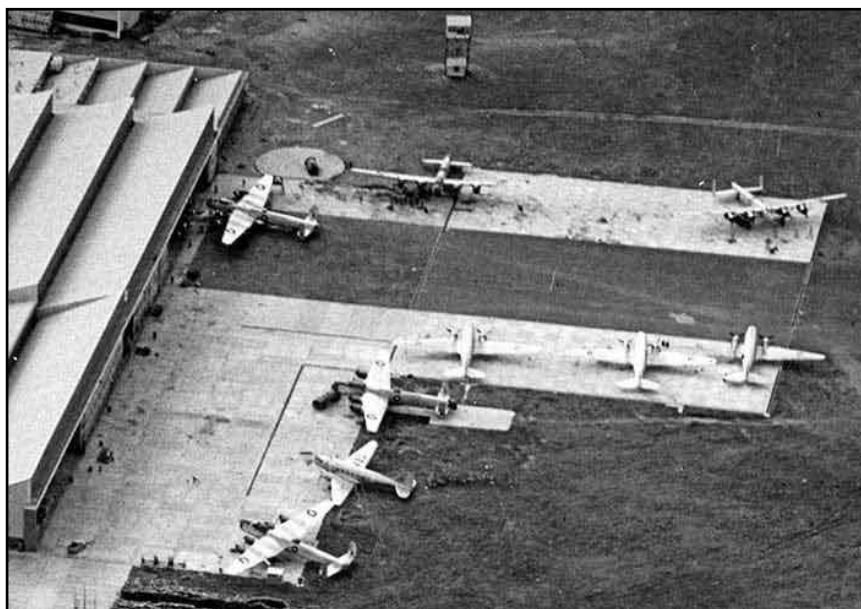
We flew two pupils to an instructor and would swap over half way through the sortie. It was great fun when not under instruction to look out from the Nav hatch during upper air work, particularly during steep turns when the wings flexed noticeably.

We were taught to three-point the aircraft, which didn't seem to present a problem. The only difficulty was coping with turbulence on finals when the slow aileron response could result in your winding the wheel from one stop to the other as your tried to keep the wings level.

Came the great day for us to go solo and the honour fell to me to go first, not that it really mattered as my fellow student had spent most of his service time as a second dickie in a Lincoln squadron.

My final landing before going off solo was with No 1 engine-out, which is the worst case scenario. Our instructor patted me on the back and said I could have a go by myself and to try and not bend it.

Now I had read about "The Long-Fingered Switch Flicker" in flight safety magazines but as a mainly single-engine pilot I had never come across one. For those not in the know, this is the co-pilot who has his fingers constantly flicking around the cockpit,



RAAF Avro Lincolns in Production at Fishermen's Bend, Vic



RAAF Avro Lincoln Mk30 at an Air Show, RAAF Amberley

switching on this switch and altering that control. Suddenly I had one sitting alongside me. Because he had spent so much time as a co-pilot in Lincolns, I thought he knew what he was doing as he did the checks for take-off, hands darting all over the place.

Digressing slightly, I came across another Long-Fingered Switch Flicker many years later when flying a lightie with another club pilot when this chap thought he was doing me a favour by doing my cockpit checks for me. I explained that he had been very badly brought up and a good way to prang an aircraft was for nobody to know who was flying it, and that if he did it again, I would break his fingers!

Back to the Lincoln. We duly lined up and I opened up to full power and let her roll. Suddenly, just as I got the tail up, the rudder bar swung hard over one way. I instinctively counteracted and kept the rudder central but it was no easy matter. It didn't take too much thinking to work out what had happened; we still had asymmetric trim on for No.1 engine out on the approach.

With full chat on, things were getting rapidly worse as we accelerated down the strip. As I was doubtful about our ability to stop in the runway remaining, aborting the take-off did not appear to be an option. There was no time to tell my co-pilot what the problem was so with a frantic yell "your throttles", I reached for the rudder trim and started winding it off as fast as I could go. To my relief, things started returning to normal as I got the trim off and we duly settled in the climb. The rest of the sortie was uneventful and I really enjoyed my short hour in command.

I found the aircraft relatively easy to fly, one just had to be aware of its

size and consequent inertia. Fortunately, we were flying the Mk 30 and not the Mk 31 "Long Nose", which I gather was an experience, particularly at night. I suppose putting the thing in context, someone with almost 2,000 hours at the time should have found it easy when you think that Bomber Command pilots flew its predecessor, the Lancaster, almost straight off course, and at night under a great deal of pressure!

It is a truism of aviation that any fool can fly, it's knowing what to do in an emergency that counts. I would add on top of this that in military flying, you must have a thorough understanding of how to use your aircraft as a weapon system. In our

Lincoln flying we were certainly out of the fool category, and I hope we would have coped in an emergency; but we certainly didn't know how to use the aircraft as a weapon system. I enjoyed my short acquaintance with the Lincoln; as I said at the beginning, I felt honoured to be allowed to fly the successor to the Lancaster.

(Norman Lee enlisted in the RAN in May 1948 graduating as a pilot and rising to the rank of Commodore before retiring in 1981. After his retirement he wrote a series of articles on different aircraft he had flown whilst in the RAN and on exchange/loan to the RN for the 'Australian Aviation Magazine'. We've re-published one on 'Flying the Sea Venom' (Dec 2019 issue). Over the next few issues Slipstream will re-publish more of these articles).



RAAF Avro Lincolns on grass waiting for their next flight



***IJN Amakusa under attack by Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray VC, DSC, RCNVR.
Image by Aviation artist Don Connolly depicts the final moments of Gray's attack.***

***Edited versions of articles by
Don MacNeill [here](#)
and Rich Thistle [here](#)***

While the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) never operated the Corsair fighter-bomber, many RCN aviators flew the type with extreme distinction with the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy.

LEUT Robert 'Hammy' Gray was much loved by his 1841 Squadron mates aboard HMS *Formidable* and was highly regarded as a flight commander and aggressive pilot. It was, however, the manner of his death that makes him so well known to Canadians. Gray died in the final few days of the war when the Corsair he was flying was shot down as he was attacking a Japanese warship in Japanese home waters.

Who was LEUT Robert Hampton Gray? Why was he posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross?

Robert 'Hammy' Gray was the oldest son in a family of three siblings, with a brother Jack and sister Phyllis. 'Hammy' was born in Trail, British Columbia on 17

November, 1917. He was 28 years old at the time of his death on 9 August 1945.

In June of 1941, 'Hammy' was sent to Canada to complete his Service Flying Training on the Canadian built Harvard 2 trainer at No. 31 Service Flying Training School in Kingston, Ontario. He disliked what he thought was a childish emphasis on routine and discipline at this school but changed his attitude when he began to fly Fairey Battle trainers. By September 1941 'Hammy' was commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant and graduated as a pilot.



***LEUT Robert Hampton Gray
VC, DSC, RCNVR***

He was first posted to South Africa in May 1942 to the newly formed 789 Squadron. 789 operated Albacores, Sea Hurricanes, Swordfish and Walrus on support duties from Wingfield, South Africa. 789 Squadron was positioned there to protect against Imperial Japanese Navy fleet advances through the Pacific. After the American success at the Battle of Midway, this threat to South Africa eased and 'Hammy' was re-assigned to Kilindini, Kenya with 795 Squadron. In September 1942 'Hammy' was appointed to 803 Squadron flying Fulmars from Tanga and thence to 877 Squadron. On 7 December, 'Hammy's'



An Artist Impression of a RN Corsair turning right in front of HMS Formidable

squadron was posted to HMS *Illustrious*, sister ship to HMS *Formidable*, the ship that would later become 'Hammy's' final home. He was promoted to LEUT on 31 December 1942 and assigned to 877 Squadron flying Sea Hurricanes as second in command.

On 6 August 1943, 'Hammy' was posted back to England and became the senior pilot of 1841 Squadron. After four long years of training and operational flying he was finally going to see action as 1841 Squadron was assigned to HMS *Formidable* which was about to undertake further attacks on the Nazi battleship Tirpitz as part of Operation Goodwood.

The first Tirpitz attack, planned for 21 August was cancelled due to poor weather and aborted again on the 22 August due to heavy cloud. On the 24 August, 18 Corsair ground attack aircraft along with 16 Barracuda aircraft loaded with bombs were launched along with six other Corsairs which were loaded with armour piercing bombs. German anti-aircraft gunners ashore and on the Tirpitz and on other escort vessels were ready and waiting.

'Hammy', in his first combat, lead his flight of Corsairs straight down at point-blank range to suppress the anti-aircraft fire and draw it away from the slower attacking Barracudas. This attack did not succeed in sinking Tirpitz and resulted in heavy British aircraft losses.

Formidable launched another attack on the 29th with Hammy again leading a daring close-in attack while receiving a direct 40 mm hit in the rudder. He flew back to the ship and orbited for 45 minutes in a brave show of airmanship waiting his turn to land rather than disrupt the landing pattern. With his gun camera film showing extreme close-ups of the anti-aircraft guns, he was heard to say that "some dumb Canadian needed a good talking to". He was awarded a Mentioned in Despatches (MID) "for undaunted courage, skill and determination in carrying out daring attacks on the Tirpitz".

By the spring of 1945, operations in the European theatre of war were winding down after the invasion of Europe and allied success in re-occupying much of Europe. *Formidable* was re-assigned to operations in the Pacific and the final drive to defeat Japanese forces. At this time, 1841 and 1842 Squadrons were refitted with 20 new F4U-1D Corsairs while other squadrons aboard now flew 12 Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers and 6 Hellcat fighter aircraft.

At the end of June 1945, *Formidable* and four other British carriers sailed from Sydney to join the USN Third Fleet under U.S. Admiral "Bull" Halsey. As the allied fleet pushed towards the islands of Japan, they fought against Kamikaze aircraft while launching strikes on Japanese airfields, warships and other strategic military targets. Matsushima



Painting by Anthony Cowland showing RN Corsairs on the Flight Deck of a British aircraft-carrier. The Book 'The British Pacific Fleet' by David Hobbs uses the image as a cover.



Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray VC, DSC, RCNVR Medals

Military Airfield was a key target assigned to the aircraft of HMS *Formidable*.

On the night of 8 August, Admiral Vian, leader of the British forces, briefed Squadron Commanders not to take any unnecessary chances in their attacks on Japanese targets, as the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and Japanese capitulation was expected at any time. Also, the senior officers knew but could not disclose that another A-bomb was to be dropped the following day on Nagasaki.

Pilots were told to limit staffing or bombing runs to one pass to limit risks. At 0835 on 9 August, 'Hammy' Gray climbed into his aircraft and prepared to lead his flight of seven Corsairs in the attack on Matsushima airfield. At the last minute, Chief Petty Officer Dick Sweet was sent to 'Hammy's' waiting aircraft with an urgent message that Matsushima Military Airfield had been heavily bombed earlier and was thought to be out of commission and if so he was to seek other targets of opportunity. 'Hammy' lead his flight to Matsushima airfield, confirmed the damage and the need to attack other targets such as Japanese ships he had seen anchored in Onagawa Bay.

Flying from the mainland side at approximately 10,000 feet Hammy turned his two flights towards Onagawa Bay to avoid anti-aircraft fire. He dove his aircraft in order to get down to sea level for the short bombing run at his chosen target. All Japanese ships in the bay were heavily armed and prepared for an air attack. Additional anti-aircraft positions dotted the surrounding hills creating a killing zone for attacking Allied aircraft.

Swooping down from 10,000 feet he made the short, exposed run at his chosen target, the ocean escort vessel *Amakusa*. Almost immediately, his

DEATH NOTICES

ADAMS, Ken. Ex-LAMAE. Died on 14 July 2020. He was a long serving member of the Fleet Air Arm Association (SA Division). He is survived by his wife Anne.

Jan Akeroyd
Secretary FAAAA (SA)

BAILEY, Graham 'Beatles'. Ex-LEUT. Graham died on 25 August aged 79 and was buried on Friday 4 September at Dignified Funerals. Formerly an active member of the SA Division, Graham is survived by his wife Siriporn, son Scott and daughter Nataleigh

Roger Harrison
Vice-President SA

COOK, Colin. Colin passed away on Friday 28 August 2020 after a long illness. His funeral service was conducted on Thursday 3 September

COURTIER, Brian. Ex- LCDR. Brian died on 10 July 2020 and is survived by his wife Pat. A graduate of the Naval College, Brian specialised in aviation.

John DaCosta

EDGEcombe, Gordon. Ex-LCDR. Gordon passed away at Carinya Palliative Care, Berry, NSW on Friday 25 September 2020. The funeral service for Gordon was held on Thursday 1 October at Shoalhaven Memorial Gardens, Worrige Road, Worrige, NSW

John DaCosta

McGOWAN, Alan. Ex-NA (AH)1. Alan died on 30 August 2020 aged 88. He served for 24 years after joining the Navy in 1950 until 1974. Alan's funeral was held sometime between 30 August and 4

September but due to current restrictions at funerals many members were unable to attend

Mal Smith, Secretary,
FAAAA (Vic)

OAKLEY, Leslie. Ex-LCDR DFC. Died recently in Canberra aged 98. The funeral was a private family occasion in Sydney. He was awarded the DFC in the RAAF during WWII and was one of a number of ex-RAAF who joined the RAN on the formation of the FAA.

John DaCosta

O'NEIL Chris. Ex-CPO (SE). Died recently. Little information available on his death. After the Navy Chris was with Ansett at the Perth Airport with several other "Old" Birdies.

Keith Taylor
Secretary FAAAA (WA)

ROBERTSON, Andrew. AO, DSC EX-RADM. Andrew died in July 2020. He is survived by his wife Patricia (Pat) and children Angus, Jane, Julia and Bruce.

Chief of Navy

STEVENS, Graham. Ex-LEUT RAN. Died in North Gosford Hospital on 20 May 2020 three days short of his 89th birthday. He is survived by his wife Jan, three children, seven grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Jerry O'Day

Note: Death Notices also appear in 'FlyBy' and Obituaries are located in the FAAAA website [here](#). (online subscribers only)



RN Corsairs being armed and readied for another sortie

Corsair was hit by enemy machine gun and cannon fire from shore batteries and five warships, and appeared to catch fire, one of his bombs being shot away and falling clear. However Gray, maintaining control of the stricken Corsair, pressed the attack home, hitting the *Amakusa* amidships in the ammunition magazine with his remaining 500 pound bomb. Then, as Hammy cleared the stricken vessel and headed for safety, his aircraft, now with smoke and flame erupting from the lower engine area, flicked to the right in a vicious roll and crashed upside down into the bay.

The bomb penetrated the *Amakusa*'s engine-room instantly killing 40 sailors and triggering an explosion in the aft ammunition magazine. This massive explosion resulted in the sinking of the *Amakusa* in just minutes.

'Hammy's' flight members then recounted seeing his aircraft enveloped in smoke and flame. They reported that his aircraft, at an altitude of only fifty feet, rolled to right into the sea in an explosion of debris and water. The aircraft was never seen again. His body was never recovered. Robert Hampton Gray was the last Canadian to die directly in combat in WW2.

After, someone keyed their radio mike saying "There

goes Hammy", his Second in Command, SBLT MacKinnon, took over as Flight Leader and launched two more attacks until the two flights exhausted their bombs and cannon ammunition on other targets in the bay. One hundred and fifty-eight Japanese servicemen were killed (71 on *Amakusa* alone). Most of the warships in the bay were sunk, destroyed or badly damaged. Japanese accounts of the battle talk of the valour demonstrated by Commonwealth pilots as they pressed home their attack.

Following this battle, the senior officers under British Admiral Vian met to discuss a suitable honour to recognise the bravery of LEUT Gray. Subsequently, he was

posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest Commonwealth award for gallantry.

The attack by this flight was the same day that the second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. The Corsair he flew that day has always been identified as number 115, since his "personal" aircraft, 119, had apparently been trapped below in the hangar deck just at the time the operation was to be launched. Finding that the target airfield had already received a pounding, 'Hammy' turned for the secondary target, which included several Japanese warships hiding at anchor in Onagawa Bay surrounded by high hills. Having been briefed about these shipping targets, 'Hammy' elected to go after the ships.



Kamikaze Attack on HMS Formidable somewhere in the Pacific Theatre

Obituaries

Lieutenant Commander Brian Courtier RAN (Rtd)

I regret to advise that I received a call on Saturday 11 July from Pam Courtier informing me that her husband Brian passed away the day before on 10 July.

Some will recall that Brian, who was a graduate of the RAN College, specialised in aviation and underwent No 34 RAAF Pilots Course in 1958/59. Other RAN pilots who graduated on No 34 Course included LEUT Neil Ralph, Robin Spratt, Albert Riley and Peter Adams.

Brian subsequently flew the Sea Venom FAW 53 All Weather Fighter, operationally, before doing a helicopter conversion course on Sycamore Helicopters. He later flew Wessex ASW Helicopters in 817 Squadron before returning to General Service.

After retirement, Brian and Pam lived in Canberra and were noted for their enthusiastic participation in tennis, and keeping in contact with their retired FAA friends.

John Da Costa

Lieutenant G. R. Stevens RAN (Retired)

Graham was born in Adelaide on 31 May 1931 and attended the then Queens College before training as a draftsman. He was a first-class cricketer and represented both South Australia and Tasmania at Hockey.

He entered the RAN as a Recruit Naval Airman (Aircrew) in NAAC Class 9 on 31 August 1953, a course unique in that all nine entrants graduated and were commissioned. Eight became pilots and one an Observer. Graham was one of the pilots and did his OFS on the Fairey Firefly which concluded with Deck Landing Qualification in the Firefly on the straight deck of HMAS *Sydney*.

Among the first to convert to the Fairey Gannet in Australia he joined 816 Squadron and did a number of deployments to the FESR as an ASW pilot before moving to and from a number of second line squadrons at RANAS Nowra. In 1958 he was one of a select few who carried out cross deck operations with the USN on the USS *Philippine Sea* (CVS 47, an unmodified Essex Class carrier). Although offered a permanent commission he chose to leave the RAN in 1962 at the end of his Short Service Commission.

He then joined Qantas where he commanded both Boeing 707 and 747 aircraft and logged some 20,000 flight hours. He died in North Gosford Hospital on 28 May 2020 just 3 days short of his 89th birthday and is survived by Jan, his wife of 62 years, three children, seven grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Jerry O'Day

LAMAE K. Adams RAN (Rtd)



Ken died on 14 July 2020 and was buried from his favourite ute on 24 July. He lived on his farm at Bagot Well within the Kapunda District. He was represented at his funeral in Kapunda by FAAAA (SA) members: Roger Harrison, Ian Laidler, Gordon Gray and Jan Akeroyd.

Ken joined the RAN on 5 March 1956 as an air engineer rating (sailor) and was discharged on 4 March 1962 serving in the FAA for six years.

His service included: HMAS *Albatross*, *Cerberus*, *Melbourne*, *Torrens* (later *Encounter*) for RAAF Edinburgh.

Ian Laidler

December Edition

Closing Date For Articles & Reports
To be into the Editor no later than

1 December 2020

Obituaries

Lieutenant Commander Leslie Albert 'Annie' Oakley DFC RAN (Rtd)

Lieutenant Commander Leslie Albert ('Annie') Oakley DFC RAN (Rtd) passed away recently in Canberra at the age of 98 years. The funeral was a private family occasion held in Sydney.

Leslie was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross during his RAAF WWII service and was one of a number of ex-WWII aircrew who joined the RAN on the formation of the RAN Fleet Air Arm around 1947/48. It is understood 'Annie' Oakley then went straight to HMAS *Shoalhaven* for a Watchkeeping Certificate before joining up with 21 CAG in the UK and returning to Australia with 817 Squadron about mid-1951. Most of those aircrew went on to serve in the Korean War in 805, 808 or 817 Naval Air Squadrons.

Well-known RAN pilot and Korean War veteran, LCDR Fred Lane, has the following story about LCDR Oakley's Korean service:

'Annie' Oakley was John Roland's usual Number Three to Shorty's Number Four in 817 in Korea. One day 'Annie' changed a briefing mid-air by hand signal to John to go into long line astern for a railway bridge target. John, who was the most accurate bomb dropper in the CAG, correctly interpreted this as line astern, one bridge length pylon to pylon, so that both aircraft's bombs exploded together on their respective pylon. This they did and for the first time in Sydney CAG's history dropped an entire span in one pass. (Unfortunately, John had to fly through 'Annie's' bomb shrapnel and one large piece lodged in an elevator hinge, rock solid jamming the elevator. By deft power, aileron and rudder control John, escorted by 'Annie', flew to Kimpo and landed safely.

John Da Costa

Lieutenant Graham 'Beatles' Bailey RAN (Rtd)

Graham died on 25 August 2020 aged 79. His funeral was held on Friday 4 September at Dignafied Funerals. Graham is survived by his wife Siriporn, son Scott and daughter Nataleigh.

After joining the Navy as a Sick Berth Attendant in 1958 he applied for and was accepted for Aircrew (Pilot) training which Graham commenced in 1964. On completion of his training he was posted to 724 Sqn for a Gannet OFS then to 816 Sqn in 1966.

In 1968, Graham completed a QFI course at CFS followed by a year instructing on Macchis at RAAF Pearce. The following year he completed a

DC-3 conversion and joined 851 Sqn where he later completed a Tracker OFS. He then joined 816 Sqn in 1971 and did a couple of cruises in HMAS *Melbourne* before rejoining 851 Sqn and paying off in September 1972. Following discharge Graham worked for 'Bain & Brown' flying DC-3 freighters between Melbourne and Tasmania.

Later he joined Cathay as a simulator instructor before retiring and settling in Adelaide. Up until his death Graham was an active member of the SA Division.

Paul Shiels

NA(AH)1 Alan McGowan RAN (Rtd)

It is my sad duty to report the passing of Alan McGowan on 30 August 2020.

Alan was 88 years of age. He served for 24 years after joining the Navy from 1950 until 1974 as an Aircraft Handler.

His career was long and varied with 23 years as a NA (AH)1. This was his choice and he finally accepted his Kellicks rating during his final year.

Alan served in HMAS *Sydney* in Korea and Vietnam. He was in Sydney for the Queens Coronation trip in 1953.

He also served many times in HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Stalwart*. Other drafts include HMAS *Kuttubul*, HMAS *Harmon*, HMAS *Melville*, HMAS *Lonsdale*, HMAS *Albatross* and HMAS *Cerberus*.

Alan's funeral was held sometime between 30 August—4 September but with the current restrictions on numbers at funerals, it was difficult for members to attend. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

Mal Smith
Secretary, FAAAA (Vic).



By Toz Dadswell

It was with great interest that I read the article in the last "Slipstream" on the checked life of Gannet XG796. However that particular aircraft had some adventures prior to the "wheels up" at HMAS *Albatross* on 10 January 1964. On 20 August 1963 three Gannets embarked in HMAS *Melbourne* for a family day display off Jervis Bay. The aircraft remained embarked for another family day off Sydney on 22nd August. The pilots involved were Arthur Payne, Jerry O'Day and myself. Because of the large number of visitors onboard, all wanting to witness the flying operations, it was decided that the flying programme would consist of three sorties. In between the sorties the spectators would be rotated. The first two sorties would consist of two aircraft which, after launching, would carry out a simulated bombing display off the port side and



then be recovered. The third sortie would be a similar display by all three aircraft except that on completion of the bombing display the aircraft would return to *Albatross*.

The first sortie flown by Arthur and Jerry went as planned. Jerry and I were programmed for the second sortie. My aircraft was XG796. The aircraft were ranged opposite the island so the spectators could get a good view of proceedings. When directed by FLYCO we manned aircraft. My observer for the sortie was Gordon Turner. After we were strapped in FLYCO ordered "stand clear of propellers and jet pipes. Start engines". I moved the port H.P. cock to the "on" position and pressed port starter button. There was a roar and a dull thud which lead me to believe that I had a dud cartridge. No great problem. I moved the port H.P. cock to "off" position, moved the starboard H.P. cock to "on" position and pressed the starboard starter button. The starboard propeller started spinning. The engine pulled away nicely and soon reached ground idle.

I could now take my eyes away from the instruments and look outside the aircraft. To my surprise I saw Gordon Turner standing outside the ACRO. He was waving madly. I also saw an army of aircraft handlers advancing towards me dragging with them an array of fire hoses. The Flight Deck director was giving me the cut signal. You didn't have to be an atomic scientist to realise that something was wrong, terribly wrong.

I closed the H.P. cock to the "Feather and Brake" position, the starboard propeller ceased spinning and, to my surprise and horror, the front of the aircraft exploded in a fire ball. The flames were licking the front of the cockpit. All aviators will agree that there is no point in remaining in an aircraft which is on fire, especially one that has just been refuelled. I remembered that visitors were witnessing the events so I decided to act nonchalant as if this was routine. I unstrapped and stepped out of the cockpit. Its hard to look nonchalant when you have just fallen thirteen feet to a steel deck. However I did manage to limp away from the aircraft and the fire fighters soon had XG796 drenched in foam.

The subsequent investigation by the ship's AEO and his maintainers determined that the sailor who had replaced the starter cartridge after the first sortie had failed to secure the cap on the port cartridge barrel. On start-up, the cap had been ejected up-

Fleet Air Arm Tribute to RADM Andrew Robertson

The "bad news" sent out by the Chief of Navy on the death of Andrew Robertson is out of the ordinary in that he was not an aviator and I would not normally send out a message to you about such a passing.

However, he had a very great interest in the FAA and was a vocal champion of our "trade" and the importance to the RAN of naval aviation, particularly "organic air".

He will be remembered by many as the CO RANAS Nowra, during which time he was relentless in setting up the basis of what is now the world-class Fleet Air Arm Museum.

RIP to a Gunnery Officer who could be called "one of us".

John DaCosta

wards and fractured the oil tank. When I fired the starboard cartridge the oil ignited. The spinning starboard propeller forced the flames under the aircraft. I couldn't see this (I was busy watching instruments) but Gordon saw the flames and sensibly made a quick exit. When the propeller stopped spinning the entire front of the aircraft exploded in flames.

The ship returned to harbour and XG796 was transported to De Havilland's at Bankstown for a rebuild while I caught the train to Bomaderry.

The reason why the under carriage of XG796 failed in January 1964 was due to the failure of the nose wheel door actuator lug. I wonder if the failure of the lug was as a result of damage caused by the fire some four months earlier. Damage perhaps the experts at De Havilland's missed?



Gannet 858 (XG796) taxis to the catapult whilst SAR Helicopter, Wessex 825 awaits for the launch. Both aircraft were eventually lost at sea.

Flapless Approach

In June 1967, Gannet XA334 (860) suffered a single engine failure on a catapult launch from HMAS *Melbourne*. The pilot declared an emergency and obtained permission to fire off the eight (8) rockets on the wings. The flaps were still in take off configuration and the rocket blast blew off both outboard flaps and severely damaged the remaining flaps.

A flapless landing at a higher than normal landing speed was necessary. The arrestor hook failed to pick up a wire and the aircraft crashed into safety barrier.



Gannet XA 334 (860) on Final Approach to the ship



Photo on the left shows Gannet XA334 (860) about to touch down between the round down and safety barrier.

Photo on right is of Gannet XA334 (860) engaging the arrestor barrier after missing all wires

Although the damage appears superficial the aircraft was assessed as beyond economical repair and was withdrawn from service.

FAAAA website [here](#) refers to this incident.



Photo on the right is taken during 'Exercise SHOWPIECE' in the South China Sea in 1965 from the flight deck of the RN aircraft-carrier HMS Eagle, with her aircraft in the foreground. The three carriers astern of her are from forward to rear, HMS Bulwark, HMAS Melbourne and HMS Victorious.



Below: Gannets and Sea Venoms ranged on the Flight Deck of HMAS Melbourne



Photo on the right is an RAN Bristol Sycamore helicopter ranged on HMAS Vengeance's flight deck. These helicopters were purchased by the RAN to fulfill the Search and Rescue (SAR) role.

The Sycamore was the only helicopter to serve on the RAN's three aircraft-carriers: HMAS Sydney, HMAS Vengeance and HMAS Melbourne





Letters to the Editor



Andy Perry's Story Attracts a Further Reply

I write in response to Bob Ray's comment (*Slipstream* June 2020) on the refusal by Andy Perry to accept the 'Medal for Gallantry'. His reasons for not accepting the Medal are clearly stated in his response to the Acting Secretary to the Governor General and need no further clarification. Here is a man of principle and a strong sense of justice not only for himself but other RANHFV personnel who also served with distinction, sometimes out front, sometimes behind the scenes.

Being "churlish" as Bob Ray has stated, is way off the mark and offensive.

When I started to research this glitch into our RAN Honours Award system sometime ago, Andy Perry had NO input to my investigation (*my Letter to the Editor Slipstream Dec 2019 summarises*) which allowed me to rely primarily on Government Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal papers including for other RAN personnel considered for higher awards.

At no time was he "In pursuit of Glory" as stated by Bob Ray. The objective of my paper was to put it "out there" for everyone to view and understand the anomalies within the system.

I understand Bob Ray's comment and I can appreciate his intent to say it as he sees it. I just cannot agree on his criticism.

Roger Harrison

FireFly Engine

Another interesting and enjoyable edition of *Slipstream*, brought back many memories of my time "on loan" to the RAN 1955/56.

However one item I noticed on page 17 of the June 2020 issue by Roger Harrison where he mentioned a Firefly with a Merlin engine! I flew all marks of Fireflies in service including Mk 7s and am pretty sure they all had Griffons!

Mike Thorne

(Mike you have a good memory! The RAN operated the Fairey Firefly AS.5/AS.6 and both used the 2259 hp Rolls Royce Griffon 74 engine.....Ed)

Where is the Modern FAA?

Whilst I enjoy the articles written by the old and bolds such as Fred and Norm - who by the way were old and bolds when I joined in 1966 - I would love to hear from the Naval Aviators of the modern FAA say from 2000 onwards.

How they were recruited, their training, operational experiences, mess life, sporting life and social life outside of duty hours.

Perhaps you could prevail on COMFAA and the Squadron Commanding Officers to seek out any of the current mob of lads (oops, and lasses) who fancy them-

selves as budding scribes, encourage them to put pen to paper or perhaps tap the keys and provide *Slipstream* with some ditties.

Added value may be that they become aware that regular members are interested in them and their stories. This may encourage them to come forward and join the Association.

Ken Vote

(The point you raise Ken is very important and I'm sure most FAAAA members would agree with you.)

Unfortunately, the current FAA has contributed little. I've written personal letters to the respective COs, and SNOs over 12 months ago and received no responses. My predecessor went even further and visited every Sqn CO and sought assistance and nothing eventuated. COMFAA is personally provided an online version of 'Slipstream', so his staff can forward it on to whomever he so wishes under his command.

Every edition I allow four (4) pages for the active FAA. Only one article has ever come through and that's been from our National President who received it from COMFAA on a Pilot Graduation. The current FAA articles appearing in 'Slipstream', I source through the Navy Media website.

I'll refer your letter to the National Executive in my Annual Report and see if an 'official' approach to COMFAA can be made for COs and SNOs to provide *Slipstream* with articles. Ed)

A Confluence of Events!

I have just been browsing through the latest (June 2020) edition of the "*Slipstream*" and came across an article written by Peter Coulson in which he describes his involvement in the (mis) adventures of XG796.

I have not spoken to Peter for some 55 or so years, so I hope he and his family are all fit and well.

I served in 816 Squadron with Peter. He joined the Squadron as a freshly minted "subbie looker" and I was crewed up with both he and Jon Hutchison who was also a freshly minted SBLT, though of the pilot variety.

I was the rear seat member of this crew as a PO Aircrewman.

Jon Hutchison was unfortunately killed in an accident during operations in the Malacca straights in March 1965, when the hook failed during a night recovery on HMAS Melbourne (I was not flying with Hutch that night, it was Ken Ryan in the rear seat).

This article gave me cause to reflect upon some of the times we shared over a short period in our lives.

A later article in the same edition was written by a then OD, relating the tale of picking up Peter and his pilot Albie Fyfe after XG796 attempted a 'sponson landing', Tom Lindsay was the Aircrewman on that sortie.

That Ordinary Seaman David Bryant, was serving



Letters to the Editor



in HMAS *Vampire* which was “riding” RESDES at the time.

Coincidentally I also served in *Vampire* (The Bat) in 1962-63. This was immediately prior to transferring to the FAA and undertaking a UC Air course on 723 Squadron at HMAS *Albatross* and subsequently transferring to 816 Squadron.

I had also, on occasions, as a ‘kellick’ seaman in both *Vendetta* and *Vampire*, coxswained those 32’ cutters referred to in his article.

It doesn’t stop there; a further article refers to the RAN’s participation in the ‘Cyclone Tracey’ relief operations in Darwin in 1974.

At that time I had been out of the Navy for some years and was an Air Traffic Controller in Department of Civil Aviation (now Air Services Australia) serving a stint in Alice Springs as a Senior Operations Controller/SAR Mission Coordinator and was involved in the initial efforts to get the relief effort following ‘Tracey’, off the ground.

The only initial “comms” out of Darwin after the blow were via a HF radio link between the Alice Springs Flight Service Centre and a Connair DH114 Heron, which was sitting on the tarmac at Darwin Airport.

Chaos ensued for a few hours as we attempted to convince Adelaide and Canberra that Darwin, to all intents and purposes, had largely been flattened or blown away by Tracey, the ‘powers that be’ kept asking for estimates of the ‘damage’.

I suspect that they failed, initially, to comprehend the enormity of the disaster that was Darwin after Tracey’s passage.

Eventually a massive relief operation was mounted that led to evacuations and eventually a substantial rebuilding of the City.

Darwin and ‘Tracey’ was some 46 years ago, my crewing with Peter Coulson and Hutch, some 56 years past.

My, how time flies when you’re having fun.

John ‘Blue’ Boulton

(Thanks John for your interesting account of your time in the FAA and your time in Alice, especially as related to ‘Cyclone Tracey’.

With respect to a 32 cutter being carried on HMAS Vampire and other Daring Class Destroyers, a former CO of the Vampire CAPT Paul Martin RAN (Rtd) said: “32ft cutters would have been too much top weight for a Daring”. He then referred my question onto the previous Managing Director of Cockatoo Island where Vampire was built. His reply to Paul: “As built the Daring’s were fitted to carry two 25 ft motor cutters and a 27 ft whaler. As modernised, Vampire and Vendetta carried one 26 ft fast utility boat (FUB) in davits and two 17 ft (I think) aluminium ‘tinnies’ carried in

the old torpedo tube space. A 32 ft cutter would have been too big for the ship I believe”.

As a Junior Seaman Officer prior to transferring to the FAA, I coxswained 32ft cutters (2) on HMAS Sydney in 1968. Mostly, they were coxswained by a PO, if not a Junior Officer. The stoker allocated was normally a LS. I sought professional advice on the 32 ft cutter because I didn’t think the Darings carried them.

David Bryant, a retired WO at the time of writing explained he was ‘watch on deck’ for No.2, 32 ft cutter on HMAS MelbourneEd)

Queen’s Medal

My question is aimed at those remarkable RAN Naval Officers who at the beginning of their career or throughout their Service life, were nominated and received the King’s or Queen’s Gold Medal for exemplary conduct, performance of Duty and a high level of achievement.

This medal is one of the oldest and most prestigious awards in the RAN dating back to 1916. I am struggling to locate a comprehensive listing of those Officers connected with Naval Aviation or as we now call it, The Fleet Air Arm.

I have found our own CDRE Toz Dadswell AM RAN (Retd) with his Kings Gold Medal awarded in 1949 and a possible second namely LEUT C J Gaudie RAN who was awarded the Queen’s Gold Medal in 1984. Don’t know this chap at all. Have I increased his standing by elevating him from General Service into the lofty heights of our Fleet Air Arm? If anyone has other names, dates etc of FAA Officers gaining this prestigious Medal, can you “Letter to the Editor” and enlighten everyone interested.

Roger Harrison

(The medal was awarded annually to the Cadet Midshipman who, in the opinion of the Captain of the Naval College, was most deserving of the honour and displayed ‘gentlemanly bearing, character, good influence among his fellows and officer-like qualities’. As a mark of prestige the letters KM or QM appear following a recipients name in the Navy List. The medal depended who was the reigning monarch: King [KM] or Queen [QM] at the time.

Most FAA officers joined via the Supplementary List [SL] and Special Duties List [SD] officers come from the lower deck. The KM or QM was designed purely for General List (GL) entry. However, with the introduction of ADFA where all GL entries were transferred, it still continues. I suspect the list of FAA winners of KM or QM would be quite short. I suggest you contact one of either ‘Toz’ Dadswell, David Farthing, or Andy Craig (three RANC Graduates) who may be able to identify out of the list available on the KM/QM website <https://www.navy.gov.au/customs-and-traditions/kings-and-queens-gold-medals> FAA recipients.....Ed)

What Makes a Victoria Cross Hero?



Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean in a painting by artist Dale Marsh that captures Sheean's valour in HMAS Armidale's final moments as displayed in the Australian War Memorial. The photo of 'Teddy' shows him wearing a cap tally of HMAS Derwent. See Note below.

The 'Teddy' Sheean Story

Edward 'Teddy' Sheean was born on 28 December 1923 at Lower Barrington, Tasmania, fourteenth child of James Sheean, labourer, and his wife Mary Jane, née Broomhall. Soon afterwards the family moved to Latrobe.

Teddy was educated at the local Catholic school. Five foot 8½ inches (174cm) tall and well built, he took casual work on farms between Latrobe and Merseylea. In Hobart on 21 April 1941 he enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve as an Ordinary Seaman at HMAS *Derwent*, following in the steps of five of his brothers who had joined the armed forces (four of them were in the Army and one in the Navy). In February 1942 on completion of his initial training, he was sent to Flinders Naval Depot, Westernport, Victoria, for further instruction.

In May Sheean was posted to Sydney where he was billeted at Garden Island in the requisitioned ferry HMAS *Kuttabul*, prior to joining his first ship as an Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun loader. Granted home leave, he was not on board *Kuttabul* when Japanese midget submarines raided the harbour and sank her on 31 May. Eleven days later he returned to Sydney to help commission the new corvette HMAS *Armidale* (I), which carried out escort duties along the eastern Australian coast and in New Guinea waters. Ordered to sail for Darwin in October, *Armidale* arrived there early the next month.

On 29 November *Armidale* sailed for Japanese-occupied Timor, in company with the corvette HMAS *Castlemaine*, to withdraw the exhausted Australian 2/2 Independent Company, evacuate about 150 Portuguese civilians and 190 Dutch troops, and land soldiers to reinforce Dutch

guerrillas on the island. Arriving off Betano before dawn on 1 December, the ships rendezvoused with the naval tender HMAS *Kuru*, which had already taken the civilians on board. When these people were transferred to *Castlemaine*, she sailed for Darwin, leaving the other two vessels to carry out the rest of the operation.

From 1228 *Armidale* and *Kuru* came under repeated attack from Japanese aircraft. Despite requests, no air cover arrived.

The Loss of HMAS *Armidale* (1)

Shortly before 1400 on 1 December 1942, *Armidale*, by then separated from *Kuru*, was attacked by no less than thirteen aircraft. The corvette manoeuvred frantically. At 1515 a torpedo struck her port side and another hit the engineering spaces; finally a bomb struck aft. As the vessel listed heavily to port, the order was given to abandon ship. The survivors leapt into the sea and were machine-gunned by the Japanese aircraft. Once he had helped to free a life raft, Sheean scrambled back to his gun on the sinking ship. Although wounded in the chest and back, the 18-year-old sailor shot down one bomber and kept other aircraft away from his comrades in the water. He was seen still firing his gun as *Armidale* slipped below the waves. Only 49 of the 149 men who had been on board, survived the sinking and the ensuing days in life rafts.

(The RANR Training Depot in Hobart was originally known as HMAS *Cerberus* VI until 7 August 1940 when it was renamed HMAS *Derwent* and later renamed HMAS *Huon*.)

Courtesy of the official RAN website located [here](#) (online subscribers only)

A4 887 Lands On Drop Tanks At NAS Barbers Point

By John Hamilton

During HMAS *Melbourne*'s visit to Hawaii in 1971 to participate in the inaugural RIMPAC Exercise, VF805 under the command of LCDR Col Patterson, disembarked to NAS Barbers Point. As the exercise was mostly an ASW one, VF805 was tasked with CAP and land based strike on an as required basis. When not required for such duties the squadron was free to conduct other flying to maintain proficiency in weaponry, FCLP and navigation etc.

The weaponry training was to be conducted on the somewhat barren island of Kahoolawe, to the east of Barbers Point. On the 26 October four A4s under the leadership of LEUT George Heron proceeded to Kahoolawe to conduct 30 degree 2.75 R/P and 25 pound dive bombing practice. Normally a bread and butter exercise and good fun to say the least – especially on a different range. All went according to plan until my third rocket dive when, during my recovery, I leant forward to disarm the Master Armament Switch, flew through the wash of the previous aircraft and my left elbow struck the undercarriage handle which under recovery 'g' caused the undercarriage to begin lowering. The handle was immediately selected back to the UP position, but at 450 knots and well over gear limiting speed, the damage was done. Momentary electrical and hydraulic warning lights indicated that there was a problem or two with the aircraft. A visual inspection by George revealed the nose gear locked down, the right main gear up and housed with the left main gear strut badly broken and trailing, but firmly attached. Flight control hydraulics were operating normally.

With control of the aircraft regained it was decided to return to Barbers Point to either land or jettison the aircraft (ie eject). The latter would have been the case without drop tanks attached. Preparations for landing were made en route to Barbers Point, which included the jettisoning of the remaining rockets and practice bombs and excess fuel in the wing to reduce the possibility of fire on landing. Meanwhile the runway was foamed to further reduce fire risks and the Squadron LSO, LEUT Keith Johnson proceeded to the threshold of the runway to assist in the approach so that the flight path flown ensured that the short field arresting gear was engaged. Under Keith's expert guidance a



Keith Johnson (whites) and John Hamilton (flying gear) look on at the left as Furies 'mop-up' after the laying of foam

hook up practice approach was conducted and with low fuel considerations a hook down arrested landing was completed without further aircraft damage, albeit with two very scratched drop tanks.

The aircraft, N13-154908 (887) was taken to a repair hangar for inspection whereupon it was found that the locking clutch mechanism in the undercarriage handle was worn and that the undercarriage handle was easily lowered without fully applying the clutch. Hence the knock under 'g' was sufficient to lower the undercarriage. Rectification of the damage was completed on site and the aircraft was recovered to *Melbourne* by LEUT Barrie Daly not long after.

It possibly should be noted that this escapade occurred on the day of the Barbers Point safety Stand Down!

Obituary

LCDR Gordon Edgecombe RAN (Rtd)

I regret to advise that I have been informed that LCDR Gordon EDGECOMBE passed away at Carinya Palliative Care, Berry, NSW on Friday 25 September.

Gordon served in Vietnam as a member of the 1st Contingent, RANHFV, under (then) LCDR Neil RALPH DSC RAN. Gordon earned a Naval Board Commendation for his service as part of the RANHFV, including as Air Liaison Officer with the 18th Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

He completed his FBWC in HMAS *Hobart* in the early 1980's and later served in the Directorate of Naval Training.

John DaCosta



Inspiring: Change the World by Making Your Bed

This is an inspiring and powerful 20-minute commencement speech by Admiral William H. McRaven USN, ninth commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, at the University of Texas at Austin on 17 May 2014. Click [here](#) to view the whole speech (online subscribers only).

Admiral McRaven's commencement speech is perhaps one of the best commencement speeches ever heard. It is on point and offers some fantastic life and business lessons.

Below are excerpts from his amazing speech.

10 Life Lessons from Basic SEAL Training

1. If you want to change the world, start off by making your bed. "If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right."

2. If you want to change the world, find someone to help you paddle. "You can't change the world alone—you will need some help—and to truly get from your starting point to your destination takes friends, colleagues, the good will of strangers and a strong coxswain to guide them."

3. If you want to change the world, measure a person by the size of their heart, not the size of their flippers. "SEAL training was a great equalizer. Nothing mattered but your will to succeed. Not your colour, not your ethnic background, not your education and not your social status."

4. If you want to change the world get over being a sugar cookie and keep moving forward. "Sometimes no matter how well you prepare or how well you perform you still end up as a sugar cookie."

"For failing the uniform inspection, the student [in Basic SEAL training] had to run, fully clothed into the surf zone and then, wet from head to toe, roll around on the beach until every part of your body was covered with sand. The effect was known as a 'sugar cookie.' You stayed in that uniform the rest of the day — cold, wet and sandy. There were many a student who just couldn't accept the fact that all their effort was in vain. . . Those students didn't understand the purpose of the drill. You were never going to succeed. You were never going to have a perfect uniform."

5. If you want to change the world, don't be afraid of the circuses. "Every day during training you were challenged with multiple physical events — long runs, long swims, obstacle courses, hours of calisthenics — something designed to test your mettle. Every event had standards — times you had to meet. If you failed to meet those standards your name was posted on a list, and at the end of the day those on the list were invited to a 'circus.' A circus was two hours of additional calisthenics designed to wear you down, to break your spirit, to force you to quit. Life is filled with circuses. You will fail. You will likely fail often. It will be painful. It will be discouraging. At times it will test you to your very core."

6. If you want to change the world sometimes you have to slide down the obstacle head first.

7. If you want to change the world, don't back down from the sharks. "There are a lot of sharks in the world. If you hope to complete the swim you will have to deal with them."

8. If you want to change the world, you must be your very best in the darkest moment. "At the darkest moment of the mission is the time when you must be calm, composed—when all your tactical skills, your physical power and all your inner strength must be brought to bear."

9. If you want to change the world, start singing when you're up to your neck in mud. "If I have learned anything in my time travelling the world, it is the power of hope. The power of one person—Washington, Lincoln, King, Mandela and even a young girl from Pakistan, Malala—one person can change the world by giving people hope."

10. If you want to change the world don't ever, ever ring the bell. "In SEAL training there is a bell. A brass bell that hangs in the centre of the compound for all the students to see. All you have to do to quit—is ring the bell. Ring the bell and you no longer have to wake up at 5 o'clock. Ring the bell and you no longer have to do the freezing cold swims. Ring the bell and you no longer have to do the runs, the obstacle course, the PT—and you no longer have to endure the hardships of training. Just ring the bell. If you want to change the world don't ever, ever ring the bell."

"Start each day with a task completed. Find someone to help you through life. Respect everyone. Know that life is not fair and that you will fail often. But if you take some risks, step up when the times are toughest, face down the bullies, lift up the downtrodden and never, ever give up — if you do these things, then the next generation and the generations that follow will live in a world far better than the one we have today."

"It matters not your gender, your ethnic or religious background, your orientation, or your social status. Our struggles in this world are similar and the lessons to overcome those struggles and to move forward—changing ourselves and the world around us—will apply equally to all."

"Changing the world can happen anywhere and anyone can do it."

*(URL for those with a hard copy of Slipstream:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxBQLFLei70>
.....Ed)*

Wall of Service

Please take note the address for applications
for wall of service is now :

PO BOX 4022,
EAST NOWRA POST OFFICE
NSW 2540



AVTUR Incidents - Some More Memories From The Past!

By Brian Dutch

Aviation Turbine fuel caused me some excitement on four occasions during my flying career which I am happy to share.

ONE

The first was during the Applied Flying Training course at the RAAF Base Pearce during a Long Range Navigation exercise. My Instructor was keen for me to try a technique known as the "Cruise Climb" in order to save on fuel consumption. This involves flying at high level at a fixed cruising speed and when the aircraft becomes lighter as the fuel is burned, it is possible to allow the aircraft to gain height gradually, thus reducing fuel consumption.

What I did not know was that as we were to be accompanied by our Instructors for the trip they had their own competition, to see who could use the least fuel. We, the Instructor and I, worked out that our best height at cruising level was 33,000 feet having considered wind speed and direction for our height.



RAAF Vampire A79-617 on a training flight out of RAAF Pearce



Brian Dutch

During that training exercise I completed the climb and levelled at 33,000 feet. I then commenced my "Cruise Climb" making sure that I carefully maintained my cruising speed. Sure enough the aircraft gradually climbed as the fuel was consumed! We cruise climbed for some time and as we got to 44,500 feet the engine suddenly flamed out! The cockpit temperature control stopped and the whole area iced up with the frozen condensation. The Instructor took control. I turned on the emergency oxygen and I was relegated to trying to keep the Air Speed Indicator, compass and altimeter gauges free of ice. Between the two of us we only had a match-



Vampires on the training line at RAAF Pearce being refuelled before the next scheduled departure phase of training

box to scrape the ice as we glided towards Pearce. We were about 80 nautical miles from the airfield and fortunately the Vampire MK 35 had a good gliding range so we considered that we would make it safely to base albeit for an "engine off" landing.

During the glide I tried several times to relight the engine without success. We arrived overhead at 21,000 feet or so where we were about 1,000ft above thick cloud which prevented us from seeing the airfield. We had no option but to rely on the Air Traffic Controller to keep guiding us back over the airfield each time he detected us on his very basic direction finding equipment.

At about 3,500 feet we broke out of cloud over the airfield and I made one more attempt to re-light the engine which succeeded, so we were able to land safely.

We were advised later that when we were at 44,500 feet the barometric pressure fuel control unit for the engine had frozen at an outside temperature of minus 45 degrees! This was the freezing temperature for our AVTUR!

When we got down to 3,500 feet, with the increased outside air temperature the fuel control unit had thawed and a considerable amount of fuel was pooled in the system from previous re-light attempts. When the engine did light up there was a sheet of flame about 100ft long behind us - Very spectacular!

Due to the many re-light attempts we had wasted all the fuel which we had hoped to save and the technique was immediately banned by the RAAF.

TWO

The next incident was when I was at 724 Squadron where the RAN had Vampire Mk 35 aircraft so that new graduates could do continuation flying while waiting for an Operational Flying Course in the Sea Venom FAW 53, All Weather Fighter.

The Vampire aircraft was started by plugging in an external battery supply cart to provide power to rotate the engine to 3,000 revolutions (I think) and when the fuel ignited the aircraft generator took over.

On one occasion I manned aircraft and had three missed starts. Prior to the next start the aircraft was tilted up to drain off excess fuel. Nevertheless, on the next attempt the aircraft started and due to pooled fuel still in the tail pipe I noticed the ground crew getting excited. The pooled fuel had ignited and a ball of flaming broomstick shot out of the tailpipe.



RAN Sea Venom in the process of taking off



RAN Vampire 805 taxiing to dispersal with canopy open

On the pre-flight inspection the ground crew used a broomstick to check the free rotation of the compressor and it had been left in the tailpipe causing the start-up problems. Of course, I had also missed finding the broomstick in my pre-flight inspection!

THREE

Some years later I manned a Sea Venom for a flight and many will recall the Venom was started by an internal cartridge system. My aircraft wings were folded and the wing tip tanks were full of fuel. When I fired the starter cartridge I thought that it was more noisy than usual but the engine started normally so I proceeded with my checks.

When I next looked out at the ground crew one was waving madly and giving me an engine "cut" sign. His eyes were open widely and he pointed to another ground crew who was standing on the wing with his finger in a hole in the tip tank and burning fuel was running down his shirt sleeve and on to the wing. Needless to say that I shut down rather rapidly and exited the aircraft. Fortunately the flames were quickly extinguished.

It was found that there had been a faulty supply of cartridges blowing the safety disk of the starter and one of the maintainers had decided that the best fix was to put in TWO safety disks. This caused the starter to blow out the disks and the result was that a hot disk was blown through the tip tank!

FOUR

The observant among you have noted that I did say there were four incidents. The next issue will tell the story of the fourth incident.

*Cheers to all,
"Lambda"*

All The News From SA Jun-Sep 2020

By Roger Harrison
SA 'Whipping Boy'



A big HELLO from the South Australian members to one and all who so far, have hung onto their sanity as we progress through this dreadful virus that spares no-one. Have not heard of any current member who has been hit by the COVID-19 virus and personally, that's how I like it.

As you can well imagine, there is not much to write home about as our calendar year for meetings and functions has been turned on its head. Just a reminder that the 16 September meeting could be cancelled leaving only our 18 November meeting a possibility. If the December Christmas lunch is cancelled, then there will be "Trouble at Mill". Also, we have a couple of new members to meet and greet and this has turned into a will we, won't we exercise one associates with a military committee hedging bets on this way or that way to attack the enemy.

Our new members are Gerry Dowling and Grant Lewis who were both Commissioned Officers within the RAN. You may know of them. Both have shown a strong interest to attend meetings and these are the types we would strongly welcome into the FAAA (SA) family. How are the rest of the States and Territories coping with new members? I am aware that QLD is battling to form a committee and their travel distance from the city meeting point as well as social distancing, have complicated the issue. Hello to member Phil Blakemore from the Toowoomba district and Adrian Whiteman somewhere in sunny Qld. Spoke with Phil yesterday (10/8) and caught up with all the current news. Reminded me that Nowra was embattled with flood waters again. May wash away. Leon Brown of Cambewarra is high and dry and intends to stay that way.

On a sadder note, Ian Laidler, Jan Akeroyd, Gordon Gray and the Whipping Boy, attended the funeral service for member Ken Adams of Kapunda, north of Adelaide in the Barossa District. The countryside was as green as ever as Ian and I travelled the 1.5-hour drive to get there on time. More on Ken inside this *Slipstream* magazine. I read the Ode and Jan had organised a bugler to play the Last-Post after the Ode. Do not recall a better,

smoother, bugle call played by this chap who's name I have forgotten. Jan, please keep this Lad on our records for future use. Ken Adams chose the back of his favourite flatbed ute to drive from the Funeral Service. Typical of Ken and Anne. A delightful man to have known.

Visited Graham 'Beatles' Bailey (Gannet, C47 and Tracker pilot) in Flinders Hospital last week and what a performance just to get in the door. Sanitize, register name and details, given a visitor sticker and off I went to the 5th floor where I had to follow the same performance whilst fitting into one of those yellow throw away coveralls with blue gloves. Must have been a sight for Graham as he awoke with a start one associates with being goosed by a hairy Stoker in the mess showers. Chatted for some time mainly to get the value out of the coverall and gloves as Beatles wasn't sure why he was there at all and so the conversation was started, and he appeared vague. I left Graham and chatted to the nurse on guard duty outside his door who said he will transfer into an old farts home because his wife Siriporn can no longer care for him. Who was it that said, "one should grow old gracefully"? Rubbish!

Beatles and I shared the Trackers on 851 and 816 Sqns in the late 60's and early 70's – wonderful aircraft and not British!

Several *Slipstream* issues back I wrote to the Editor, Paul Shiels, on the lack of VC's for Navy heroes to date. Interesting to see that the Prime Minister has made a move to recommend World War 2 hero Edward "Teddy" Sheean be reconsidered for the posthumous award of the Australia VC. Thinking that out of Australia's 100 VC recipients, not one was from the Navy. What are the chances? More on this to follow I am sure.

Finally, I am sending a big "Stay Safe" to all members who have managed to keep out of trouble and obeyed all the Government directions on staying COVID-19 safe. At this point in time it looks like Victoria has taken a bullet for the rest of us for whatever reason. Please take the time to phone a mate and ask him RUOK?

Hi to John Siebert, Michael Cain, Michael Stubbington, Ian Laidler, Henry Young, Skinhead Kelson, Marcus Peake, Paul Shiels, Bob Scobie and Leon Brown. Been a long time between drinks Boys!

(Since your submission to *Slipstream*, Roger; Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean has been officially awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia—the first RAN VC. Ed)



Painting by D.H. Harrison of 724 Sqn Sea Venom 879 overhead HMAS Melbourne. Image supplied by John Hamilton

Ejection Seat Malfunctions in 'Delmar' Sea Venom

By John Hamilton

On 28 July 1969, Sea Venom, side number 865 was the designated Delmar target towing aircraft operating with VC724 and successfully carried out numerous sorties for Fleet support. Most Sea Venom pilots had flown the aircraft in this role during the late '60s.

What started out as a Delmar famil for myself and PO Aircrewman Cook almost ended up as a disaster. Having not many hours on the Venom, it was my turn to learn how to operate 865 as the Delmar fitted Fleet Support system. PO Cook had previous experience with operating the system so it was his duty to teach me how to do it; I fly, he works the Delmar – easy.

After a comprehensive briefing and pre-flight, a start-up, clearance and runway line up was effected as normal. The take off into a rather stiff breeze on Runway 26 was noticeably slower in acceleration due, no doubt, to the additional weight of the Delmar rig and the opposite wing drop tank. This was not unexpected and the aircraft climbed away nicely, experiencing the normal turbulence off this runway. Once safely air-



borne the undercarriage was retracted with flap retraction to follow. In addition to the normal noises heard during gear retraction and housing, there was a very audible, mechanical clunk/click from the right hand side of the cockpit. I looked across to PO Cook for confirmation and saw that his eyes were the size of dinner plates – a real 'aw- s..t' moment.

The Sea Venom's observer's seat in preparing itself for ejection, was designed to move slightly to a more upright position ready to depart the aircraft; the 'click/clunk' was the action of this movement. My recollection is that the seat was OK in the zero altitude and 90knots envelope so no problem at that stage. After discussion with the Squadron we came to the opinion that the seat had not housed completely on re-installation and would not proceed any further with the ejection sequence unless, hopefully, a handle was pulled. Satisfied that PO Cook would not be fired into the canopy and bleed on me, we decided to land immediately, but leave the safety pins out just in case an ejection became necessary for some other reason. A smooth approach and gentle landing was completed to the delight of PO Cook. Under the direction of the armourers we exited the aircraft with no further excitement. PO Cook walked away shaken (not stirred) but to his credit he returned the next day to successfully complete the mission.



ADF Gap Year— The Way To Go For Belinda!!

By Ms Dallas McMaugh

Photo: CPOIS Cameron Martin

The Australian Defence Force Gap Year presents young Australians with the opportunity to experience military training, service and lifestyle through a year-long program which is ideal option for anyone interested in exploring a career in Defence and the options available.

On finishing high school, Able Seaman Belinda Cole says she was torn between a career in medicine or aviation.

“I found myself studying laboratory medicine at university, which I enjoyed, however, I took the year off to explore the Navy through the gap year program.

“I’d always been interested in joining the Defence Force and saw the gap year as an opportunity to gain insight to the different job roles before I committed to a particular role.

“Growing up in Broome, I didn’t get much opportunity to see the south coast of Australia and saw the gap year as a chance to travel and meet new people,” she said.

Talking about her gap year, she said it featured many highlights.

“I spent three weeks on board HMAS *Canberra*, we also went to Tasmania, and the base establishment tour took me to Navy bases all around Australia.

“It was through this tour of the establishments that we went to HMAS *Albatross*, which is where I first heard about the role of Aircrewman.

“And that was it, I knew that was what I wanted to do.

“So I committed to joining the Navy beyond the Gap Year program and commenced Aircrewman training at 723 Squadron in October 2019,” she said.

723 Squadron provides foundation skills to future Pilots, Aviation Warfare Officers (AvWO) and Aircrewman to perform their roles in the highly sophisticated combat helicopters operated by the Royal Australian Navy and Australian Army.

This training provided everything Able Seaman Cole was looking for.

“I’ve always wanted a career that’s a little different, that’s challenging but also fulfilling.

Working in a close knit team is very appealing to me, as well as constantly learning new things. I am very appreciative of this opportunity,” she said.

Able Seaman Cole is Navy’s first Gap Year par-

ticipant and direct entry aircrewman to graduate from 723 Squadron. Until now, the aircrewman branch was only open to in-service transfers from other categories.

Not only did she recently graduate as a qualified aircrewman, she also received the Rotary Course Aircrewman Dux Award.

Presented by Boeing Defence Australia, the award acknowledges the student who achieves the highest grading over both theory and practical exercises and demonstrated a high standard in Airmanship.

The skillsets covered in the course include basic operations, external loads, winching, unaided and aided night operations, aircrew operations, search and rescue and embarked operations.

Command Warrant Officer Gary Fuss, Officer in Charge of coordinating the Gap Year Program at HMAS Albatross, said Able Seaman Cole's success was not a surprise.

"From day one, Able Seaman Cole was committed and confident and brimming with potential. You could see her determination, she realised "This is what I want and she went for it."

Command Warrant Officer Fuss may not have



An Airbus Helicopter EC135T2+ over Jervis Bay, NSW

been surprised, but Able Seaman Cole certainly was.

"When my name was called I was stunned, but I put in a lot of hard work throughout the course and I'm happy it paid off."

"For anyone considering the Gap Year, I would say go for it.

"The people you meet and the experiences and opportunities you get aren't things you can get anywhere else," she said.

As to her next career goal, Able Seaman Cole said "I'm honestly not too sure, I'll just take it as it comes."

An approach which has definitely worked for her so far.





**Aircrewman
Awarded 'Wings'**

Leading Seaman Aircrewman Braedon McGuinness proudly wears his wings following his graduation from the Aircrewman course at HMAS Albatross

***By Ms Dallas McMaugh,
Photo: CPOIS Cameron Martin***

Leading Seaman Braedon McGuinness stood proudly in a small ceremony at 723 Squadron this month, marking the graduation of Navy's latest cohort of Pilots and Aircrewmen.

Despite growing up in the Shoalhaven in a Navy family, naval aviation wasn't Braedon's first career choice.

"It did seem really fascinating.

"My dad, Lieutenant Commander Mark McGuinness, is an Aeronautical Engineer and he definitely inspired me growing up by virtue of seeing and hearing about all his experiences overseas, close to home and working to help the local community.

"But, I still felt compelled to explore other options," the Nowra-born sailor said.

"I tried so many different things just to be sure I wouldn't miss out on another career that I might fall in love with, which included going to university to study business, working as an accountant, working on a cattle station, working in a car dealership and various retail jobs.

"But it became clear again and again that Navy was the perfect fit for me," he said.

Braedon enlisted in 2015 as an Avionics Technician specialising in explosive ordnance maintenance.

"I completed my trade qualification on the Seahawk before deciding I wanted a bigger challenge.

"The Aircrewman branch seemed to be the perfect fit; it looked like a high-tempo, physically demanding and mentally rewarding job that would provide the challenge I was seeking.

"I sat the week-long selection board in June last year and started training as an Aircrewman in October," he said.

"As for the course: I honestly enjoyed every part of it, it's the perfect mix of being seriously challenging, interesting as well as great fun.

"Flying every day for work means it hardly feels like work at all; and to top it all off the Shoalhaven is such a beautiful region to train, work and fly in, and it looks even better from the air!

"I've always been passionate about my work in the Navy and the job satisfaction I've found in my new role has only strengthened this even more.

"Honestly, I could talk all day about it. It's seriously been the best fun I could imagine having at work.

"As for the future, as soon as I can I'd like to return to the Romeo Seahawk platform and deploy to sea so that I can contribute to Navy's operations in a frontline aviation role; which I see as the pinnacle of achievement for an Aircrewman and the position in which our skills can be utilised best," he said.

Amazing Feat — Stoker Reaches MAJGEN

*Published Previously in
Navy News
Slipstream
Naval Officer's Club Newsletter
(Edited Version)*

'Stoker' Mohr as he was known amongst his friends, ex-shipmates and the legal fraternity became a Supreme Court Judge of SA and the first Judge Advocate General of the ADF in the rank of Major-General.

He enlisted in the RAN in 1942 aged 17. After training as a stoker, he was posted to HMAS *Arunta* where he served until 1947, seeing considerable action in the Pacific, including the 'Battle of Leyte Gulf' and afterwards in Japan with the Occupation Forces.

Arunta must have had knowledgeable engineering spaces. Two of his fellow stokers, Ray Northrop and Richard McGarvie became judges in the Federal Court and Victorian Supreme Courts respectively (McGarvie also became Governor of Victoria) while a third stoker, Peter Mann, became Bishop of Dunedin.

Following discharge, he studied law at the University of Adelaide. Graduating in 1952, he joined two law firms before striking out solo as a Barrister. He tried to join the RANR Legal Team, but for some reason, the Navy didn't accept him, so he enlisted in the Army Reserve (then Citizen Military Forces – CMF) Legal Branch in 1959. Here he cut out a distinguished career in military legal matters.

In 1970, he was appointed as a Judge to the District Court in Adelaide and then to the SA Supreme Court in 1978. He retired in 1995.

In 1982 he was promoted to MAJGEN and appointed as the Army's Judge Advocate General (JAG). Two years later he became the ADF's first JAG.

In 2002 he came out of retirement when with former RADM Phillip Kennedy he conducted a Federal Government review into service entitlements for service personnel who served in South East Asia between 1955 and 1975.

Despite his spectacular career in law, 'Stoker' considered his experience in *Arunta* as his proud-

est achievement. He was very proud he was a stoker and that of his nickname.

He often would tell the story of the trip around Sydney Harbour in an Attack Class Patrol Boat in the 1970s as a Colonel. On the bridge as was the case with Attack Class PBs, a stoker manned the throttles. This day the Leading Stoker on the throttles spotted 'Stoker's' WWII medal ribbons and said: "You must have been a CO of a battalion during the war, Sir?"

'Stoker' replied: "No I was in the Navy"

The Leading Stoker said: "Well you must have been at least the captain of a destroyer" to which 'Stoker' told him: "No, I was just a stoker like you" to which the Leading Stoker replied: "Well, there is hope for me yet".

Each Anzac Day 'Stoker' would march with the *Arunta Association*. However, one year he turned up in his MAJGEN uniform. The howls could be heard throughout the Navy's WWII contingent: "You might be a MAJGEN Bob, but we only knew you as a stoker!"

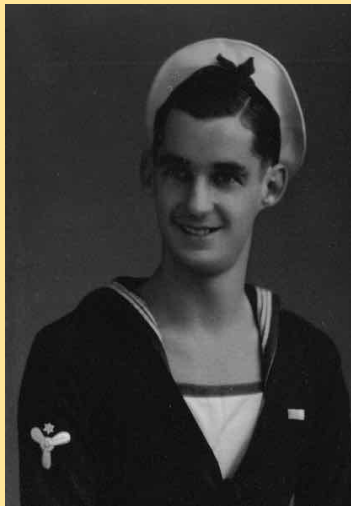
When 'Stoker' marched with the *Arunta Association* it annoyed some members because he insisted marching in the front rank on the extreme left. Many members tried but, didn't succeed in pushing him aside!

'Stoker' laughed all of this off, but he would regularly express that ex-service personnel only remember you at the rank you were at the time you were in the service with them.

Major-General Robert 'Stoker' Mohr RFD ED died several years ago.

(I decided to post this article again in Slipstream as I knew 'Stoker' from his attendance at the monthly lunches at Keswick Officers Mess, Adelaide where some ex-service officers would meet. Along with a friend, a former OC RAAF Edinburgh (ACDRE Lyall Klaffer) I would regularly catch up with 'Stoker' at these lunches. Often he would relate these stories and other humorous ones re the legal profession which would time and again have us all in fits of laughter. He hadn't lost his touch with his 'lower deck' mates with whom he was very proud to have served.

Confirmation of Anzac Day events was provided by my father-in-law now aged 97, an Ordnance Artificer in Arunta with 'Stoker' from 1943-47. He is just one of only two Arunta (I)'s crew still alive in SA.Ed)



**'Stoker' (later MAJGEN)
Bob Mohr**

Appealing to the Veterans Review Board and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

What is the VRB?

The VRB is part of the veterans and military rehabilitation and compensation determining systems. It is a tribunal created by Parliament to review decisions about disability pensions, war widow(er)'s pensions, and attendant allowance under the [Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 \(VEA\)](#); and rehabilitation, compensation and other benefits under the [Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 \(MRCA\)](#).

The VRB reviews decisions made by officers of DVA who have been given power under the VEA to decide claims for pensions. It is independent of the Repatriation Commission, the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission and DVA. The VRB is made up of members who decide cases, and staff who assist the members.

Who are the Members?

There are four types of members:

Principal Member

Senior Members

Services Members

Members:

The Principal Member is responsible for the overall operations of the VRB. Senior Members are

usually lawyers and they preside at hearings. Services Members are selected from nominations submitted to the Minister by Ex-Service Organisations. The other Members have a wide variety of qualifications. All members are appointed by the Governor-General. To see who the VRB members are, visit the [Organisational Structure, Membership and Senior Staff page of the VRB website](#).

What are Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) procedures?

ADR is a term which describes "alternative" process which can help parties to finalise a case. There is no need for a VRB hearing, so related expenses and time of a hearing can be avoided. Involvement in an ADR process does not mean that the parties forgo their right to a hearing if the application is not finalised.

The VRB's General Practice Direction sets out the procedure for ADR program cases and non-ADR program cases. In ADR program cases the first step is one mandatory outreach. If an application is not finalised at the first outreach, the next possible ADR step and the requirements for a hearing will be discussed. In non-ADR program cases limited ADR in the form of case appraisals and neutral evaluation is available to all applicants. If an application is not finalised by an ADR process it will be listed for hearing.

The General Practice Direction is available from the Publications page of the VRB website.

How will the Members deal with my case?

Cases are decided by a panel of three members — a Senior Member, a Services Member and one other Member. However, if a member is ill or unavailable, a case may be decided by two Members.

Whenever it decides a case, the VRB must apply the law as set out in the VEA or the MRCA, and other related legislation.

May I talk to the Members about my case?

You may talk to the VRB members about your case at your hearing, which is held in private. The VRB encourages you to take part in your hearing. You can do this by coming along to the hearing, or

Contributors to 'Slipstream'

Those who contribute and have their piece published in 'Slipstream' will be provided with a 'free' copy of the online 'Slipstream' before the Hard Copy is printed or the online version is distributed.

The online version offers extras with 'links' to videos and URLs.

'Slipstream' is looking for articles from all Fleet Air Arm Branches. While we all enjoy reading about different aircraft and the exploits of aircrew, ground crews too play an important role in the FAA. So, why not give it a go and write an article about something you experienced in your time in the FAA?

by asking the VRB members to ring you during your hearing, if you cannot attend.

It would be helpful if you could send the VRB any papers that you think support your case as early as possible before the hearing.

Do I have to attend my hearing?

You do not have to attend your hearing but the VRB members usually find it helpful to talk to you, preferably in person or otherwise by phone. The VRB will decide your case in your absence if you do not wish to take part in the hearing, but they may still ring to ask you some questions to help them make their decision. They will only ring you if you agree to this arrangement.

Where are the VRB hearings?

The VRB holds hearings in each State capital (except Darwin) and in Canberra. Hearings are also sometimes held in various regional centres.

What happens at a hearing?

Members will do their best to make you feel at ease. They will need to ask you some questions to clarify the evidence in your case and to help them decide whether your claim should be granted or refused. Hearings are recorded, and you may obtain a copy of that recording.

The VRB will not be able to tell you their deci-

sion at the hearing, unless the VRB decides to give oral reasons for its decision.

What happens after a hearing?

The VRB will send the decision and reasons to you as soon as possible after the hearing, usually within a few weeks. If you were represented at your hearing, a copy of the VRB's decision and reasons will be sent to your representative.

The VRB cannot discuss the reasons for the decision in your case.

What are the VRB's obligations under the Privacy Act 1988?

The VRB has adopted DVA's Privacy Policy, which explains how DVA (and the VRB) will manage and protect your personal information. This Privacy Policy contains information about how you can access the information the VRB holds about you, how you can ask the VRB to correct your information and how you can make a complaint if you have concerns about how the VRB has managed your information. For more information, or to access our Privacy Policy visit the privacy page of the VRB website or contact the VRB using the details listed under More Information

Continued Next Page for AAT

Victorian Division Report Ending 30 June 2020

By Mal Smith

Greetings to all members from the Victoria division.

I generally start my report hoping that all members are safe and well. In the current climate that has never been more relevant. As you are all no doubt aware, we are currently going through stage four restrictions with a curfew from 2000 until 0500 each night. To the best of my knowledge all of our members are well. My thanks to those from other states who have wished us well during this time.

As you can imagine, very little has happened since our last report. All of our functions / meetings have been cancelled and our meeting venue, the Mission to Seafarers is closed. When we eventually are able to return to the MtS members will notice some changes. The 110 year old



building has been undergoing a major renovation. A lot of the work is unseen (re-stumping, re-wiring etc.) but was badly needed to bring the building up to present day standards. More is still to be done as funds become available.

Sad news since the last report was the passing of association Life Member, long time committeeman and one of the FAA originals, Alan (Happy) Clark. Our thoughts are with Alan's family as they go through this difficult time. Pleasing to report that we have had three new members sign up in recent weeks. They are Ian Hamilton, Darrell Secker and Mark Carr. We welcome them and look forward to meeting them in the near future.

Quite a few members have enquired about the health of long time member Ron Andrews. Ron has been struggling for several years with health problems but I am delighted to advise that he seems to be over the worst and is on the mend. I spoke to him recently and hopefully it will not be long before we see him in Melbourne again.

What is the AAT?

The AAT is an independent review body with power to review all decisions of the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) as well as decisions made by delegates of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC) under DRCA and MRCA.

The AAT can also review certain Repatriation Commission decisions relating to service pensions specific to veterans' allowances.

What is the scope of AAT review?

The AAT conducts a 'de novo' review on the merits of the case. This involves a reconsideration of all evidence and all issues of fact and law. The AAT is not limited by reasons given in the decision under review. Further investigations may be undertaken (if appropriate) and additional evidence may be obtained and considered.

Which decisions can the AAT review?

Under the [VEA](#), the AAT can review any decisions of the VRB, and certain decisions of the Repatriation Commission that relate to service pension and specified allowances, provided the decision has been first reviewed by the Commission.

Under the [DRCA](#), the AAT can review a decision of the MRCC, provided a request for reconsideration of that decision has been made and the MRCC has advised in writing of the outcome of the reconsideration.

Under the [MRCA](#), the AAT can review any decision of the VRB and it can also review an initial reconsideration decision by the MRCC.

How do I apply to the AAT?

You can write a letter to the AAT or fill out a form available at AAT offices. You must include:

- the name of the decision maker;
- whether the decision was made by the Repatriation Commission, the MRCC or the VRB;
- the date of the decision;
- brief reasons why you think the decision is wrong; and
- a copy of the decision.

For more information about how to apply, please refer to the AAT website at www.aat.gov.au/applying-for-a-review/how-to-apply

What are the time limits?

For VEA claims you must apply within three months of receipt of the decision you are appealing against. This will preserve the benefit of maximum possible payment. At the discretion of the AAT, appeals may be accepted up to 12 months after receipt

of the decision. If accepted, backdating of benefits will be affected.

For DRCA claims, you must apply within 60 days of receiving written advice from DVA of the outcome of your request for reconsideration.

For MRCA claims, an application to the AAT for review of a VRB decision must be lodged in writing with the AAT within three months of the day you receive the VRB's decision. An application to the AAT for a review of a MRCC reconsideration must be lodged in writing with the AAT no more than 60 days after the date you receive the reconsideration decision.

If you apply for review outside the timeframes listed above you need to ask for an extension of time and explain the delay. For VEA, DRCA and MRCA cases any applications outside stipulated time frames will involve extension of time requests and the AAT will normally send the Respondent a notice asking if there is any opposition.

As under the VEA, appeals from VRB decisions under the MRCA may be accepted up to 12 months after the receipt of the decision.

For more information about the time limits, please refer to the AAT website at <https://www.aat.gov.au/apply-for-a-review/veterans-entitlements-and-military-compensation/time-limits>.

What fees must I pay?

No fees apply to requests for review by the AAT of decisions under the VEA, DRCA and MRCA.

Am I entitled to legal aid for my application to the AAT?

Legal aid may be available at the AAT for a review of a decision by the VRB.

Legal aid commissions are independent bodies established under state and territory legislation. Commissions determine eligibility for their legal services and the extent of assistance they will provide in individual cases.

Legal aid applications by DVA clients are exempt from means testing but are subject to a merits test.

In addition to representation in the AAT, legal aid commissions may also provide advice and/or legal task assistance for people preparing an application to the VRB, including any alternative dispute resolution processes. However, a lawyer is not able to appear before a VRB hearing.

More information about legal aid commissions and the types of services they provide can be found on each commission's website (centrally located at www.nationallegalaid.org).

Financial assistance for people appearing before the AAT may be provided by the Attorney-General's Department at www.ag.gov.au

Further information about this, including eligibility criteria, can be found in the Legal Financial Assistance Information Sheet.

An Aircraft-Carrier on loan to the RAN!



HMAS Vengeance arriving off Sydney on 11 March 1953

HMAS *Vengeance* (I) was one of a group of sixteen Light Fleet Carriers laid down in British Shipyards during 1942 and 1943. Known as the Colossus and Majestic classes, they were originally named *Colossus, Glory, Ocean, Leviathan, Hercules, Majestic, Perseus, Pioneer, Terrible, Triumph, Vengeance, Venerable, Magnificent, Theseus, Warrior and Powerful*.

She was commissioned by the Royal Navy as HMS *Vengeance* on 15 January 1945. She completed her workup in the Mediterranean in March 1945 before joining the East Indies Fleet and then the British Pacific Fleet. She sailed for Sydney in company with HMS *Venerable* and HMS *Colossus*, arriving in July 1945.

Vengeance (I) proceeded to Hong Kong in August 1945, remaining in the Hong Kong area until December 1945 when she returned to Australia for a refit. The refit was completed in March 1946, after which *Vengeance* (I) returned to Hong Kong, then Japan and later Trincomalee in Ceylon. She returned to the United Kingdom in August 1946.

Vengeance (I) continued to serve with the Home Fleet, including service in the Mediterranean and off Africa, until the early 1950s. She also spent a period conducting endurance trials in the Arctic in February and March 1949. In September 1952 she commenced a refit in preparation for her Australian service.

She was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy as HMAS *Vengeance* (I), on loan from the Royal Navy, at Devonport, England, on 13 November 1952, under the temporary command of Commander Clive M Hudson, RAN with a steaming party of 550 officers and men who had arrived in England from Australia in the SS *Asturias*. Captain Henry M Burrell RAN assumed command on 2 December 1952.

Sailing from England in January 1953, *Vengeance* (I) arrived in Sydney on 11 March 1953, having proceeded via Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said, the Suez Canal, Colombo, Fremantle and Melbourne.

Following a three month refit in Sydney, *Vengeance* (I) commenced seagoing service with the Australian fleet in June 1953, working up in preparation

Continued Page 45



HMAS Vengeance with Air Group of Sea Furies and Firefly's Embarked and crew forming ship's name—22 June 1953

Story and Pics Courtesy RAN website [here](#)

Yangste Incident—The Unexpected Hero

By Paul Shiels

First Published in

Naval Officers Club Newsletter 113, June 2018

Posted to the Far East to a staff job in Nanking as Assistant Naval Attaché, Lieutenant-Commander John Kerans was given this ‘out-of-the-way’ posting to save further embarrassment to Admirals and the Admiralty. But, to their humiliation Kerans was soon to become a national hero!

John Kerans joined the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth at 13 in 1929. Early in his career as a Lieutenant whilst Officer-of-the-Watch in HMS *Naiad*, Kerans incurred the displeasure of an Admiral and was reprimanded over an incident that by the end of the war showed he’d been unfairly treated.

The *Naiad* was a Dido-class light cruiser and the flagship of a flotilla of RN ships. Kerans had altered course towards smoke on the horizon which he believed to be enemy warships and brought the crew to ‘action stations’. When no smoke was seen by the Admiral, Kerans was admonished for his actions.

Boom at Scapa Flow

It was only after the war that Kerans actions were vindicated when German records showed the detection had indeed been the German battleships *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*. On sighting the Royal Navy flotilla on radar, they had turned away. It was no wonder Kerans was unhappy when this evidence was produced.

Later, Kerans was given his first command HMS *Blackmore* a Type II Hunt Class destroyer. But, twice he got himself into trouble. Once caught in a boom at Scapa Flow and another time off the south east corner of England where a cable was caught in his propeller and he needed assistance to free it.

At the time, Kerans was known to be a heavy drinker. It was not uncommon for him returning from ashore to need assistance to his cabin; an uncomfortable moment for all concerned let alone instilling confidence for the ship’s company.

On 12 October 1945 HMS *Blackmore* ran aground. A Board of Inquiry convened a week later and Kerans incurred the Admiralty’s displeasure.

In 1947 he was given command of a Bay-class anti-aircraft frigate, HMS *Widemouth Bay*. One night, while berthed in Malta, some of the crew urinated over the ship’s side, then jumped naked into the water! All in full view of and in front of the



**Lieutenant-Commander (later Commander)
John Kerans DSO RN**

Admiral’s residence which overlooked the ship where a function was being held.

A Board of Inquiry was considered but, was not pursued. However, on 8 October 1947, Kerans was court-martialled for accepting a gift of six bottles of wine from the wardroom and for allowing his officers an extra day’s leave after the crew had already embarked. By this stage Kerans was making a name for himself—and not in a good way!

So, all the Admiralty wanted to do was get him as far away as possible. The Far East seemed to be the place and China even better!

It was while serving at the Embassy in Nanking that Kerans ended up taking command of HMS *Amethyst* at the direction of Captain (later Rear-Admiral) V. Donaldson, the Naval Attaché at Nanking. He took over from Lieutenant Weston, the Executive Officer HMS *Amethyst* who had been seriously injured during the initial attack. The appointment in-command was confirmed by the FO2FEF, Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Madden.

Kerans joined and a day after the action,



Painting of HMS Amethyst arriving in Hongkong immediately after the action in the Yangste River

Lieutenant-Commander Skinner, the original Captain died of wounds.

Lieutenant Stewart Hett was the only Executive Branch officer left alive or uninjured leaving only two other officers apart from Kerans and Hett; Electrical Lieutenant-Commander Strain (promoted whilst in the Yangste) and Flight-Lieutenant Fearnley (replacement Doctor flown in by RAF Sunderland).

Many Negotiations

The 'incident' saw HMS *Amethyst* remain in the Yangste River for three months. Then Kerans made a brave escape. The Admiralty assumed he would be unpredictable and careless while performing his duties. But, Kerans was far from that as shown in the many negotiations with the Peoples Liberation Army delegation.

Lieutenant-Commander H. S. Hett MBE RN Rtd (XO of *Amethyst* during Yangste Incident) said: "My opinion of Kerans is that from the time he left the British Embassy in Nanking on 20 April until *Amethyst* arrived in Hong Kong on 4 August, he performed superbly and deserves credit for it. During the time we were trapped in the Yangste, the Officers bar (Wardroom?) was certainly open, but I have no recollection of Kerans or any of us drinking to excess"

A difficult and stubborn character, Kerans was resolute that an escape was possible. The First Sea Lord and British Ambassador were amazed Kerans had taken matters into his own hands. Discussions had been underway with the Foreign Office and the British Ambassador to China, Sir Ralph Stevenson for the safe passage of the ship to open waters. The Foreign Office was hoping that these talks with the Communist would bring the incident to a satisfactory conclusion. However, Kerans and apparently the C-in-C Far East Station were unaware of these negotiations..

So where the Royal Navy felt Kerans was an ineffectual officer, he suddenly became a 'hero' in the eyes of the British and Commonwealth public by escaping from the Yangste. So much so, that after the escape King George VI immediately awarded the DSO to Kerans before any Admiralty recommendation. Because of his 'heroic' status, the Admiralty were also encouraged to promote him to Commander due to public pressure.

As the ship cleared the Yangste and in support of Kerans performance, the King sent a telegram to C-in-C Far East Station: "Please convey to the Commanding Officer and Ship's Company of HMS *Amethyst* my hearty congratulations on re-joining the Fleet. The courage, skill and determination

shown by all onboard have my highest commendation. Splice the Mainbrace”.

Following his promotion to Commander, Kerans attended the RN Staff College (1950); Head of Far East Station Intelligence (1950-52); CO HMS *Rinaldo* (1953-54); British Naval Attaché, Bangkok (1954-55); Senior Officers Technical Course, Portsmouth (1957); before he retired from the RN (1958).

‘Mothball’ Fleet

In 1956, Commander Kerans was Technical Adviser in the making of the film ‘Yangste Incident’ in which HMS *Amethyst* was taken out of the ‘mothball’ fleet and initially used until a massive explosion during filming (simulating shell’s being fired at the ship) holed and nearly sank her. This required all aboard to abandon ship. She listed heavily and couldn’t be righted, so was towed away. HMS *Amethyst*’s engines were inoperable until an ‘ex-Engineer Commander’ Forbes spent three days working to bring them back to life! Her replacement was HMS *Magpie* (previously commanded by HRH Prince Phillip 1950-52). Filming was done in the River Orwell near Ipswich UK starring Richard Todd (an ex-Army Captain Paratrooper) as Lieutenant-Commander Kerans.

As ever, Kerans didn’t inspire neutral feelings: people either loved him or hated him. The action-unit cameraman described him as ‘an arrogant, rude, self-opinionated bore who would listen to no one and to whom film-makers seemed to be a large gang of coolies dragging stones to erect a monument to him’.

Kerans went on to become a Conservative MP for Hartlepool (1959-64) where he utilized his notoriety in the film in his initial election campaign. Following this he became a Civil Servant on the Pensions Appeals Tribunal (1969-80).

Commander John Kerans DSO RN died on 12 September 1985.

Acknowledgements

With permission to quote from ‘Last Action Hero of the British Empire’ by Nigel Farndale

‘Hostage of the Yangste’ by M. H. Murfett

‘<http://www.naval-history.net/WXLG-Amethyst1949.htm>

Correspondence between LCDR H. S. Hett MBE, RN (Rtd) and the writer of this article regarding the then LCDR Kerans relates in particular to his alleged drinking. Hett is the last surviving officer of HMS Amethyst. The book he recommends as giving the most accurate appraisal of the incident is ‘Hostage on the Yangste’ by Malcolm H. Murfett 1991 printed by the United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland USA.

RAN Involvement in Yangste Incident

HMAS *Shoalhaven* had been tasked to replace HMS *Consort* at Nanking, but was exchanged with HMS *Amethyst* at the last moment. This was because the Australian Government were concerned at the escalating tensions between the Nationalists and the Communists.

The ship’s ROP for April 1949 stated: *“The Australian Ambassador had arranged to visit Shanghai and take passage onboard to Nanking but the political and military situation at Nanking prevented the visit. HMAS Shoalhaven was scheduled to proceed to Nanking on 11 April, but owing to the possibility of the Communist crossing the river about that time the programme was changed.”* HMAS *Shoalhaven* moved alongside HMS *Amethyst* on 16 April at Shanghai transferring 137 tons of fuel for her trip up the Yangste River.

On 20 April 1949, *Shoalhaven* was brought to one hours notice for steam in preparation to proceed up river to assist *Amethyst* who had signalled she was under heavy fire and aground in the Yangste River. However, it was decided HMS *London* and HMS *Black Swan* should proceed and for HMAS *Shoalhaven* to remain alongside in Shanghai as W/T guard for ANA Shanghai.

The temporary transfer of Surgeon Lieutenant N. S. Chalk RANR to HMS *Black Swan* saw the RAN actively involved in the action. He then transferred to HMS *London* before it joined the fighting in the Yangste River in during which 17 were killed and 15 wounded on that ship alone. Surgeon Lieutenant Chalk returned to HMAS *Shoalhaven* on 22 April.

Two officers from HMAS *Shoalhaven* were landed to meet ratings from HMS *Amethyst* who had managed to get ashore and were due to arrive in Shanghai by train. The RAN officers assisted in establishing a liaison between local British residents and these ratings in order for them to be temporarily billeted ashore. The funeral of those killed in *London* and *Consort* was held on 23 April at Hung Jao Cemetery, Shanghai. HMAS *Shoalhaven* provided the firing party.



National Serviceman with 'RANR (NS)' Cap Tally and Partner aboard HMAS Vengeance shortly before leaving for Japan to embark RAAF 77 Sqn

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for a deployment to Korea. At the end of July it was announced that HMAS *Sydney (III)* would deploy to Korea in lieu of *Vengeance (I)*.

Vengeance (I) remained in Australian waters until April 1954. Between February and April 1954 she was one of several Australian warships tasked for Royal Escort duty during the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh. In company with HMA Ships *Anzac (II)* and *Bataan (I)*, she escorted the SS *Gothic* with the Royal Party embarked, to the Cocos Islands.

On 5 April 1954, in the vicinity of the Cocos Islands, *Bataan (I)* was damaged in a collision with *Vengeance (I)* during replenishment operations. On completion of Royal Escort duty, *Vengeance (I)* visited Manus Island and Rabaul before returned to Sydney in May 1954.

On 27 October 1954 she sailed from Sydney for Japan to embark aircraft, men and equipment of No.77 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, and return them to Australia. *Vengeance (I)* sailed from Yokosuka on 19 November 1954 and arrived in Sydney on 3 December.

Following a three month refit which was completed in February 1955, *Vengeance (I)* resumed training duties which occupied her until late April

1955. On 16 June 1955 she sailed from Sydney to commence the long passage to England and reversion to the Royal Navy, with almost 1,000 officers and sailors who were to commission HMAS *Melbourne (II)*.

Sailing via Singapore, Colombo, Aden, Suez, Port Said and Malta, *Vengeance (I)* arrived in Devonport on 13 August 1955, at which time administrative control was assumed by the Senior Officer Reserve Fleet, Plymouth. *Vengeance (I)* decommissioned on 25 October 1955 and reverted to the Royal Navy. HMAS *Melbourne (II)* was commissioned three days later on 28 October 1955.

Vengeance (I) remained in the Reserve Fleet until 14 December 1956 when she was sold to Brazil. Following extensive reconstruction and modernisation in Rotterdam, *Vengeance (I)* was renamed and commissioned by the Brazilian Navy as *Minas Gerais* on 6 December 1960. The ship was further modernised in the late 1970s and early 1990s.

Completing over 40 years of service with the Brazilian Navy, *Minas Gerais* was decommissioned in 2001. In August 2003 it was reported that the ship was being offered for sale for \$7 million.

Class	Colossus Class
Type	Aircraft Carrier
Pennant	R71
Builder	Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson, Wallsend-on-Tyne, England
Laid Down	16 November 1942
Launched	23 February 1944
Commissioned	13 November 1952
Decommissioned	25 October 1955
Dimensions & Displacement	
Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13,190 tons (standard) 18,010 tons (full load)
Length	695 feet
Beam	80 feet
Draught	23 feet 6 inches
Performance	
Speed	24 knots
Propulsion	
Machinery	Parsons turbines, twin screws
Horsepower	40,000
Armament	
Guns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 x 40mm anti-aircraft guns 32 x 20mm anti-aircraft guns

Written In The Sky By Mark Carr

Every now and again another book hits the streets authored by a past member of the Fleet Air Arm. They are generally of interest as, in most cases, we can easily relate to the people, places and events described.

Such a tome hit my desk last month. Boldly titled "Written In The Sky", it tells the personal story of Mark Carr – born into modest circumstances, shy and awkward as a kid, aspiring to a career in aviation but not certain how to ever achieve it.

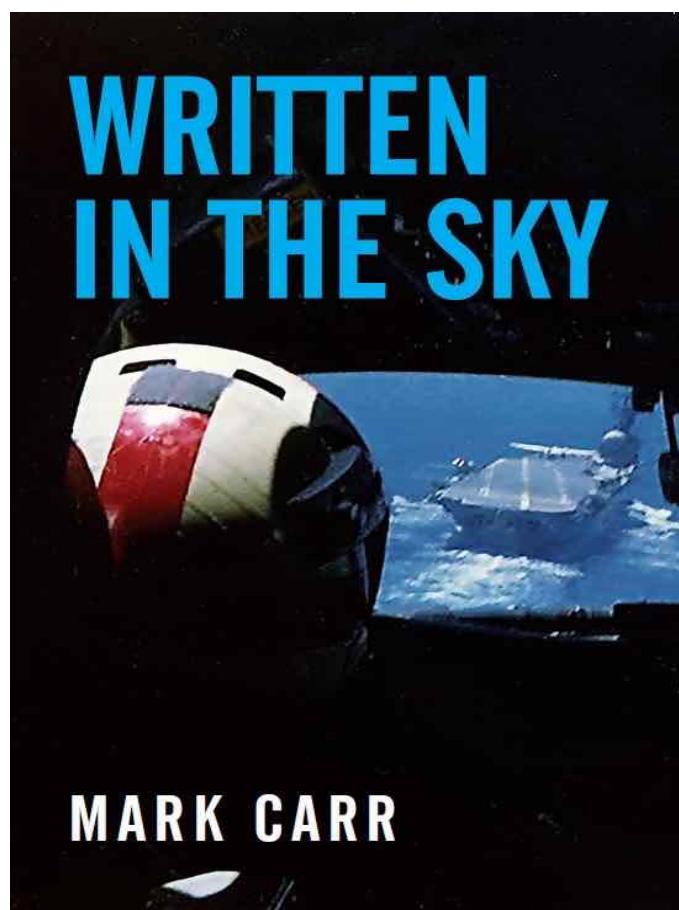
Most of us would know something of the early part of his journey as it would reflect our own. Perhaps, like him, we joined the Air Cadets at school, or we saw a Navy aircraft at a show and were swept up in the dream of joining that elite band of professionals called the Fleet Air Arm. And so it is in the early chapters of this book as he describes the selection process, induction into Cerberus, the grist-mill of flying training and, at last, graduation and subsequent life as a front line pilot in 724 and 851 Squadrons flying Macchis, HS748s and Trackers. Filled with anecdotes and rich in its language and imagery, this part of the book alone is worth the price.

But, like an onion, this book is multi-layered: each one offering a harvest to any reader with an interest in aviation. We hear of the author's experiences training young FAA pilots at RAAF Pearce, of the devastating disappointment in the loss of the Fleet Air Arm's fixed-wing element; of his transition to the Air Force to fly P-3 Orions and then to Ansett to master the "Dutch Wheelbarrow" (Fokker Friendship), and the 737. Through his eyes we learn of the crushing effects of the airline seniority system and the madness of the disastrous pilots' dispute of '89-90 that would change the Australian airline industry forever.

The final third of the book tells us of his life of a Cathay Pacific pilot, then regarded as the jewel in the crown of airlines; of the demanding climb from First Officer to Captain, and of the gruelling life of a long-haul pilot on the big Boeings and Airbuses. It is filled with fascinating detail on how airlines work and, more particularly, the difficulties of taking an aircraft full of passengers or freight half way around the world through storms and around war zones, and of the life of an 'ex-pat' in Hong Kong.

Written in the Sky is one of those rare books that

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has something for everyone, and is the real deal for those who love aviation. It captures the modesty of the author, the twists and turns to get ahead in a cut-throat industry, the struggle to excel, and, after a lifetime of work in the industry, the reward of retirement in Victoria with a couple of historic aircraft at Benalla. It's a compelling read and I have no hesitation in recommending it to anyone.

Marcus Peake

(The author has offered special discount for Slipstream and FlyBy readers. If readers buy from the publisher it will cost near \$50.00, but if they email the author and identify themselves as a FlyBy/Slipstream reader he will sell for \$40.00 postage paid and will personally autograph their copy - a 25% discount with benefits! All readers have to do is email him at his address: mark.carr@bigpond.com. Those that don't have email access can purchase the book if they send a cheque for \$40 made out to the authors company, 'Military Air Training Heritage Pty Ltd'.

*Address: Military Air Training Heritage Pty Ltd
'Cloudbase'
561 Creightons Creek Rd
CREIGHTONS CREEK VIC 3666)*

Submarine Hunter

By

Zbigniew ('Ben') Patynowski

This book partially fills a gap in Australian military aircraft history by recording some aspects of the RAN life of the anti-submarine Fairey 'Gannet'. The author, Ben Patynowski, is a civilian but has spent several years pulling together a monumental record from a host of Navy people who spent a good deal of their lives flying in and working on this rather unusual aeroplane.

The Gannet was an ungainly looking machine but fairly effective at its job. Some pilots had little positive to say about the bird but that was not the general recollection of most aircrew; particularly pilots. Indeed, many of them interviewed spoke warmly of an aircraft which, despite its enormous size and ungainly appearance, was light and easy to fly, had excellent forward vision and, given the technology of the day, was good at its job – hunting submarines.

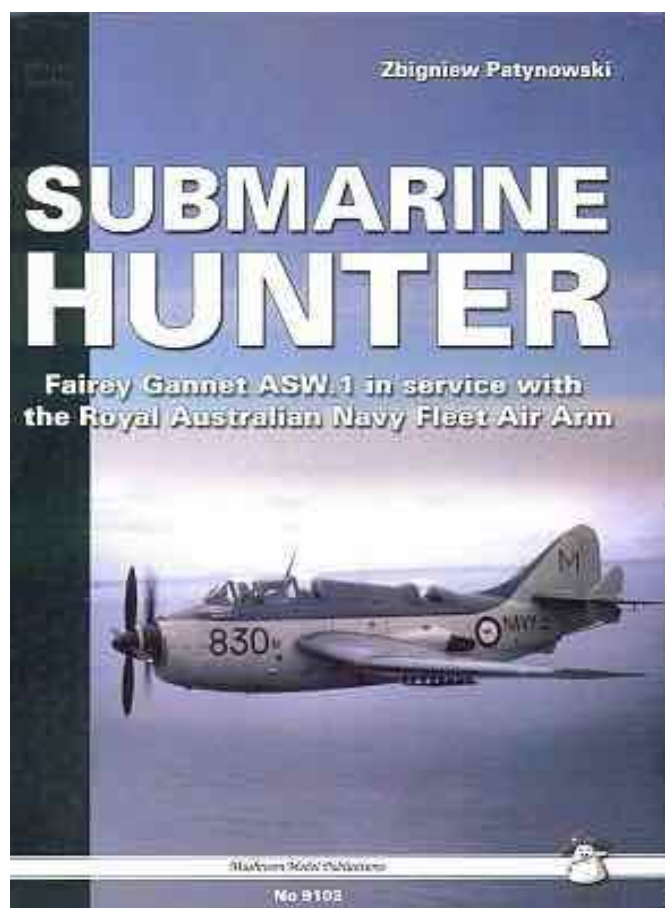
Its two gas turbine engines powered two counter-rotating propellers which could each be operated independently with one shut-down during a long patrol. Mechanically, it had a chequered career but ironically the RAN was just about on top of these problems when the aircraft's life came to a close prior to being replaced by the Grumman 'Tracker'.

By far the book's main content is personal interviews with many officers and sailors, both flyers and maintainers. Many people who operated or worked with the Gannet will find their photo in this book and it makes a good 'coffee table' read.

The book has some shortcomings. Most disappointing is that there are few technical details. Other books of this genre (such as the Aerospace Publications series on most other earlier RAN aircraft) give data tables, history of all serial numbers, fuselage and engine cutaway sections, and so on. A couple of cockpit layout photos or diagrams would have been helpful. The bomb bay view on p.159 is a good example of what can be done in that regard.

Lack of an index is frustrating for researchers and is a common failure in such works. A comprehensive work thus still remains to be written – which is a pity because most other significant earlier RAN aircraft have now been covered. A couple of proof reading errors slipped – through

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(such as the 'carnivorous' bomb bay depicted on p.159 and a couple of pics whose captions seem to have wandered-off somewhere else).

On a positive note this is a work of highly reliable oral history; each entry correlates with several others, thus ensuring multiple cross-referencing which supports authenticity.

The book is big, well bound, easy to read and is a 'must have' for anybody who has ever served in and on RAN Gannets. On a broader scale it is one of the best yet describing everyday (and night) operational life at sea in the confined working environs of an aircraft carrier and the inherent dangers of the business. As oral history it is first class. Those wanting to know more precise technical detail about the aircraft as a machine and as a weapons system rather than mainly about the people associated with it will find a little of that information by hunting through the text but generally will have to wait until such a definitive work is produced.

Ron Robb

Abridged Book Review

August 2020

Merchandise for Sale



PRICES	SHIRT	\$10
	CAP	\$5
	MUG	\$2
	CARRY BAG	\$1

SHIRT (CHILDREN SIZE – large only)	\$5
LANYARD	\$1
ASSOC TIE	\$25
POSTAGE	approx. \$10-\$15

Please contact Jock Caldwell via email flynavy@shoalhaven.net.au or phone/text to 0411 755 397, with your request, and address details. He will then get back to you with pricing and payment details (payment either via EFT or cheque)