



Slipstream

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WWII Witnessed Mobile Naval Air Bases (MONABs) Set-up in Australia, South Pacific & South East Asia



MONAB VII commissioning at RNAS Middle Wallop UK as HMS Nabreekie on 1 June 1945

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I plan to run stories on MONABs located within Australia over several issues with links to relevant parts of the MONAB story. However, I'd recommend members spend time looking through the sites themselves. There's a strong possibility that going through these sites will be an incentive to continue accessing same.Ed

would be the middle of 1944 before sufficient resources became available to begin assembling the first Mobile Naval Air Base.

There were 17 units planned, 15 Mobile Naval Air Bases (MONAB) and 2 Transportable Aircraft Maintenance Yards (TAMY). 9 MONABs and 1 TAMY operated during the last years of World War Two. Without the contribution made by these units and the men who served in them, the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) could not have participated in the final stages of the conflict in the Pacific.

Continued Page 3

The Concept

In October 1942 the Royal Navy began searching for a method for providing airfield facilities more quickly and more economically, both in labour and in materials. It was at this time that the idea of a Mobile Naval Airfields Organisation was born. It

Published by the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia

Editor: Paul Shiels 0481 302 760

Email: slipstream_faanaa@outlook.com

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National President:
RADM Mark Campbell AM CSC RAN (Rtd)

National Secretary:
Terry Hetherington 0411 126 016
PO Box 7115, Naval PO, Nowra NSW 2540
Email: skytrain@optusnet.com.au

Webmaster:
Marcus Peake
Email: webmaster@theFAAAA.com

ACT:
President
John Schonberger 0412 882 810
41 Noarlunga Crescent, Bonython ACT 2905
Email: John.Schonberger@defence.gov.au

Secretary
George Sydney 0435 838 296
12 Feakes Place, Campbell, ACT 2612
Email: sydneys5@optus.com.au

NEWS SOUTH WALES:
President
Phil Carey Phone No. (02) 4422-7803
17 Juniper Place, Worrige NSW 2541
Email: admin@shoalegal.com.au

Secretary
Dick Martin (02) 4422-5860
PO Box 28, Nowra, NSW 2541
Email: pincher@iprimus.com.au

QUEENSLAND:
President
Ray Murrell 0412 608 507
Email: nanandpop9@optusnet.com.au

Secretary/Treasurer
John Stewart 0422 210 522
6/74 Mattocks Road, Varisty Lakes, QLD 4227
Email: jbs55394@gmail.com

SOUTH AUSTRALIA:
President
Mike Stubbington
PO Box 814, Murray Bridge SA 5253
Email: mstubbington@bigpond.com

Secretary
Jan Akeroyd 0407 610 894
5 Brown Street, Kapunda SA 5373
Email: ronjan8@tpg.com.au

TASMANIA:
President
Dennis Hinds
Email: dennishinds5@gmail.com

Secretary
Graham Nicholas 0413 186 247
15/1684 Channel Hwy, Margate TAS 7054
Email: grahamnicolas@aapt.net.au

VICTORIA:
President
Chris Fealy (03) 9974-2862
10 DeGaris Place, Werribee VIC 3030
Email: fealy@tpg.com.au

Secretary
Malcolm Smith (03) 9813-0308
24 Invermay Grove, Hawthorn East VIC 3123
Email: r59167@bigpond.com

WESTERN AUSTRALIA:
President
John Gregory Kelson (08) 9591-3882
23 Wilmott Drive, Cooloongup WA 6168
Email: anngre@iinet.net.au

Secretary
Keith Taylor (08) 9572-1487
26 Hefron Street, Mount Helena WA 6082
Email: ktt59345@bigpond.net.au

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PO Box 7115, Naval PO, Nowra 2540
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***RN Corsairs Assembled at MONAB IV
(RNAS Ponam in the Admiralty Islands)***

Mobile Naval Aviation Support

A MONAB provided all the capabilities of an air station or aircraft carrier that could be dispatched to any location on the globe. A basic MONAB consisted of the following components: Non-technical - Command & Executive, Medical, Stores, Flying Control, Radio & Radar. Technical - Maintenance Servicing, Mobile Maintenance, Maintenance Air Gunnery, Maintenance Air Radio. Smallest ship's company totalled 517 (MONAB VII). Additional 'bolt-on' specialist components Maintenance, Storage & Reserve Unit, Mobile Repair, Mobile Air torpedo Maintenance Unit. Depending on which, and how many additional components were added a MONAB complement could exceed 1000 men.

Containerised workshops & Specialised vehicles

Large numbers of specialist vehicles, trailers and other equipment had to be sourced, or specially constructed, to provide the mobile facilities. Containerised workshops and offices, flying control and VHF and D/F vans, IFF transmitter, receiver & display van, landmark

beacon trailer, Meteorological van, Photographic tender, medical and dental dispensaries. Then a Bakery, electrical generating, camp lighting, water purification plant, crash tenders, ambulances, and more. canvas covered portable aircraft hangars and wooden framed, canvas covered, buildings were supplied for aircraft maintenance parties.

Installation could be on any airstrip

The MONABs were designed to either construct their own airstrip by attaching a Royal Marines Construction Battalion to the complement, or to occupy a captured enemy airstrip where the basic airfield facilities were already built. In the Pacific it was envisaged the MONABs would move forward following the fleet on its advance towards Japan, occupying captured airfields when they became available; as the operational area moved further away the MONABs would 'leap frog' each other.



1 June 1945 at RNAS Middle Wallop UK; Senior officers attend the commissioning ceremony - CAPT Frai RNVR, CO MONAB VII front left, RADM Mackintosh, centre, and CAPT Edes, CO of HMS Flycatcher is nearest the camera. Note: HMS Flycatcher was the name for the RN's headquarters for its MONABs which supported their Fleet Air Arm units. It was based first at RNAS Ludham UK then moved to RNAS Middle Wallop UK.

Commissioned MONAB Units

Ten MONABs and one TAMY commissioned, ten of them were to see active service.

Unit	Ship's name	Commissioned (UK)	Paid Off	RNAS Name
MONAB I	NABBINGTON	28 Oct 1944	15 Nov 1945	RNAS Nowra
MONAB II	NABBERLEY	18 Nov 1944	31 Mar 1946	RNAS Bankstown
MONAB III	NABTHORPE	04 Dec 1944	15 Nov 1945	RNAS Schofields
MONAB IV	NABARON	01 Jan 1945	10 Nov 1945	RNAS Ponam, Admiralty Is.
MONAB V	NABSWICK	01 Feb 1945	18 Mar 1946	RNAS Jervis Bay
MONAB VI	NABSTOCK	01 Apr 1945	09 Jun 1946	RNAS Maryborough
MONAB VII	NABREEKIE	01 Jun 1945	05 Nov 1945	RNAS Archerfield
MONAB VIII	NABCATCHER	01 Jul 1945	01 Apr 1947	RNAS Kai Tak, Hong Kong
MONAB IX	NABROCK	01 Aug 1945	15 Dec 1945	RNAS Sembawang, Singapore
MONAB X	NABHURST	01 Sep 1945	12 Oct 1945	RNAS Middle Wallop UK
TAMY I	NABSFORD	01 Feb 1945	31 Mar 1946	RNAMY Archerfield

Note: MONAB X was used for 'Trials & Development' whereas 'Transportable Aircraft Maintenance Yard No. 1 (TAMY I)' was used for what it depicts. Clicking on the blue [MONAB](#) link will take the online subscriber direct to the relevant site. Each of the MONABs can be accessed with a 'link' for online subscribers only. Those with a hard copy can view the relevant MONAB unit by entering the following URL:

<http://www.royalnavyresearcharchive.org.uk/MONABS/index.htm#.X4qWJNAzaUk>

Re-evaluation of planned units after the Japanese surrender

After the Japanese surrender the assembly of all mobile units was put on hold while the planning was reassessed. The assembly of MONABs XI & XII were already under way at Middle Wallop, MONAB XI having begun its formation on the first of August. MONAB XII personnel had been arriving in advance of the units planned formation in September. Work on both of these units was suspended and remaining units were cancelled. MONAB X, the last MONAB to have been commissioned, was paid off on October 15th while still at RNAS Middle Wallop.

Over the next four years the components and structure of MONAB X were modified and redesigned, and new mobile equipment was tested for its suitability for field use. At some stage the organisations name was changed to reflect its new post-war role, becoming the MONAB Development Unit (MDU). The use of roman numerals for unit numbers was also dropped the trials unit becoming MONAB 10. By 1950 the unit was held in storage

at RNAS Lossiemouth pending a decision about its future usage. MONAB 10 was disbanded on 2 July 1955.

MONAB 1 Story onPage 6

Videos Showing the British Pacific Fleet Operations in WWII

MONABs in Australia WWII is [here](#)
 British Pacific Fleet Part 1 is [here](#)
 British Pacific Fleet Part 2 is [here](#)
 Kamikaze: HMS Formidable 4 May 1945 is [here](#)
 British Task Force in the Pacific 1945 is [here](#)
 British Carrier Attack—Sumatra 1945 is [here](#)
(This is for online subscribers only. However, for 'hard copy' recipients type in 'MONABs' and 'British Pacific Fleet' as separate searches into the YouTube search box. From the MONABs search you will see 'Royal Navy in Australia 1940-49' This is the video on MONABs. With respect to British Pacific Fleet search, all the other above videos will appear. . . .Ed)



National President's Update

G'Day All,
We recently held the primary annual meeting of the Fleet Air Arm Association, the Federal Council Meeting (FCM) with delegates usually attending from across the country. You will be pleased to know that we did not let Covid 19 get the better of us, and we held the meeting via Zoom for the first time. The meeting was a little clunky and difficult at times, but all who 'attended' felt that an effective meeting was held, and we achieved what would normally be achieved at the FCM.

We considered two major items at the Meeting. The first was the fact that our Association website is on life support at the moment. And the second that we are losing money on *Slipstream*, our flagship publication and that the arrangements surrounding how *Slipstream* is produced need updating.

The Association website has been in difficulty for most of the year, primarily due to the withdrawal of support for several small plug in programs that make the website work. Initial costing work by our webmaster, Marcus Peake suggested that the costs of rebuilding the website would be in the order of \$20,000 which was an eye watering figure, particularly when you consider that most IT projects go way over the planned time and budget. So, we took the problem to the FCM, and I am happy to report that the FCM agreed that the website is a vital resource and window into the Association and that it should be rebuilt. Since the FCM, an enormous amount of work by Marcus has led to a much lower cost estimate and a fund raising campaign in 'FlyBy' has raised almost \$10,000 which will pay for most of the rebuild contract, which is an excellent outcome. Marcus has put an incredible amount of time and effort into this issue and we are now well on the way to a rebuilt website by April 2021. BZ Marcus!

The second matter involved the fact that the National Treasurer, Jock Caldwell, brought to the attention of the National Executive that the Association is losing over one dollar for each hard copy version of *Slipstream* and that the governance arrangements for *Slipstream* required work. The FCM considered some updated governance arrangements, an increased *Slipstream* levy and what is effectively a user-pays arrangement for the future. A



minor Association Constitution matter prevented the user pays construct from passing, but most of the desired outcomes were achieved. All in all, a most satisfactory outcome from the FCM. The National Executive will propose changes to the Constitution at the next FCM that will seek to embed a user pays principle for *Slipstream* production.

On other issues, our membership is still slowly reducing, and the Association would be greatly improved and enlivened if every member drew in just one of their ex-Fleet Air Arm mates to the FA AAA. Can I urge every reader to work on this please?

Covid 19 remains a major issue across the planet and I recommend that you all think globally and act locally and to reach out to family, friends and old mates whenever you can. If you need assistance, please put your hand up. There will always be someone around who will be able to assist you. R U OK ? is always a good and serious question.

Can I wish all readers a very Merry and safe Christmas and all the very best for the New Year, and may it be considerably better than 2020 !!.

Mark Campbell
RADM, RAN (Rtd)
National President.

December 2020

The MONAB I (RNAS Nowra) Story in 1945-46

Permission to use material from the RN Research Archive located [here](#) and MONAB website located [here](#) provided by the Editor and Webmaster of the RN Research Archive

In 1938, a survey of the Shoalhaven area was made by the Department of Civil Aviation for an aerodrome and RAAF Advanced Operational Base. A site was selected in an area known as Browns Hole, on the Braidwood Road, six miles from Nowra (This site would replace an existing unsuitable aerodrome on the edge of Nowra which was established in 1935).

The Government acquired 357 acres of land at the Site on 14 June 1939, a further 118 acres being



Victory Parade through the streets of Nowra, 17 August 1945: Senior rates of HMS Ships Nabbington (RNAS Nowra) and Nabswick (RNAS Jervis Bay) continue to wheel from Berry street into Junction street.

Function

The support of disembarked TBR Squadrons, the provision of Continuation & Refresher Flying Training. Fleet Requirements Unit (723 Sqn)

Aviation support Components

Mobile Maintenance (MM) 1

Maintenance Servicing (MS) 1 & 2

Mobile Repair (MR) 1

Maintenance, Storage & Resave (MSR) 1 & 2

Mobile Air Torpedo Maintenance Unit
(MATMU) 3. 6 & 7

Aircraft type supported

Avenger Mk. I & II

Corsair Mk. II & IV

Hellcat Mk. I & II

Martinet TT. I

Commanding Officers

Commander G. A. Nunneley 28 Oct 1944

Captain H. G. Dickinson 09 Mar 1945

Captain J. D Harvey 01 May 1945

added shortly after war had been declared. Approval to develop the site for use by the RAAF was given on 19 October 1939, and permission to use the airfield for civil use alongside the RAAF was given to Nowra Municipal Council in May 1940. The aerodrome was opened for civil flying on 21 July 1941, and work commenced on building a camp area with accommodation for 734 personnel, this requiring a further 50 acres acquisition. RAAF Nowra was not to become operational until 7 May 1942.

The main role of the base was to provide Torpedo Bomber training, and a BTU (Bombing and Torpedo Unit) was established, practice torpedoes being dropped at target ships in Jervis Bay. Shortly after Nowra opened for business they experienced their first aircraft accident; a USAAC (United States Army Air Corps) B26 Martin Marauder crashed while landing and was destroyed by fire, all survived. The station was to operate RAAF Beaufort Bombers, USAAC and Netherlands East Indies Air Force B26 aircraft over the next two years, all using the bombing and torpedo ranges. The Nowra runways were constructed of rolled compacted sand with a top dressing of ½ -1" of rolled tarred gravel, operations by heavy aircraft such as the Beaufort and B26 were to take their toll, the runways required frequent maintenance. The airfield was 359 feet above sea level with two sealed gravel runways of 2,430 and 2,150 yards in length. Permanent accommodation was in a camp on the North-eastern side of the landing area.



The aircraft parking area at RNAS Nowra 1945; lines of ready for issue reserve aircraft are arranged in front of the stations Igloo hangar.

Assembly and commissioning of MONAB I in the UK

Personnel and equipment for Mobile Naval Air Base I began to assemble at RNAS Ludham, Norfolk UK on 4 September 1944, the same day as Ludham commissioned as a Naval Air Station and headquarters for the Mobile Naval Airfields Organisation (MNAO). The unit was to form as a type A (Small) MONAB tasked with supporting up to 50 aircraft and was allocated the following maintenance components:

- Mobile Maintenance (MM) unit No. 1 supporting Avenger Mk.I & II, Corsair Mk.II & IV, Hellcat Mk.I & II
- Maintenance Servicing (MS) unit No. 1 supporting Avenger Mk.I & II
- Maintenance Servicing (MS) unit No. 2 supporting Corsair Mk.II & IV

Additional components added later in Australia:

- Maintenance, Storage & Re-save units (MSR) No. 1 & 2 supporting Avenger Mk.I & II, Corsair Mk.II & IV & Hellcat Mk.I & II
- Mobile Repair unit (MR) No.1 supporting all front-line types operated by the British Pacific Fleet (BPF)

Being the first of its kind meant MONAB I's formation period was to be a time of discovery, this was

all new territory, and all the planning was about to be put to the test. It soon became apparent to the senior officers of both MONAB I and the MNAO that the laid down scales of equipment, stores, manning levels and vehicle requirements would be hard to meet.

The specialist vehicles for the unit did not exist prior to the late summer of 1944 when resources became available. These had to be specially converted and outfitted and many arrived too late to sail with the unit when it departed from the UK. Stores and specialist tools were also in short supply in the UK; any shortfalls were to be drawn from local depots upon arrival in the theatre of operations.

A large proportion of personnel that were being drafted to join the unit were found to be untrained for their assigned billets, many being too old or unfit for service overseas. All of these problems had to be sorted out before the unit could become operational, in most cases the solution was 'replacements to follow'. Despite these handicaps MONAB I was sufficiently complete to become operational by the end of October. The unit commissioned as independent command on 28 October 1944 bearing the ship's name HMS *Nabbington* with CMDR G.A. Nunneley in command.



8 May 1945 – roasting the fatted calf? A barbeque held at RNAS Nowra for disembarked squadrons and members of ships companies of HMS Nabbington (RNAS Nowra) and Nabswick (RNAS Jervis Bay) as part of the VE Day celebrations.

Despatched overseas

By mid-November the unit was ready for despatch overseas; all of the planned mobile units had been allocated to the support of the new British Pacific Fleet which was to begin operations in the South Western Pacific in early 1945. Australia was to be the rear echelon area for the fleet and a number of the MONABs were to be installed there.

The stores, equipment and vehicles of MONAB I were transported by road to Victoria dock, Birkenhead UK for sea passage to Sydney, Australia on board the SS *Suffolk* sailing on or around 20 November. The personnel and last-minute additions sailed from Gladstone dock, Liverpool onboard the SS *Empress of Scotland* on 20 November. The passage, via the Panama Canal and across the Pacific, took a month, the personnel arrived in Sydney onboard the SS *Empress of Scotland* on 20 December 1944, the main body disembarking to Warwick Farm, a part of HMS *Golden Hind*, the RN barracks in Sydney. An advance party went directly to the unit's operational base at RAAF Station Nowra, New South Wales, arriving there on the 22 December. The SS *Suffolk* arrived at



Aircraft Artificers (Ordnance) C. H. Allen, E. Bates, and R. Thomas (crouching) of 1843 squadron pose in front of the squadron's Corsairs at RNAS Nowra in the summer of 1945.

Sydney on Christmas Eve 1944. Work began immediately on unloading the stores and equipment for transport to Nowra, this being done by No. 1 Transportation & Movements Office of the RAAF.

Commissioned at RNAS Nowra, NSW

The main party of MONAB I arrived at Nowra airfield on New Year's Day, 1945. The next day RAAF Nowra was officially transferred on loan to the RN and commissioned as HMS *Nabbington*, RNAS Nowra. The station was still under reconstruction at this time and some expansion work continued during January.

The first squadron to arrive at RNAS Nowra was 723 Fleet Requirements Unit, the personnel for this squadron had sailed from the UK on board the troopship *Athalone Castle* as part of an uplift of personnel including MONABs II and III. On their arrival in Sydney on 27 January 1945 the squadron personnel travelled to Nowra. At this time, they had no aircraft, these would not be issued until the end of February by MONAB II once it had become fully established at Bankstown, Sydney

Disembarked squadrons arrive: The British Pacific Fleet arrived off the NSW coast at the end of the first week of February and the first aircraft disembarked to the station on 9 February, these were from 1830 and 1833 (Corsair) squadrons which disembarked from HMS *Illustrious*. The fol-



AA4 (O) Maurice Ayling of 1843 squadron pose in the cockpit of a Corsair parked at RNAS Nowra with its wings folded in late 1945



MONAB I, HMS Nabbington commissioning at RNAS Nowra, the Ship's Company witness raising the White Ensign on the Quarterdeck

Following day three more squadrons arrived; 820 (Avenger) from HMS *Infatigable*, 849 (Avenger) from HMS *Victorious* and 857 (Avenger) from HMS *Indomitable*. They were joined by 1834 and 1836 (Corsair) Squadrons from HMS *Victorious* and of 1839 & 1844 (Hellcat) Squadrons from HMS *Indomitable*. Last to disembark was 854 an Avenger Squadron from *Illustrious* on the 11 February.

Initially only six aircraft from each squadron were flown ashore to Nowra. There were several reasons for limiting numbers; at that stage aircraft parking areas were inadequate and many aircraft were parked on the grass beside the runways. Also, aircrew accommodation and wardroom facilities would have been overwhelmed by the large numbers of extra personnel. By using the carriers for accommodation, it was possible to rotate aircrew between Sydney and Nowra for flying practice and short leave periods. Some of the air crews were billeted under canvas. These squadrons spent their time at Nowra working up and training in preparation for the next operations to be undertaken by the BPF. Within the space of three days MONAB I accepted in excess of 60 aircraft and their aircrews. This highlighted the fact that there were insufficient hangars or accommodation at Nowra at this time.

The personnel of 723 squadron travelled to RNAS

Bankstown, MONAB II on 27 February to receive their equipment, 8 Martinet Target Tugs and 8 Corsair fighters and to commission on the 28 February as an FRU. Also, on the 27 February the disembarked squadrons began to re-join the fleet, 820, 849, 1834, 1836, 1839 & 1844 Squadrons re-embarked in their respective carriers. 857 Squadron followed on the 28 February and 854 Squadron on 6 March. 1830 & 1833 squadrons were the last to leave on March 7th. With their departure all operational flying transferred to Nowra's satellite airfield at Jervis Bay, 15 miles to the southeast. This was necessary to permit emer-

gency repairs to be carried out on the runways & taxiways at Nowra which were deteriorating due to wet weather and heavy use. During this period CAPT H.G. Dickinson {C.O. designate of MONAB V} relieved CMDR Nunnerley as Commanding Officer of MONAB I (RNAS Nowra), assuming command on 9 March 1945.

Despite the large number of aircraft operating on the station there were only five flying incidents recorded for February and March, all involving Avengers: On 14 February JZ593 of 857 Squadron, flown by SBLT G.W. Tookey RNVR, managed a forced landing after the engine cut out following belching blue smoke from its exhausts; three days



Rear Admiral Portal, Flag Officer Naval Air Pacific during a visit to RNAS Nowra presents sporting prizes on completion of Admiral's Divisions



An Avenger squadron gets warmed up prior to departure from RNAS Nowra, once the engine is running the wings are extended and locked

later the same pilot flying in JZ369 of 857 Squadron, also suffered a sudden engine failure landing crosswind while carrying out Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings (ADDLs); on the 21st JZ505 820 squadron flown by SBLT J. K. Johnstone RNVR swung off the runway to port landing and dipped the starboard wingtip. On 8 March JZ110 of 854 squadron caught fire on the ground and was retained at Nowra; JZ280 of 706 Squadron, flown by SBLT D.M. Bayne RNVR, swung on landing, braked hard and nosed over (at Jervis Bay) on the 13 March.

A change of role? In early April three additional components were added to MONAB I, these were Mobile Repair (MR) 1, Maintenance, Storage & Reserve units (MSR) 1 & 2 which had arrived in Sydney with MONAB V, HMS *Nabswick*. Each MSR unit was equipped and stored to maintain and store 50 reserve aircraft and were designed for inclusion in a type B (large) MONAB. The MR component was tasked with carrying out repairs above those handled by an MM unit, but below the level requiring the attention of an aircraft repair yard; MR units were designed to move any MONAB requiring their skills. While Nowra was closed for flying the men and equipment of MONAB V were ferried in from Sydney and preparations were made for their move to occupy Jervis Bay.

Flying operations returned to Nowra on 28 April 1945 and MONAB V commissioned RNAS Jervis Bay as HMS *Nabswick* on 1 May with CAPT Dickinson re-joining his command. CAPT J.D Harvey assumed command of MONAB I. On 18 May 854 (Avenger) Squadron disembarked from *Illustrious*, it was earmarked as first element for No. 3 Carrier Air Group (CAG) A new reserve Air Group was to be formed at Nowra in August comprising 854

(Avenger) and 1843 & 1845 (Corsair) Squadrons. On 4 June 723 FRU, which had been operating from RNAS Jervis Bay since receiving its equipment, returned to Nowra. *Indomitable* 857 (Avenger) Squadron, 1839 & 1844 (Hellcat) Squadrons arrived on the 5 June in preparation for the carrier being placed in dockyard hands in Sydney for repairs and refit. One aircraft, FN434 a photo recon Hellcat, from 1849 Squadron flown by SBLT I. G. Dymott RNVR swung off the runway landing, braked hard to avoid a ditch and nosed over. The following day 849 (Avenger) Squadron disembarked from *Victorious*, re-embarking on the 24 June.

Next to arrive, on 14 July was 1845 (Corsair) Squadron from RNAS Maryborough, MONAB VI, to join No. 3 CAG. They were joined by 1846 (Corsair) Squadron which disembarked from HMS *Colossus* on 21 July, and the following day 1843 (Corsair) Squadron arrived from RNAS Jervis Bay to complete No. 3 CAG which officially formed on 2 August.

A near fatal accident occurred on 19 July during a training flight by aircraft of 1845 squadron. Corsair KD870 flown by LEUT E.H.S. Wright RNZNVR and Corsair KD887 flown by SBLT R.A. Coles RNVR, collided in a cross-over turn during formation flying. LEUT Wright made a forced landing at RNAS Jervis Bay while SBLT Coles landed safely at Nowra. There were three other Corsair incidents during July, one of which was a fatal crash. SBLT A.R. Thornton RNVR of 1843 squadron taxied over wooden drain cover in KD600 on the 23 July causing the undercarriage to fall into a 3-foot-deep hole. On the 29 July SBLT R.G. Kennett of 1845 Squadron was killed while flying a cross-country exercise in KD275 The aircraft crashed in a field attempting an upward roll from 100 feet, and



A group of Petty Officer Air Fitters from M.S.R.1, pose with an Airspeed Oxford at Nowra, May 1945

burst into flames, 7 miles south of Goulbourn NSW, 41 miles WNW of Nowra; the following day SBLT P. J. H. Ford RNVR of 1845 Squadron had a lucky escape when he ditched in Jervis Bay after the prop of his aircraft, Corsair KD628, struck the water and lost power. He was safely rescued.

Indomitable's air group re-embarked at the start of August, 857 Squadron on the 2 August, and 1839 & 1844 Squadrons on the 3 August. 1844 Squadron was to return on 11 August but re-joined the carrier after a brief 5 day stay and 1846 Squadron re-embarked in HMS *Colossus* on 13 August. SBLT P. J. Hyde of 723 FRU made a forced landing in a field 3½ miles from the airfield on 3 August after his engine cut out while doing a loop in Tiger moth A17-748. He landed safely with no damage.

Victory over Japan and the rundown to closure

On 15 August the Japanese surrendered and VJ Day was celebrated at Nowra by members of both MONABs I & V. Members of the ships' companies

marched through the streets of Nowra to mark VP Day on the 17 August 1945 (In Australia the war's end was termed 'Victory in the Pacific' or VP day as opposed to Victory over Japan as it was known in Europe).

Elements of the BPF began to return to Nowra at the end of August; the 2nd CAG disembarked from *Formidable*, 1841 & 1842 (Corsair) Squadrons on the 23 August followed by 848 (Avenger) Squadron on the 24 August. 828 (Avenger) Squadron also disembarked from *Implacable* on the 24 August. There were three accidents during August: SBLT P. F. Stapleton RNVR of 848 Squadron selected wheels-up instead of flaps after landing in FN931 on the 22 August; SBLT J. R. Ferguson RCNVR taxied Corsair KD679 of 1843 squadron into a concrete picketing block and nosed up on the 28 August; SBLT T. E. Dunn RNVR of 1845 squadron was killed on 24 August when his aircraft, Corsair KD891, went into the SE corner of RNAS Jervis Bay after flattening out from a steep angle having dropped a live bomb on the Jervis Bay range.

Next to arrive was 1771 (Firefly) Squadron from *Implacable* on 13 September. There were two Corsair incidents on this date, both involving aircraft from 1845 squadron; KD203 flown by MIDN J.W. Hunt RNVR spun on the runway and

SBLT D.A. Coles RNVR in KD614 swung off the runway on take-off.

Indomitable's 11th CAG began to arrive on the station beginning on 10 October when 1844 (Hellcat) Squadron disembarked, and 857 (Avenger) & 1839 (Hellcat) Squadrons on the disembarked on 11 October. The 16 October saw 771 (Firefly) Squadron disbanded. The 11th CAG effectively ceased to exist on their arrival at Nowra, the aircraft of both Hellcat squadrons were withdrawn and the personnel re-embarked in *Indomitable* for passage to the UK on the 20 October. Only 857 Squadron re-embarked as an operational squadron once the carrier was at sea on the 22 October. Meanwhile 820 (Avenger) Squadron arrived, disembarking from *Indefatigable* on the 18 October.

A new second-line squadron arrived on the station on 24 October, this was a leaner version of No. 706 Pool & Refresher Flying Training Squadron which had relocated from RNAS Maryborough to continue operations. This unit operated 12 aircraft,



8 May 1945 - Inter-denominational service conducted by Captain H C Dickinson, DSC, RN. Disembarked squadrons and members of ships companies of HMS Nabbington and Nabswick took part in the VE Day service. © IWM (A 29305A)

two each of Avengers, Barracudas, Corsairs, Fireflies, Hellcats, Seafires. It reduced from its previous strength of 36. The recently formed 3rd CAG was officially disbanded at Nowra on the same day the squadron personnel of 854, 1843 and 1845 had already embarked in the troopship *Stratheden* for passage to the UK. The personnel of 848 (Avenger) Squadron, 1841 & 1842 (Corsair) Squadrons embarked in *Victorious* on 25 October for passage to the UK leaving their aircraft at Nowra. The next arrivals were the 16 October CAG, 837 (Firefly) and 1831 (Corsair) squadrons which moved here from RNAS Jervis Bay on the 29 October.

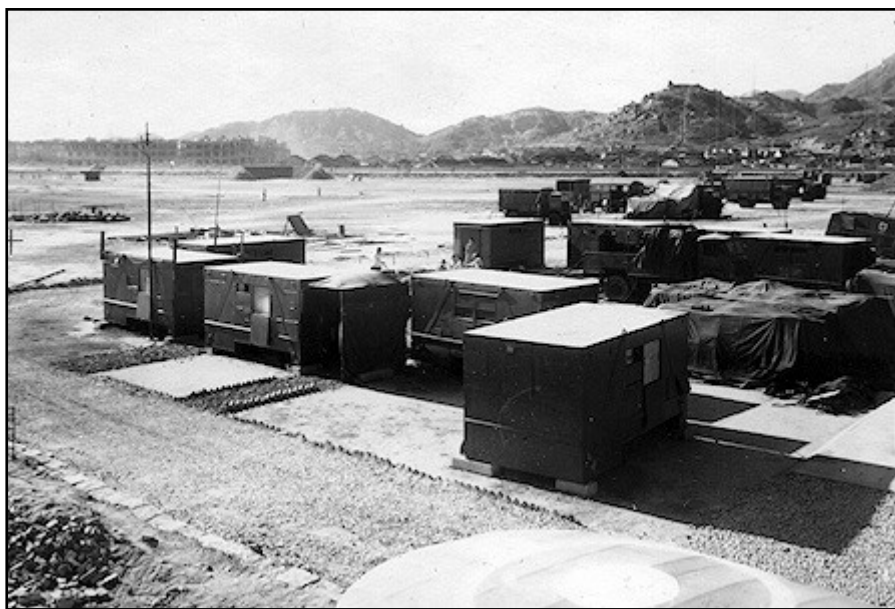
There were five flying incidents during October: On the 3rd Corsair KD368 of 1845 squadron, flown by SBLT E. Humphrey RNVR, landed with port drift, braked sharply and nosed over; Barracuda MX577 of 837 squadron, flown by SBLT R. D. B. Douglas-Boyd RNVR, swung on landing, ground looped and the undercarriage collapsed on the 5 October; Avenger JZ534 of 820 squadron, flown by SBLT R. Sunderland RNVR, while conducting ADDLs, bounced on landing and dropped its port wing which hit the runway on the 12 October; Avenger JZ702 of 828 squadron, flown by SBLT D. R. Wells RNVR landed with the undercarriage retracted during night ADDLs on the 23 October; SBLT A. Fyles RNVR flying in Firefly MB523 of 837

squadron swung to port on landing, causing the undercarriage to collapse on the 30 October.

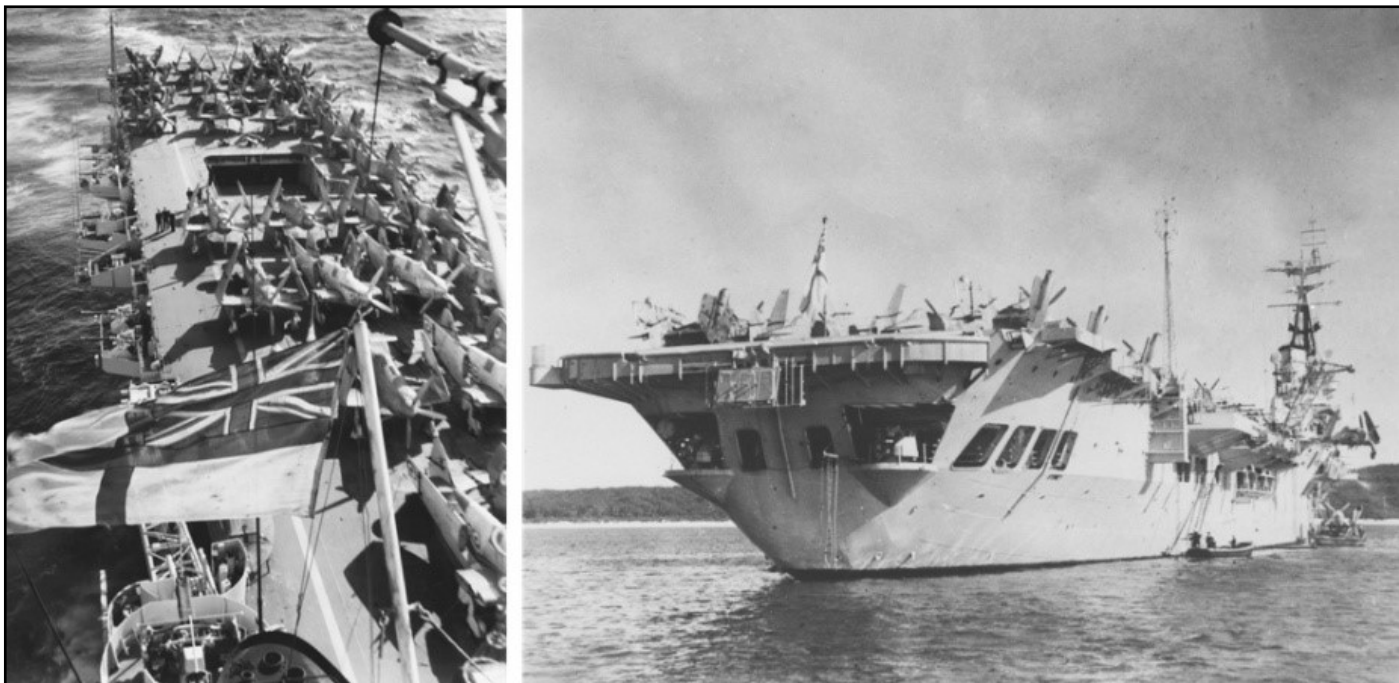
Re-organisation: As part of a review of the naval air support in the Pacific theatre the Admiralty announced in October that four Mobile Units were to be disbanded in early November 1945. These were to be MONAB I, III, IV and VII; MONAB II, V & VI plus TAMY I would continue operations in support of fleet operations and the reception and disposal of aircraft arising from the disbandment of squadrons as the BPF began to reduce its size.

As part of this downsizing operation MONAB V was to replace MONAB I at Nowra and MONAB VI would replace MONAB III at Schofields. MONAB VII personnel were to be redistributed to other units, many joining TAMY I.

With the arrival of the 16th CAG at Nowra all flying units had been relocated from RNAS Jervis Bay as preparations were made for the change over which would result in Jervis Bay reverting to the status of a satellite of Nowra. Flying training continued in early November resulting in three recorded flying incidents: On the 6th Corsair KD449 of 1831 Squadron nosed over landing and overturned pinning the pilot, SBLT R. W. H. Boyns RNVR, underneath, he was safely recovered; also on the 5 November Firefly MB549 of 706 Squadron landed with drift causing the starboard oleo to collapse, the aircraft nosed up and skidded on its starboard wing



**MONAB Containerised workshops & Specialised vehicles
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Left: HMAS Sydney en route to Australia with her aircraft embarked on the flight deck. Right: Sydney unloading aircraft for transfer ashore to NAS Nowra while at anchor in Jervis Bay, NSW.

the crew, SBLT L R. Roberts RNVR & SBLT M. G. Henry RNVR, were OK; Seafire NN399 of 706 Squadron, flown by SBLT G. R. Rodd RNVR, swung landing in a cross-wind and the undercarriage collapsed on the 9 November.

Paying off and returned to RAAF Control

HMS *Nabbington*, MONAB I, paid off at Nowra on 15 November 1945. RNAS Nowra re-commissioned as HMS *Nabswick*, the same day, MONAB V replacing MONAB I taking over the stores and equipment in situ. Some of the personnel of MONAB I were drafted back to the UK to be demobbed, others were dispersed to other units in Australia.

Stocks of reserve aircraft held on the station were flown to RNAS Bankstown over the next month. In late February the men of HMS *Nabswick* sentimentally marched through the streets of Nowra to say farewell to the town. MONAB V, HMS *Nabswick*, paid off at Nowra on March 18th 1946.

The Station was returned to RAAF control the next day, it was immediately reduced to reserve status, 'to be retained, but not maintained'! No. 828 Squadron remained at Nowra as a lodger unit with the RAAF until embarking in *Implacable* on 5 May 1946 for passage to the UK, leaving their aircraft behind.

Post war use

The Station was transferred to the RAN on 15 December 1947 as the logical choice for the first shore establishment for the Australian Fleet Air Arm. An advance party had left Sydney for Nowra on 8 May 1948 to begin transforming the wartime airfield into a Naval Air Station. The airfield had been vacant for the past two years and had been

subjected to widespread vandalism, so that extensive refurbishment was required to make the Station habitable.

NAS Nowra, HMAS *Albatross* was commissioned on 31 August 1948. NAS Nowra was to become the FAA's main training establishment and the appropriate support facilities had to be established; classrooms, accommodation, galleys, stores and married quarters. Additionally, a dummy carrier flight deck was required for the new School of Aircraft Handling. All this had to be achieved in seven months to be ready for the arrival of the 20th Carrier Air Group (CAG) in May the following year.

The site was to be home to the following schools: School of Aircraft Maintenance - Engineering; School of Aircraft Maintenance - Electrical; School of Aircraft Maintenance - Radio; School of Aircraft Ordnance; Photographic School; Meteorological School; and School of Aircraft Handling.

The Majestic class Light Fleet Carrier HMAS *Sydney* arrived in Jervis Bay on 25 May 1949 with the first Australian Naval Air Squadrons, 805 (Sea Fury FB.11) and 816 (Firefly FR.4) embarked. In total *Sydney* carried 27 Sea Fury FB.11s, 27 Firefly FR.4s and 2 Sea Otters plus stores and squadron maintenance personnel from the UK. The 2 Sea Otters were the first aircraft to land at Nowra. They had been lowered over the side by the ship's crane. The airframes and equipment were ferried ashore by lighter and the aircraft were then towed to Nowra in convoys, the last arriving on 29 May 1949. It was another two weeks before flying could commence due to inclement weather. NAS Nowra is still in operation supporting an all rotary-wing force and is also the home of the RAN Fleet Air Arm Museum (Est 1974).



**Artist Ben Patynowski Impression of Gannet 810 on the flight deck of HMAS Melbourne
with a SAR Sycamore helicopter on the Portside of the ship**

Development of the Technically Advanced Fairey Gannet

**By Ben Patynowski author of the
'Submarine Hunter'. Ben explained that
the publisher deleted 240 pages. Hopefully,
Slipstream can help by republishing
some of those missing pages**

(Ben started off as a model aircraft builder and when he sought the colour scheme of the Gannet, he was inundated with an enormous amount of information about the aircraft. So much so, many ex-Gannet personnel convinced him to write a book. He did so and called it the 'Submarine Hunter'. On completion of the book, he tried several publishers who declined to undertake the task. The book was finally published in the UK but printed in Poland, which is ironical as Ben is of Polish heritage. He made very little money out of it to which he donated to the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia. After completing the book he took up Art with the Gannet that is shown above being one of his early achievements. Ed)

No doubt the bitter experience from German U-Boat attacks on Allied shipping during World War II, with huge losses in men and material clearly demonstrated the need for a dedicated aircraft capable of protecting the fleet and merchantmen from submarine attack.

Very broadly the 1945 British MoS (Ministry of Supply) **Specification GR.17/45** specified a two-place aircraft capable of detecting and destroying enemy submarines, both on and under the sea. It had to be capable of carrying all its locating radar equipment and offensive weapons within a single airframe and be able to operate from existing aircraft carriers. Later in 1949 this specification would be revised (Issue 2) to provide for a third crewmember required to operate the new radar equipment.

In 1945 there were two main aircraft companies short-listed for the contract, **Blackburn Aviation and Motor Co. Ltd.** and the **Fairey Aviation Company**. Later under a revised specification **Short Brothers** also submitted a design for an ASW / AEW aircraft.

Development was somewhat laboured due to the end of hostilities in Europe which inevitably reduced defence spending in post war budgeting. Not until the proposed expansion of the Soviet military, with a declared proposal in 1948 to build a fleet of 1,200 submarines alone, did the alarm bells ring throughout Western Europe.

As a result NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was formed in 1949 to guard against the threat of Communist expansion, consequently the need for an anti-submarine warfare aircraft now became urgent. As the new radar equipment would demand a heavier workload, revision of the original MoS

(Ministry of Supply) GR17/45 standards was required.

The new aircraft would incorporate a third crew member and an independent search and strike capability coupled with a comparable weapons load capable of destroying both enemy submarines, and surface vessels.

Development History

As a stop gap measure, due to the perceived delay in the production of a suitable aircraft and the need to fulfil its commitment to NATO, in 1953 the Royal Navy, acquired 100 Grumman TBM-3E (Mk 4) and TBM-3S (Mk 5) Avengers from the United States under the MDAP (Mutual Defence Aid Program) agreement. Retaining their midnight blue finish and equipped with the AN/APS-20 surveillance radar these aircraft served five front-line RN (Royal



Gannets and Sea Venoms aboard HMAS Melbourne

TO: A.C.N.B. 890		DEPT. OF THE NAVY	
FROM: N.L.O. LONDON.		2721 18 4	
METHOD OF TRANSMISSION: T/R.		CODE CYPHER: (ONE TIME)	
T.O.O. 282531/MAR'52			
SECRET			
<p>INDEXED INT. 5.2 DATE 3.11.52</p> <p>SUPER PRIORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN BY U.K. GOVERNMENT TO GANNET PRODUCTION. PRODUCTION IS NOT EXPECTED TO START EARLIER IN CONSEQUENCE BUT RATE OF PRODUCTION SHOULD BE INCREASED.</p> <p>2. ADMIRALTY ORDERS FOR GANNETS ARE LIKELY TO BE INSUFFICIENT TO ENABLE MAXIMUM USE TO BE MADE OF SUPER PRIORITY.</p> <p>3. ADMIRALTY OFFICERS, IN FORM ME AN R.A.N. ORDER NOW FOR GANNETS WOULD ENABLE AN ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION LINE TO BE LAID DOWN AND SHOULD ENABLE SUPPLY TO AUSTRALIA TO BE STARTED IN 1954/55 INSTEAD OF 1955/56. TO OBTAIN THIS ADVANTAGE AN IMMEDIATE ORDER IS NECESSARY.</p>			
<p>Distribution:</p> <p>1ST. N.M. 2ND. N.M. 4TH. N.M. H.N.B. D.N.A.S. D.A.M.R. D.A.W.O.K. RECH.</p> <p>SECRET</p>			

Dept. of Navy Message 3/4//52

National Archives of Australia

Navy) squadrons and three Reserve squadrons until the Gannet entered service with No 826 Squadron on Lee-on-Solent.

This still required two aircraft to operate together for anti-submarine operations. One aircraft (the Hunter) was used to carry the radar equipment and operator, and the other aircraft (the Killer) was used to carry ordnance that would ensure the destruction of an enemy submarine or surface vessel.

The 'hunter-killer' combination was also adopted in the RAN FAA with the Fairey Firefly, which itself needed protection against attack from enemy aircraft by the very capable Hawker Sea Fury fighter aircraft.

Blackburn Aircraft and Motor Co. Ltd

The British company Blackburn Aircraft and Motor Co. Ltd was founded by **Robert Blackburn** who completed his first aircraft, a monoplane with floats (no designation) in April 1909. Success followed with the design and manufacture of the 'Mercury' series of aircraft between 1911-1915.

Robert Blackburn was born in England on 26 March 1885 in the city Leeds. In 1906 he graduated from Leeds University with a degree in Engineering with a consuming



***The first prototype Blackburn Y.A.5 / WB781 with
Rolls Royce Griffon engine installed.***

***Photo Blackburn, courtesy of
Roger Jackson, A.J. Jackson Collection.***



***The third prototype Blackburn Y.A. 1 (B - 88)
WB797 with extended cockpit.***

***photo Blackburn Aviation, courtesy of
Roger Jackson, A.J. Jackson Collection***

interest in aviation. This led him to travel to France to further his education of flight and aircraft construction.

During WWI the Blackburn company produced a twin-engine bi-plane called the Kangaroo, which was used in anti-submarine operations by the Royal Naval Air Service.

Other aircraft of note have been the B-5 Baffin / B-6 Shark (bi-planes for the RN in the 1930's), later the Blackburn B-24 'Skua' and B-25 'Roc', serving with the FAA (Fleet Air Arm) during World War II, the post war single seat fleet fighter, the B-37 'Firebrand'. Also of note was the very successful Blackburn turbo-jet B-103 'Buccaneer', entering service with the FAA in 1965.

Robert Blackburn died September 1955 in Devon. In 1962 the Blackburn Aviation and Motor Company was eventually acquired by the Hawker Siddeley group, who later in 1977 would merge with other British Aerospace manufacturers to form BAe, today's British Aerospace.

Being the only serious contender and rival for the 1945 Air Ministry production contract, Blackburn received an order to produce three prototypes, these were to evolve as the Y.A.5 (B-54) (later changed to Y.A.7), the Y.A. 8 and the Y.A. 1 (B - 88), the definitive turbine powered version.

The Y.A. 5 (B-54) was originally designed as a two-seat carrier-borne ASW aircraft and was powered

by the Rolls Royce Griffon 56 engine of 1491 kW (2000 hp) driving contra-rotating propellers.

This, however, was not the intended engine but a substitute for the Napier Double Naiad turbo-prop, which did not reach production. Consequently its Y.A. 5 designation was changed to Y.A. 7. This aircraft incorporated an inverted gull wing and featured an acute dihedral tailplane. It contained all its armament and radar equipment within a single airframe and first flew on 20 September 1949. Deck landings were trialed in February 1950, this was four months prior to the Fairey Gannet making its first deck landing.

Y.A.8, the second prototype, was built to accommodate changes to the original specification and was designed to carry a third crewmember, which necessitated a change to the wings and tail. Y.A.8 made its first flight on 3 May 1950.

Having failed to gain further production orders the three Blackburn aircraft performed valuable service as



Pilot's Cockpit of the Fairey Gannet



Gannet With Wings Folded On Dispersal

test aircraft, Y.A.7 and Y.A.8 were used by the Royal Aircraft Establishment (Farnborough and Y.A.1 served as an engine test bed with Armstrong Siddeley.

Without a doubt, one of the few RAN personnel to fly in the Blackburn aircraft was **Lt. Cdr. Brian "Snow" O'Connell**, later CO of 816 Sqn Culdrose, England.

**What a Career!
From No.1 Naval
Airmen Recruits
Course
To SATCO**



By Paul Shiels

John William Currie enlisted in the RAN from Fremantle where he joined No. 1 Naval Airmen Recruit Course at HMAS *Cerberus* on 6 January 1948. After completing Basic Recruit Training, he along with the rest of the course, took passage to the UK in HMAS *Kanimbla* for Air Branch Training.

Arriving at HMS *Gamecock* on 3 August 1948, John completed the Naval Air Mechanic (NAM) III Course. He departed on 4 May 1949 to join HMS *Fulmar* (RNAS Lossiemouth). The next day he continued his training completing it to NAM I (Prov.) level. This was followed by a short posting of 2 ½ months to HMS *Heron* (RNAS Yeovilton) before taking passage back to Australia.

John arrived home in early 1950 and following a short leave, he was posted to HMAS *Albatross* (NAS Nowra). On 1 April 1952 he was posted to 805 Sqn. He had qualified as a 'Pilot's Mate' on 5 February 1952. Shortly after he was promoted to A/Leading Air Mechanic and confirmed in the rank on 7 August 1952.

John moved between HMAS *Sydney* and *Albatross* with a short posting to HMAS *Vengeance* as 805 Sqn worked up. He was one of the few Fleet Air Arm members to serve in all three RAN aircraft-carriers.

Mid-1953 saw him attend HMAS *Nirimba* for yet another course in the rank of A/POAM (A)(Prov.). On return to *Albatross*, John was posted to 723 Sqn and confirmed in the rank of Petty Officer on 1 July 1954.

Returning to the UK, he joined HMS *Heron* (891 RN Sea Venom Sqn) on 7 February 1955 before joining (808 RAN Sqn) on 7 August the same year for further training on the Sea Venom aircraft.

Following his service in 808 sqn ashore and afloat between *Albatross* and HMAS *Melbourne* which ended on 19 September 1958, John joined *Cerberus*

on 30 September in preparation for his Special Duties List training for which he had been recommended on 20 May 1958.

Once again, John returned to the UK to join HMS *Excellent* (shore establishment at Whale Island near Portsmouth) on 8 November 1958.

On 28 April 1959 John was commissioned as ASLT SDAV RAN, reporting to the Royal Naval College Greenwich on 16 June 1959 for further Officer Training. He then was posted to HMS *Fulmar* on the 16 November 1959 for Air Traffic Control (ATC) training which he completed on 9 November 1960.

After returning to Australia, John worked as an ATCO at *Albatross* until January 1964 when he was posted to *Melbourne* as 'Aircraft Control Room Officer and Air Explosives Accounting Officer'. He was promoted to LEUT SDAV ATC in 1964, posted back to *Albatross*, where he continued in a similar role from October 1965 until early 1968. He then returned to ATC.

I recall one morning in April 1971 after most of the ATCOs had just arrived at work when the phone rang in an area adjacent to the Approach Control room. John answered the phone and was heard to say: "Yes, we do own an orange and white aircraft. Why? You say someone is shooting at it why? Well the white puffs might be parachutes – are they? You say they are parachutes now". That was the first call for Errol Kavangh's and Peter Clarke's ejection from one of our new Macchis then painted orange and white.

In 1974, John was promoted to LCDR where he finished off his career as Senior Air Traffic Control Officer (SATCO) retiring in mid 1976.

John and Leslie have been married for over 66 years and still reside in Nowra. He is now 93 but unfortunately not in the best of health. John was a superb colleague to work with and an even better boss as SATCO.

Flying the Hawker Sea Hawk



Royal Navy Hawker Sea Hawk in flight

By Norman Lee

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

There is an old saying in aviation that if it looks right it will fly right; never was this truer than in the case of the Seahawk. It would be one of the prettiest little aircraft that I ever had the pleasure to fly.



I saw my first Sea Hawk in the hangar of HMS *Bulwark* when doing my initial deck landing familiarisation in Gannets. Two Hawks were on board and I had a chance to have a really good look at them and to wonder what they were like to fly.

At that point in my aviation career there didn't seem to be the remotest chance that I would have that opportunity. However, fate moves in mysterious ways and three years later I was offered two years exchange with the Royal Navy at the Day Fighter School at Lossiemouth in Scotland. The posting was as a QFI (Qualified Flying Instructor) in one of the training squadrons which operated Vampires and Sea Hawks.

I soon checked out in the Sea Hawk and found that it lived up to its looks and was a delight to fly. Apart from an earlier propensity to blow up in the air due to fuel leaking into the rear fuselage, it had no vices. Fortunately, the fuel problem had been identified and corrective action taken by the time I got to fly them, but it was still mandatory to eject immediately if the fire warning light came on. There were, however, a few little quirks that one needed to know and to get used to, such as the fuel system itself. All the fuel was carried in the fuselage in three tanks.

The third tank, known as the saddle tank, fed into the rear main tank, so for normal operations you could consider the aircraft as only having two tanks. This was to cause me a problem later but I will re-



Hawker Sea Hawks start-up with a cartridge start as was common with the Sea Venom start



Sea Hawks of 898 Sqn at RNAS Brawdy 1954

turn to that in due course. There were two LP cocks which were normally left on; they were mainly used for maintenance work. There was an ingenious arrangement for maintaining the c of g in limits without the pilot having to fiddle with the fuel transfer pumps.

This was done by the reading on the fuel gauges controlling the pumps in the two tanks, turning them on and off to match a pre-set ratio between the tank readings. This may sound like a Heath Robinson arrangement but it worked. The only snag was that if you suffered a fuel gauge failure and didn't notice it in time, the c of g could very rapidly get out of limits. In the event of such a failure you could control the pumps manually and keep the aircraft in balance by feel.

Shortly after I joined the squadron, we had a course through which included a Surgeon Lieutenant. Flying doctors were rare animals and were to be given every encouragement. This young gentleman got airborne one day with the rear LP cock off and commenced a sortie of cine air-to-air gunnery. After a while he found that as he rolled in off the "perch", the aircraft was tending to pitch up. This got steadily worse until just about the time when he thought he might have a problem, the engine flamed out.

He then found that he could not control the air-speed in the glide, the aircraft having entered a rapid phugoid of plus and minus 50 knots. He attempted a forced—landing at an RAF airfield but missed out by about 100 yards and bent the aircraft somewhat badly. His c of g was so far aft that it was remarkable that he had any control of the aircraft at all. Sorry to say, our medico didn't last long, as two weeks later, after having received a mild rebuke for his misdeeds, he taxied into the dispersal and wrote off several Seahawk rudders with his wingtip!

Another aspect of the aircraft that required some care was the need to ensure that the powered ailer-

ons were properly engaged after start-up. To do this, the stick had to be moved through its full range laterally once you had hydraulic power. As the stick was moved from side to side you could feel the pawls sliding along the control rod and engaging in their detents.

Failure to engage properly could result in a half power/manual situation which could be very disconcerting. The early model Hawks, of which we had a few, tended to lack a clear neutral point in their aileron set-up, causing a knife edge effect which

could make formation flying a pain.

The ejection seat was an earlier model without

Sea Hawk F GA Mk 6 Specification

Power Plant: One Rolls-Royce Nene 103 centrifugal-flow turbojet rated 5,200 lb st (2 359 kgp). Internal fuel capacity, 395 Imp gal (1 796 l) with provision for up to four 90 Imp gal (409 l) drop tanks.

Performance: (Clean aircraft at 13,543 lb/6 143 kg) Max speed, 599 mph (964 km/h) or M = 0.79 at sea level, 587 mph (945 km/h) or M = 0.83 at 20,000 ft (6095 m), 564 mph (908 km/h) or M = 0.83 at 30,000 ft (9 145 m), 529 mph (852 km/h) or M = 0.8 at 40,000 ft (12 190 m);

Initial climb, 5,700 ft/min (28.95 m/sec); time to 10,000 ft (3050 m), 2.0 min, to 20,000 ft (6095 m), 4.0 min, to 30,000 ft (9 145 m), 8.0 min, to 40,000 ft (12 190 m), 14.0 min; service ceiling, 44,500 ft (13 565 m); range, 480 mls (772 km); with two 90 Imp gal/409 l drop tanks and two 500-lb/227-kg bombs at 16,153 lb/7 327 kg max speed, 518 mph (834 km/h) or M = 0.68 at sea level, 524 mph (843 km/h) or M = 0.71 at 10,000 ft (3 050 m), 518 mph (834 km/h) or M = 0.73 at 20,000 ft (6 095 m), 524 mph (843 km/h) or M = 0.77 at 35,000 ft (10 670 m).

Initial climb, 4,270 ft/min (23.97 m/sec); time to 10,000 ft (3 050 m), 2.5 min, to 20,000 ft (6095 m), 5.8 min, to 30,000 ft (9 145 m), 12.0 min; typical radius of action, 288 mls (463 km); take-off distance to 50 ft (15.25 m) at 13,543 lb (6 143 kg), 1,255 yds (1 147 m), at 16,153 lb (7 327 kg), 1,930 yds (1 765 m); landing distance from 50 ft (15.25 m); at 12,100 lb (5 489 kg), 1,250 yds (1 143 m), at 13,30 lb (6 033 kg), 1,360 yds (1 244 m).

Weights: Tare, 9,278 lb (4 208 kg); normal loaded, 13,543 lb (6 143 kg); 111 ft take-off, 16,153 lb (7 327 kg).

Dimensions: Span, 39 ft 0 in (11.89 m); length, 39 ft 8 in (12.09 m);

Height, 8 ft 8 in (2.64 m); wing area, 278 sq ft (25.83 m²); span folded, 13 ft 3 in (4.04 m); height folded, 16 ft 9 in (5.10 m).

Armament: Four 20-mm British Hispano Mk 5 cannon with 200 rig and provision for up to four 500-lb (227-kg) bombs or up to 20 3-in (7.62-cm) or 5-in (12.7-cm) rockets.



As one Sea Hawk is catapulted off an RN aircraft carrier, another Sea Hawk taxis to the 'cat' to be next aircraft flung into the air

leg restraints but fitted with fairly solid metal thigh guards which sprang up at the beginning of the ejection sequence. After a spate of shattered elbows following ejection, it was established that if you pulled the face blind straight down, your elbows would meet the thigh guards rising on their very powerful springs. The technique subsequently adopted for ejection was to grasp the face blind with the palms of the hands outwards, this automatically forced you to lift your elbows as you pulled down (try it!).

Finally, there was an occasional problem with the canopy lock which would jam leaving you trapped inside the aircraft after shut down. This wasn't too bad in winter but could be hellish in high summer. The Seahawk was fitted with a Rolls Royce Nene centrifugal flow gas turbine which proved to be a very robust engine and rarely caused us any problems. The intakes and exhaust were bifurcated, with the engine well and truly buried in the fuselage.

The flap/speed brake arrangement was quite ingenious. The flaps were simple split flaps which in conjunction with a similar over wing panel, formed the speed brakes when the latter were selected. This arrange-

ment was useful on entering the circuit when, after using the speed brakes to kill speed on the break, selection of flap would drop the upper panel. It was essential however, to deselect speed brakes otherwise they would operate again when the flaps were selected up (shades of the Wirraway!). The view from the cockpit was excellent and the aircraft also had a very effective rear-view mirror mounted inside the canopy.

The Sea Hawk was relatively easy to fly on instruments being particularly stable once set up on the glide slope. When the weather precluded flying the students, I would detail the instructors to go and do low level GCAs (ground-controlled approaches). You could nip round the

circuit in a matter of minutes as we only climbed to 2,000 feet after each approach. It really honed your instrument flying skills. Stability on the approach also made it a 'kiddy' car for deck landing; 110 knots on the mirror landing sight and just drive on down until you arrived!

The Sea Hawk was cleared for spinning but the pilot's notes gave a prediction of a fairly hairy ride with the aircraft pitching up and down once in the spin, with a rapid rate of turn. This was certainly the case on my first spin and I quickly went to recovery mode, but on subsequent analysis I concluded that what I had experienced was merely horizontal flick-



***14 Sea Hawks ranged on the Flight Deck of an RN aircraft carrier
The Sea Hawk in line with the flight deck starts (cartridge start)***

ing and not a true spin. I left it longer next time and got it into a proper spin. Recovery was straightforward and rapid.

I flew the Sea Hawk for just on two years so experienced the delights of UK weather in the depth of winter. Lossiemouth wasn't too bad for snow but we did get the occasional polar low which would dump several feet in a very short space of time. I once had the good fortune to be first off after the passage of one of these lows, when as usual we had brilliant blue skies in the aftermath. The aircraft fairly rocketed up in the climb because of the extreme cold and I had the most magnificent view of the whole of Scotland, totally white.

As I recall, snow didn't interfere with our flying generally but the odd accident occurred due to the banks of snow on either side of the runway; one certainly needed to watch out for any crosswind, particularly on take-off. Our major problem was ice on the taxiways which required exercising some care when braking.

We used to start night flying at 1530 in the depth of winter, but of course, in summer we had the reverse problem of barely a few hours of darkness. During my second summer, because of the number of students we decided to migrate south for our night flying period and I took the Scimitars, which we had acquired by then, to Yeovilton in the south of England and the new CO took the Hawks to Brawdy in Wales.

It was on an earlier night trip to Yeovilton as a target for one of the night fighter squadron's operational readiness inspections that I experienced one of those magical moments in flying. I took off at 2300 and set course south with the sun just setting on my starboard quarter. On the return some time after midnight, there was the most magnificent display of the Northern Lights, which at 30,000 feet was a sight to behold. I was so hyped-up by the experience that I couldn't resist waking my very pregnant wife at 0200 to tell her all about it!

When I first joined the squadron, the students were "taken" through parts one and two of the OFS (Operational Flying School) on the Sea Hawk; part



Hawker Sea Hawk FGA.6 (XE375) of 898 Squadron on the deck of HMS Ark Royal, circa 1955

one was getting to know the aircraft and part two was using it operationally. We would start off with the usual formation flying followed by battle drill, cross countries, night flying and the odd jolly when we would let them off the leash for a trip by themselves.

I particularly enjoyed taking them for their early formation flying, three students to an instructor where it was routine to end the sortie with a "chase-me-charlie". What the students didn't know was that we had a couple of aircraft with "g" suit systems. The early RN 'g' suits were worn under the flying suit with a hole in the side for the connection so it wasn't obvious that you were wearing one. The Seahawk was cleared for 6 g, so if you were wearing a 'g' suit you could readily out turn anyone not so fortunate; the poor students would end up all over the sky as we looped and rolled.

There was the additional fun during the debriefing when we would lay it on the line that if we, who were 5 to 10 years older could handle "g" better than they could, they had better get out on the playing fields and get themselves fit! On completion of part 1 of the OFS it was into the weapons phase which included air-to-air, rocketting, bombing and straffing. Live firing on the banner, which was the

ultimate test of your co-ordination skills, was my favourite weapons detail. We flew in flights of four with two guns loaded and each pilot having his 20mm rounds tipped with different coloured paint to mark his hits on the banner. Front-Line standards were something under 10% and the training standard about 5%. It mightn't sound much but to achieve that on the banner meant that a much higher success rate could be expected against a real aircraft.

I well recall a particular sortie when all three of my students had to return early because of gun stoppages. There I was with the banner all to myself, full ammunition, and a long run home. This was towards the end of my time when I had flown quite a few banner sorties. I confess to being in form that day and really filled the banner with red paint.

As we flew the last few miles back to base I was praying that the Meteor 7 would not lose its tow in the sea. My score was 47% and I was beside myself until the following week when a Sub Lieutenant from a front-line squadron beat me by a considerable margin. Returning to the Sea Hawk fuel system, the squadron flew a four-plane aerobatic team and used the saddle tank to carry oil for making smoke. There was a specially approved mod which disconnected the saddle tank, thus depriving the aircraft of 40 gallons of fuel. We had to use the aerobatic aircraft for student work and normally this didn't pre-



Sea Hawks in right hand finger formation

sent a problem, however, I got badly caught out through a sequence of events which were obvious in hindsight but not at the time.

The sortie in question was a cine air-to-air mission with myself and two students. Because of a conflict in weapon details, one of the students had to take an aerobatic aircraft fitted with bomb carriers. The weather was marginal for students but we decided to fly. The rot set in when this lad missed his first fuel call (bingo 1) and called (bingo 2) half way into the sortie. I knew that he would be using a lot more power because of the bomb carriers but was relying on his bingo call. I immediately headed for home only to be informed that our let-down and approach would be via a GCA due to a deterioration in the weather this was not a problem in itself but rather in the amount of fuel it would require.

We had strong winds blowing and I can categorically state that it was the longest homing to the overhead I've ever done! We duly commenced our GCA for a formation landing and broke out in good time to see the runway, with me praying my student wouldn't run out of fuel before we got there. We touched down and went into trail for the taxi back whereupon my lad flamed out.

If he had left his fuel booster pump on we might have made it back to dispersal, but it was SOP (standard operational procedure) to switch it off after landing. As on the rest of the sortie, my laddie was also switched off! I had an awkward time explaining to the Station CFI how I, as the squadron senior pilot, had got myself into such a situation.



Sea Hawk cockpit showing vital scan instruments surrounded by a white border



Sea Hawk on final approach to land. Note: The hook up meaning either a 'touch and go' on an aircraft carrier or landing at an airfield

On another weapons detail, just as I was getting out of my aircraft on completion of the sortie, I heard a loud explosion from the aircraft next to mine. I looked across to see a body lying full length on the concrete. It was immediately obvious that a 20mm round had been fired and it looked on the face of it that we had suffered a fatal casualty.

I am not partial to the sight of blood but had no option but to take charge of the situation. As I reluctantly ran across to the scene I was silently saying "don't roll him over, I don't want to see". As I got there, the body stood up and I could see that it was the Petty Officer Armourer, unharmed. It transpired that the aircraft had suffered a stoppage and the sailor or trying to clear the round out of the open breech had been too enthusiastic with the cleaning rod. The Petty Officer realised as he saw the rod struck that there was a good chance that the base of the round would strike something in the breech, so he had rolled out of the way just in the nick of time. The sailor concerned was lucky to only have the palm of his hand cut as the cleaning rod shot out of the barrel.

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end and towards the end of my time in the squadron we lost our Seahawks and became the Scimitar OFS. Mention of the Scimitar reminds me of the joke circulating at the time the aircraft was introduced into service, that Vickers Armstrong hadn't known whether to put a hook on it and flog it to the Navy as an aircraft, or tracks on it for the Army to use as a tank, but more of that at another time.

In conclusion, I've often been asked "what was the best aircraft you ever flew?". It's a hard one to answer because it depends on what particular aspect of the aircraft your considering, eg weapons capability, handling, flight envelope etc. However, if I had to name one, it would have to be the Seahawk because of its all round performance and the fact that it was a sheer delight to fly. Recently, I was in the United Kingdom and visited the Fleet Air Arm Museum where they were kind enough to let me sit in a Seahawk. Suddenly thirty years rolled away and I was back at Lossie for two of the most enjoyable years of aviation I've ever experienced.

(Commodore Norman Lee ran a series of articles about aircraft he had flown for the Australian Aviation magazine when a pilot with the RAN Fleet Air Arm. He joined in 1948 as a Recruit Rating Pilot and graduated as a Pilot 4th Class [Leading Seaman equivalent]. He commanded two HMA Ships Queenborough [ASW Frigate] and Vampire [Destroyer], before commanding NAS Nowra [HMAS Albatross] as a Commodore. He retired in 1981).

Vietnam Aviation Patches

Members of the RANHFV, especially those attached to the 135th Assault Helicopter Company may be particular interested in an online booklet of these patches located [here](https://www.bonusprint.co.uk/view-online-photo-book?widgetId=f8e1808e-50ca-421f-bfd7-c412b5bc9fe5) for online subscribers. (For those that receive a hard copy the URL is:

<https://www.bonusprint.co.uk/view-online-photo-book?widgetId=f8e1808e-50ca-421f-bfd7-c412b5bc9fe5>

The author of the publication is interested in any photos of other 135th patches, especially if worn by those who served with the 135th, in addition to any info on how the patch came about.

As the newly formed Aviation companies arrived in Vietnam, their AO's and call signs were confirmed. To foster Esprit de corps, young aviators set about designing unit pocket patches. Their boundless imaginations and the skillfull Vietnamese artisans, leave us a colourful, tangible, legacy, of that unique conflict.



Letters to the Editor



A Potential Candidate to be a Navy Pilot??

I would like to take this opportunity to demonstrate my commitment to not just becoming a Naval Aviator with the RAN but how I want to make the RAN a life long career.

Firstly I am an Australian Navy Cadet holding the rank of 'Leading Seaman' at TS *Noarlunga*. Secondly, I have undertaken the following flight training.

I have been a member of the Murray Bridge Gliding Club since December 2018, flying their G-109 motor-glider.

I have been flying powered fixed wing aircraft (the Aeronca Champ - 7AC, tailwheel) since March 2019. I have obtained my Recreational Pilot Licence (RPL) as well as have obtained my aerobatics endorsement in the Super Decathlon down at Adelaide Bi-planes, Aldinga Airfield.

I have been a member of Adelaide Soaring Club (ASC) out at Gawler airfield since August 2019 flying pure sailplanes such as the G-103, DG-505 and the DG-1000s.

I commenced helicopter flying lessons this year in August (2020) through Helistar/Aerostar at Parafield. So far, I have accumulated 6.8 hrs in the Robinson R44 helicopter.

I am also an Associate Member of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots of Australia.

It's not by chance that I have undertaken the flight training the way I mentioned above. I have tried to replicate the basic steps and process that a RAN helicopter pilot would undertake their flight training; first doing the same flight training the RAAF pilots do in the now PC-21 (fixed-wing), then transfer to HMAS *Albatross* for Helicopter/rotor-wing conversion.

What has made all this possible is the support from my father and grandparents as well as successfully being award two flying scholarships. One through Recreational Aviation Australia (RAAus) and ASC. Altogether I have accumulated 112 hours flying time.

Despite all these accomplishments/achievements, most of the people who know me (including friends) don't know this about me. The only people I tell are only those who need to know this about me, such as, like with you for the purpose to help support my application and to demonstrate my motivation and dedication towards becoming a Naval Aviator. This is due in part to my introvert personality. I quite often prefer to listen and 'understand' what others are saying

and speak out when either asked to, or I feel that something needs to be added or that has been overlooked.

A lot of people have made it known to me that they see this as a weakness in me and need to change this about myself if I want to be an officer in the Navy. I use to see this as weakness and something I need to change about myself and thus become more extroverted until my father gave me a book about successful Introvert leaders. I am comfortable in getting out in

front of other Cadets and leading a parade, giving instructions and directions. I also tend to feel more comfortable engaging with people who know through being there and have done it themselves. This is one of the main reasons why I would like to be an Associate Member of the FAAAA. By being an Associate member, I hope to not just learn more about the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) and its history etc. but also have the potential opportunity to communicate with people who know what it takes to be successful in a career within the FAA because they were. Even though I no longer see my introvert personality style as a short-coming to being a good leader, I still have concerns how others will view it, especially the Officer Selection Board (OSB)

as part of the recruiting process. The reason why this is that it is my understanding that I need to demonstrate to the OSB that I understand that I am an "Officer first, Pilot second".

Other goals I would like to achieve while in the FAA is to become a Helicopter Instructor and Helicopter test pilot.

All that is mentioned in the welcoming letter is all satisfactory, and it would be a great honour and privilege to be an Associate Member of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia, and my intentions are to be involved in as many functions and meetings that I can with the FAAAA.

I am also looking forward to meeting you and other FAAAA members in the future.

Kalell Kemp

(This letter was received from Kalell, a 16 year Australian Navy Cadet applying to join the SA Division of the FAAAA as an Associate Member. The enthusiasm shown by Kalell demonstrated his eagerness to follow a career in the FAA. For his age and the fact he has accumulated 112 flying hours of which 6.8 are in the R44 helicopter demonstrates his pursuit to reach his goal through scholarships and parental support... Ed)



Kalell Kemp

Fresh Eggs For the Captain

By Colin Fiford
sent via Mick Storrs

On 13 July 1945, HMAS *Kiama* berthed at Cairns. Scheduled for a boiler clean, the ship's company was looking forward to some well-earned rest and recreation.

About a week later, a contraption constructed of wood and wire netting was delivered to the ship, addressed to the skipper, Sam Benson. He ordered it be placed on Y Deck by the potato and vegetable locker, under the Oerlikon gun. And there it sat, evoking curious glances and many theories as to its purpose, until the day before departure. In the mid-afternoon of that day, Sam Benson handed Able Seaman Ray 'Bluey' Paley two pound notes, with instructions to go ashore and purchase two healthy young laying hens.

A short time later, Paley returned and passed the fowls to Sam, who placed them in their new wire netting home on Y Deck. There was no change from the two pounds (the equivalent of an AB's weekly wage) which were tucked safely away in Paley's pocket. Later in the afternoon it was reported that the Cairns police were looking for a redheaded sailor who had stolen two prime pullets from the fowl house of a Cairns citizen. *Kiama* slipped away quietly early next morning, bound for Milne Bay, New Guinea. Elected as keepers of the fowl house, the Captain's steward, Joe Howell, and officers' steward, Jack Thompson (not the film actor!) were held responsible for the care and wellbeing of the two pullets. They also had to account for all eggs laid.

Now, it was routine that each evening at sunset the crew would close up for action stations, when guns were tested and fired. On the first night out from Cairns, it was the Oerlikon gun that was fired. When action stations ended there were two freshly-laid eggs in the hen house. Consequently, the Captain had two fresh, boiled eggs for breakfast next morning. After a short settling-down peri-



HMAS Kiama entering harbour with crew at 'Procedure Alpha'

od, adjusting to shipboard life, the two stewards assured the Captain that the two birds had each continued to lay one egg a day, usually during or just after action stations. And, although Joe Howell continued to assure Sam that the two eggs he had each morning were fresh from the nest the previous evening, some of the shells were clean while others were stamped QEB (Queensland Egg Board).

Sam Benson never queried this anomaly, and no explanation was ever given, but he regularly commented on how delicious freshly-laid boiled eggs were. Later, one mid-afternoon when *Kiama* was escorting a convoy from Langemak Bay through calm seas to the Admiralty Islands, the alarm was raised. One of the chooks had literally flown the coop, and was strutting casually around Y Deck. Naturally, nobody knew how it had happened. Conveniently, everyone in the area at the time had gone temporarily blind! It was proposed later however, that the breakout probably occurred either during an exchange of QEB eggs for freshly-laid, clean ones, or the surreptitious placement of two QEB eggs in the nest before action stations.

One of the crew tried to catch the fugitive, but it evaded him and flew overboard. There was no way that Sam Benson was going to forego his standard breakfast as easily as that. He turned the ship around, stopped near the chook, and called for a volunteer. 'Lightning' Martin stepped forward, donned his gear, and dived into the sea.

When he reached the water-borne fowl it immediately leapt onto his head and hung on for dear life. Martin began to swim back to the ship, free-style, but every time his arm came over he knocked the startled chook into the sea. Sam Benson quickly assessed the situation. "Swim breast stroke," he yelled. 'Lightning' did so, and brought his bedraggled friend back to safety.

For a while the pair continued to 'lay' QEB eggs. But whether they stopped producing any of their own, or whether Sam finally twigged the game, or just got sick of eggs, we'll never know. Whatever the reason, he eventually gave the chooks to the Petty Officers Mess at Madang, hoping they would do better ashore. They later advised him the baked chooks had been delicious and tender.

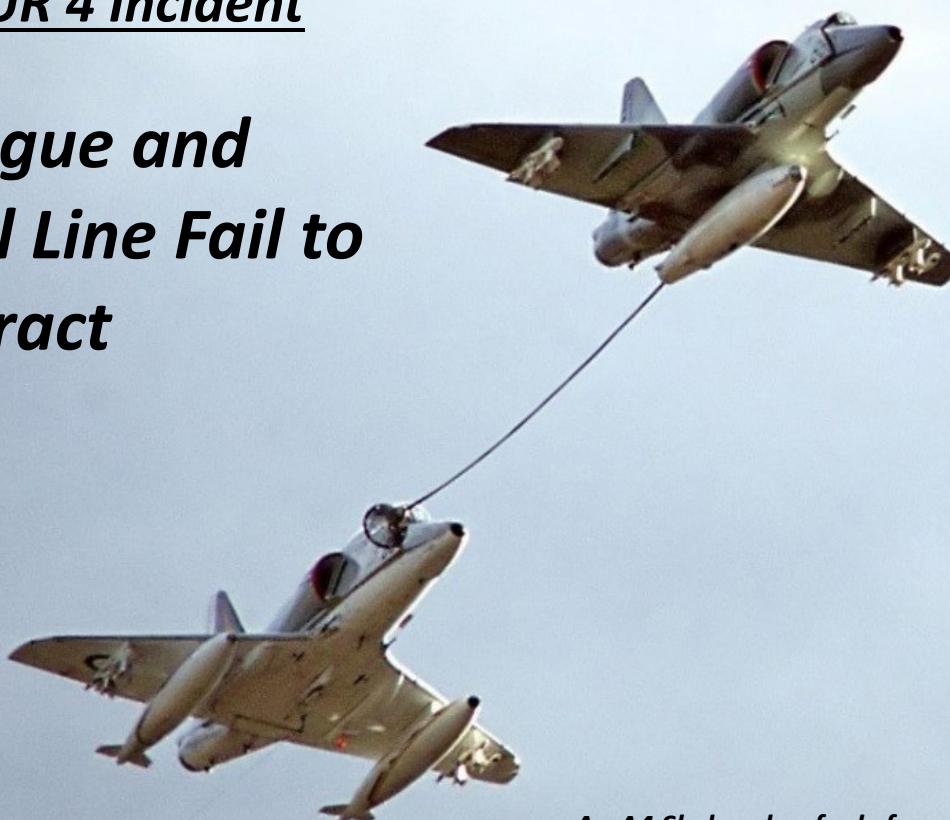
HMAS *Kiama* was a 'Bathurst' Class corvette launched on 3 July 1943, and commissioned on 26 January 1944, with then Lieutenant Samuel J. Benson, RANR (S) in command.



Officers of HMAS Kiama with promoted LCDR Sam Benson RANR (S) in the middle. Other Officers are RANVR

AVTUR 4 Incident

Drogue and Fuel Line Fail to Retract



An A4 Skyhawk refuels from a buddy A4 acting as Tanker .

By Brian Dutch

In the last issue I was investigating the challenge of re-calling the facts relating to a trip in 1974 from RAAF Pearce in Western Australia back to HMAS Albatross.

I was the CO of VC724 Squadron with the role of Skyhawk Operational Flying Training. We flew four Skyhawk aircraft across to RAAF Pearce, refuelling at RAAF Edinburgh in South Australia and on to RAAF Pearce in Western Australia to mark a graduation and award of Wings to Naval students.

We took two Trainer A4G's and two single seat A4G's. The group are shown in the photograph. I note that there must have been a fourth A4 pilot who is not in the photograph and I cannot recall his name.....any volunteers? Perhaps he took the photograph?

The visit was a success and our plan for the return to Nowra was to attempt a non-stop crossing of Australia from West to East by the single seat aircraft. This was potentially possible as there was a very strong Westerly forecast Jet Stream (a very

strong high level wind) behind us at our planned cruising height. The two trainer aircraft would need to land at Edinburgh to refuel before continuing to Albatross.

The two single seaters were flown by Mike Nordeen and by me. I had a re-fuelling pod fitted to my aircraft so that I could top up Mike with fuel if required. It was therefore considered that the two of us could potentially complete the non-stop crossing.

We all set off in a climb into cloud from Pearce and at our cruising level in the Jetstream we were above cloud which obscured the land. When we cleared the cloud I glimpsed the land well to the North of our position and we were over water in the Great Australian Bight! The jet stream was much stronger than forecast and was from a more north westerly direction. I altered course about 30 degrees left and we proceeded towards Edinburgh where the two training aircraft detached and landed to refuel before continuing to *Albatross*.

Mike and I carried out a fuel check and Mike advised that he was happy with his fuel supply and the two of us continued our trip, hoping to complete our non-stop flight. Later, we were over western



From left to right: Clive Blennerhasset, Eddie Bell, Brian Dutch, Ron McKenzie and Mike Nordeen a USN pilot on exchange duty.

Victoria and the sun was starting to set when Mike advised that he was not confident that he had enough fuel, bearing in mind that we had the potential for a night landing at low fuel level.

I streamed the fuel drogue to top up Mike's fuel supply which was successfully achieved. When I attempted to retract the drogue and fuel line the drogue would not retract! As I could not land with the drogue and line extended my only option was to fire a system which cut the fuel line and clamped it closed.

I had to check that I was in a safe position to jettison the drogue and heavy fuel line without damage at ground level. Fortunately we were over the North West of Victoria, the Big Wilderness National Park in the Mallee district. When I was sure that we were in as safe an area as possible, I plucked up courage and cut the drogue and line clear.

Mike now had sufficient fuel however I decided that it would be safest for both of us to return and land at Edinburgh to ensure that the line had cut and sealed so we rather sheepishly called up Edinburgh and returned to refuel and remain overnight.

Next day we returned home to *Albatross* having failed to achieve our non-stop crossing and needing a repair to the re-fuelling system.

All very sad.....

Cheers,

"Lambda".

A contented rationalist.

Thanks to London Legacy!

I wish to thank the President of London Legacy, Simon Kleinig for the article on 'Wife Remembers Husband Killed in Korea' (*Slipstream Sep 2020*) and Trevor Rieck for forwarding the article on. Simon is a Vietnam conscript and TPI and lives with one of his two daughters close to London.

London Legacy helped Naomi put this article together some years ago for their magazine as they did for several other ladies. London Legacy looks after about 200 widows who live overseas. Until Covid London Legacy had an annual fund raising dinner in Australia House. . .Ed

How many are still with us?
No.1 NAVAL AIRMEN RECRUITS—1948



Introduction and Basic Training for No.1 NARs

*(This is the story of the original group of Naval Air-
men Recruits who formed a segment of the for-
mation of the RAN Fleet Air Arm in 1948 in a book-
let written by Les 'Jukie' Matterson. Slipstream
plans to serialise this booklet into chapters, so
many serving and ex-Fleet Air Arm personnel can
share the experience these men undertook. It's a
credit to Les and all those members of No.1 NAR—
1948 who collated all their thoughts into a publica-
tion for future generations to remember. Ed)*

Introduction

1948 was a noteworthy year. The Chifley Labour Government introduced the 40 hour week, pharmaceutical benefits and rehabilitation services. Foreign Minister Dr H V Evatt was elected President of the United Nations General Assembly and the first in-country; mass produced Holden sedans rolled off the assembly line. Bob Dyer began broadcasting his 'Pick a Box' radio programme and Merv Woods won the single sculls rowing event at the London Olympics.

The Royal Australian Naval Air Station (RANAS) Nowra, HMAS *Albatross*, was commissioned on the South Coast of New South Wales as a

shore establishment in support of carrier borne aircraft operations. At Devonport in the United Kingdom, HMAS *Sydney*, a light fleet aircraft carrier, was commissioned for service with the RAN.

However, it was an even more noteworthy year for 60 young Australians. They enlisted in the RAN as Naval Airman Recruits for a period of twelve years, to become the first direct entry aircraft mechanics (airframes and engines) in the new Air Branch. Prerequisites for entry were an age limited to between 17 and 21 years on entry, passing a prescribed educational test and a medical examination. Proof of birth details and a certificate or Headmasters statement showing the highest standard of education attained, were also required on application. An aptitude test was administered also which no doubt assisted the final selection process.

The RAN offered an active lifestyle involving overseas travel, opportunity to visit foreign countries and exciting and interesting work in the service of the nation. The Second World War highlighted the value of the many facets of naval air power and RAN authorities and the Government decided to establish a Naval Air Branch.

Steps had been taken to acquire two light fleet

aircraft carriers and state of the art aircraft. To compensate for the lack of aircraft operating experience in the RAN initially, training was provided by the RN and manning of squadrons and support facilities contained a large proportion of experienced RN personnel, to be reduced gradually as qualified RAN personnel became available to assume operational control.

The 60 Recruits who enlisted in January, February and March from all the mainland states, were classified Naval Airman Recruit (NAR) entries 2, 3 and 4 respectively ⁽¹⁾. They had come from all walks of life and represented the early stages of almost as many civilian occupations as there were individuals.

(Note⁽¹⁾: The earlier entry NAR1 was somewhat anomalous as it was comprised of personnel who would be divided into several categories. The majority were destined to be trained in Air Ordnance. There were also two Bandsmen, an Electrical Artificer and a group who would become skilled Air Mechanics and Aircraft Artificers).

They were dispatched by rail from the capital cities in each state to arrive at Flinders Naval Depot in Victoria for basic naval training as one group. All looked forward expectantly to what the future held in store. What follows is an account of their experience and progress to a competent level as Naval Airman and Mechanics in the airframe and engine trades of the fledgling RAN Air Branch.



Aerial view of HMAS Cerberus (Flinders Naval Depot) in 2014

Basic Training HMAS Cerberus

The new recruits duly arrived at HMAS Cerberus, Flinders Naval Depot (FND), Mornington Peninsula, Victoria during January, February and March 1948 for an introduction to navy life and commencement of basic training.

Well established as a training centre, FND was able to fulfill the RAN's requirement for properly trained seamen, communications personnel, electrical and marine engineers, cooks, supply and medical staff. However, it was not equipped to provide naval aircraft training, which at the time, would be done in the United Kingdom (UK).

Apart from the necessary disciplinary and uniform dress standard, parade ground drill, fitness and small arms training, which are all regular features of the armed forces, a course in basic seamanship was essential for safety and shipboard life at sea.

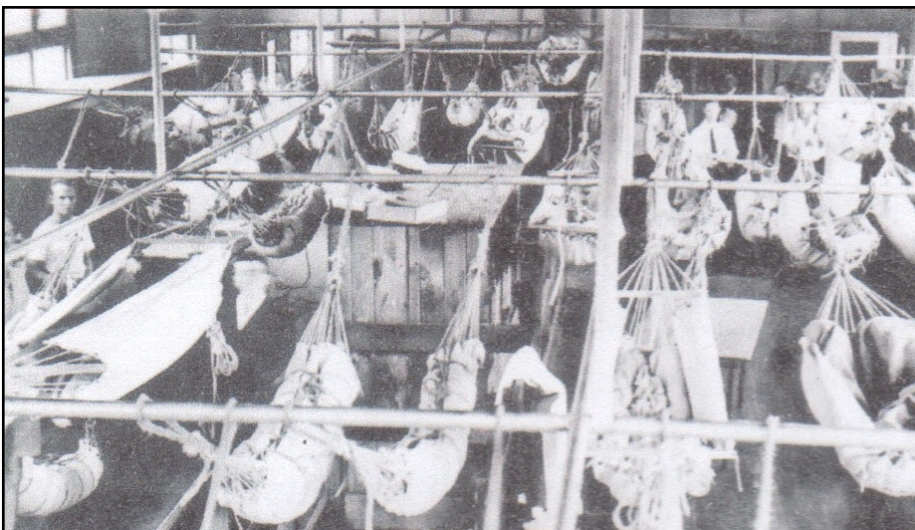
The new arrivals were to be lodged in "H" and "J" Blocks in large dormitory spaces with kit lockers but without beds. They were remote from the main three storey depot accommodation but

there was ready access to toilet, bathing and laundry facilities. Rows of horizontal steel bars suspended about 6 feet above floor level in the dormitory spaces provided the answer to the lack of beds.

These were hammock bars. Hammocks were slung nightly, and each morning lashed into a cylindrical shape, unslung and stowed in a purpose built bin.

Once art of managing the hammock was mastered, it proved to be quite comfortable and a convenient space safer ashore and afloat.

Settling in procedures includ-



Hammocks slung in the Mess Deck of accommodation

ed the issue of a station card and an official number (ON), the latter to remain with the recipient usually for the duration of service. In addition to a hammock, a basic kit issue was also made, comprising: kitbag, bedclothes for hammock, toiletries, caps and ribbons, underwear, boiler suits and belt, boots — one pair heavy; one pair light, socks, khaki shorts, shirts and stockings, jersey, shoe cleaning gear name type for marking clothing in black or white waterproof ink and a “housewife” — a compact sewing/darning clothing emergency repair kit

To ensure clothing was maintained in good condition, all items had to be rolled up individually and laid out with the owner’s name displayed, for inspection (kit muster) whenever required.

A visit was made to the barber for the inevitable regulation hair trim, followed by a familiarisation walk around the establishment to learn the whereabouts of important centres i.e. cafeteria, canteen, post office, sick bay, gymnasium, swimming pool, clothing store, chapel, training classrooms, parade grounds, playing fields.

Early instruction began with aspects of daily routine as published in Daily Orders, discipline, correct dress including some history relating to the naval uniform, and duty watches. The group was divided into three watches (red, white and blue) which meant that members of a watch were on call one day, and one weekend in three, to carry out work after training hours. This usually involved cleaning.

Learning to tell the time by the 2400-hour system was new to the majority. It was expressed in four digits i.e. 0100 for 1.00 am, 0200 for 2.00 am and so on to 1200 noon. Thereafter it became 1300 for 1.00 pm, 1400 for 2.00 pm up to 0000 midnight. Bugle calls announced important events of daily routine such as “wakie wakie” (veille), colours (raising the flag), meal calls, liberty men (shore leave), sunset (lowering the flag) and lights out. Although puzzling initially, they soon became routinely recognizable.

Periods of parade ground drill alternated with other activities to form a balanced programme. Early stages of drill began with recruits dressed in caps, blue boiler suits, heavy boots and green gaiters. It wasn’t a pretty sight. As with all drills practised endlessly, they soon learned to “fall in” on a marker in three columns, dress by right or left at various ordered intervals, stand to attention, right turn, left turn, about turn and stand at ease. Saluting was also practised with tongue in cheek advice that, if at first you were not sure when to salute, it was wise to observe the old rule “if it moves salute it; if it remains still paint it”.

The process of converting a group of recruits into a disciplined squad with the ability to produce a reasonable performance on the parade ground in the course of a few weeks requires a unique type of person. Parade grounds come equipped with them and

usually they become legends. Chief Petty Officer Otto Schmidt seemed born to square-bashing training and, while not of large stature, he was able to project an imposing — sometimes intimidating — presence, usually accompanied by wisecracks and a shower of spittle, making it difficult to look him in the eye at close quarters. While addressing one trainee this situation prompted Otto to remark, “Don’t look up there son — He won’t help you. He’s not in charge of this parade ground — I am!” As the days passed the group progressed to marching in columns of three and in line, executing a multiplicity of parade movements while stepping out, stepping short and slow marching.

This was followed by rifle drill utilising the Lee Enfield rifle with and without fixed bayonets. In these latter stages it became apparent that a reasonable degree of parade ground proficiency had been achieved to the satisfaction of training staff and trainees. This was somewhat remarkable considering the course of injections and inoculations for overseas travel had been administered throughout the period of parade training, often with adverse effects.

As the training progressed an additional kit issue was made, consisting of blue serge bell bottom trousers, jacket, white square neck shirt, collar, silk and lanyard. This was the No.2 uniform to be worn for ceremonial divisions and important occasions. A second uniform set, No.3, was issued for everyday use where the boiler suit would be out of place. Instruction was given on how to wear and care for the uniform, in particular the pressing of the seven traditional horizontal creases into each leg of the trousers. For those wishing to enhance their appearance ashore, it was customary to visit a civilian naval tailor (‘Robbies’ or ‘Seagraves’) who would provide a tighter fitting, finer quality serge uniform than the “pusser” issue, with 32 inch bottoms; a white dickie front to replace the bulkier shirt; a narrow collar; a smaller round white cap and a pair of black shoes — all of which was referred to as “tiddley”, or “tid” gear. These fancier items of kit were deemed to be non-uniform and the risk of confiscation was always present whenever they were taken on board.

Training also included an introduction to the Divisional System in the Navy. This caters for the welfare, guidance, representation and advancement of personnel. Each body of men was divided into manageable groups under the watchful eyes of a senior non-commissioned officer and a divisional officer (DO). Both gave advice, assistance and representation when required. A set of confidential documents, known as the Service Certificate (SC) was also initiated for each sailor to record personal details, postings, employment, qualifications, promotions and performance standard. The SC accompanied a sailor wherever he was posted, being updated regularly as a service history.

Periods of physical training (PT) were scheduled frequently in the mornings. These were conducted in a large gymnasium under the direction of a Physical Training Instructor (PTI). The range of exercises covered warm up, stretching, muscle building and breathing. Some practice in rope climbing, tumbling and break falling was also given.

A minimum swimming standard had to be demonstrated before joining a ship for sea service. Testing of all trainees was phased into the programme and remedial instruction provided for those who failed to qualify initially.

Small arms training, dealing with the description, handling, safety precautions and use of hand carried firearms was a popular subject. The weapons fea-

tured were the Lee Enfield .303 rifle, the Bren, Thompson and Owen machine guns and the hand grenade. Some instruction was also given regarding the duties of an armed party as an aid to civil power. Classroom instruction was followed by a day on the rifle

range with two members qualifying for sharpshooters crossed rifles badges. The remainder enjoyed the experience but not the sore shoulders that lingered for a day or two afterwards.

Gas drill was also a memorable experience. Beginning in the classroom with a description of the gas mask and the gas agents, tear, mustard, phosgene and nerve gas, together with their effects on the human body and the protection needed to avoid such effects. The training concluded with a practical demonstration using tear gas. Having donned and adjusted gas masks as instructed, groups of class members entered a sealed compartment accompanied by an instructor who released tear gas from a canister. After several minutes of checking the effectiveness of the gas masks the group was ordered to remove their masks, exposing them to the gas cloud. When the effects were suitably noticeable the instructor opened the compartment allowing tearful trainees to rush outside for relief in the fresh air - an experience to remain in the memory.

Fire drill was conducted in a similar manner to gas drill. Classroom descriptions of the elements of fire, types of fire and preventative measures led on to hand operated extinguishing appliances and methods of use. Practical training was given in a fireground area to illustrate the operation and effectiveness of the gas-water, pyrene and foam appliances.

Basic seamanship was phased into the programme on a day to day basis. Classroom instruction and practical work were involved. Learning naval terminology was essential. Words such as floor, ceiling, wall and door became deck, deckhead, bulkhead and hatch respectively. Left and right became port and starboard; front and rear became forward and aft or stern - and so it continued as a whole new language was revealed.

As the trainees were not destined to become seamen, familiarisation lectures only were given in ship steering, cables and anchors, buoys, navigation, signalling and ship safety. As a ship at sea requires personnel on duty for 24 hours of every day, watch keepers worked a 4 hour

shift routine. Starting at 0000 hours, the 4 hour watch periods were termed middle, morning, forenoon, afternoon, first and last dog, and first watch. Splitting the evening period into two 2 hour "dogs", allowed for the evening meal at a reasonable time. Passage of time during the



No. 1 Naval Airmen Recruit Course rowing a 32' cutter (10 oarsmen side by side) which differed from the 27' whaler that was smaller and only had 5 oarsmen (2 one side; 3 the other)

watches and hence the day was gauged by striking a bell every half hour, with a maximum of 8 bells representing the end of one watch and the beginning of the next e.g. 0000 ~ 8 bells; 0030 — 1 bell; 0100 — 2 bells, etc to 0400 — 8 bells, when the cycle is repeated.

Ropes and cordage received more emphasis with lessons covering the types and uses of rope (including wire rope), coiling, whipping and splicing. Practical instruction in most aspects of ropework was given including knots, bends, hitches and the rigging of sheerlegs with block and tackle for lifting purposes.

Boatwork followed, beginning with the types of boats, equipment, disengaging gear, hoisting and lowering. One boundary of FND opens onto Westernport via a dockside. At one location a boom extends from the dock over the water providing access by rope or ladder to boats moored below. Some experience at manning and rowing a cutter was gained before the final stage of training commenced.

This comprised a short familiarisation cruise on one of two corvettes, HMAS *Gladstone* and HMAS *Latrobe* moored alongside the dock. Half the group of trainees boarded each vessel for a few days sea experience. This acquainted them with a ships rou-

Continued Page 42

SA Division Report Sep-Dec 2020

By Roger Harrison
SA Whipping Boy



Thank God that shite of a year has been cancelled and a new one taken its place. 2021 must be so much better than 2020 turned out to be even with 2020 vision. I can only hope that most of us have survived the pandemic and started looking toward a better, brighter year with minimal gnashing of false teeth. I personally would be happy if this Covid-19 just targeted the insanely stupid and other drop-kicks who surround our busy lives.

This report will be like our last report in as much as there is little to comment on other than some SA new Members, the National Council Meeting, the death of Beatles bailey, and the colour photos opposite. Will not mention the USA elections.

New Members are Grant Lewis, Gerry Dowling and an Associate Member Kalell Kemp of Hallett Cove. An interesting letter by Kalell appears in this issue of *Slipstream*.

Always a delight to meet the New Members at General meetings or FAAA functions namely the end of year Christmas Sunday Lunch. The next General Meeting after the November Meeting will be Sunday, 17 January 2021 and usually at the Witunga Botanic Gardens at Blackwood depending on the weather pattern. For hot weather extremes we revert to a Members backyard and that will be decided closer to the date and whether we can sober up the weatherman for an informed and accurate weather details for that day.

Recently I had the opportunity to ring Beatles Bailey's wife Ciriporn, to see how she was coping. Well I got the answering machine and it was Beatles speaking from the grave. Almost wet myself on this paranormal experience.

The General Meeting in September held here in South Australia, was well attended by Members and their wives/mistresses as the photos Paul Shiels has included show. I think we were all waiting for that chance to get out and mix it with other humans all be it, carefully. We all looked well, and it was wonderful to see our Henry and Madge Young attend. Not to mention Mal Parrington.

Have read all the Federal Council reports for the October Federal Council AGM as supplied. Great work by stalwart members who never seem to tire. At our November meeting, John Siebert our State Delegate, will pass on what he has gleaned from the "Zoom" Federal Council Meeting held on that morning. Certainly, some issues to talk through and hopefully resolve. I see the West Australian Division still have their resident lawyer working hard for them.

The Slipstream Editor, Paul Shiels, has requested more short stories from us all to be included into our FAAA history via the quarterly Slipstream magazine. We all have a story or two to tell and at some FAAA functions and meetings it's impossible to shut you up. So, jot them down, leave out the expletives, and e-mail them to our hard at work Editor, Paul. Address from the Slipstream magazine.

Paul, please note that I have now corrected the spelling of your surname to Shiels not Sheils as our State Minutes show. For the Queensland Members, I had reversed the "e" and the "i" in his name.

As we all step into this New Year, I will wish each and every one of you throughout this vast country, on behalf of the South Australian Division, a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year. God/Allah bless you all. Covering my arse, to be politically correct. How's it working out?

Regards to you all.

Roger Harrison

(Note: The 18 November 2020 Meeting of the SA Division was cancelled due to COVID-19)

**Proposed Articles
and Reports
for**

Slipstream

Quarter Ending 31 March 2021

**To be forwarded to Editor no
later than 1 March 2021**

Photos of SA Division Sep Meeting and Lunch



On the left Vice President Roger Harrison and President Michael Stubbington

On the right: Dee and Ian Laidler

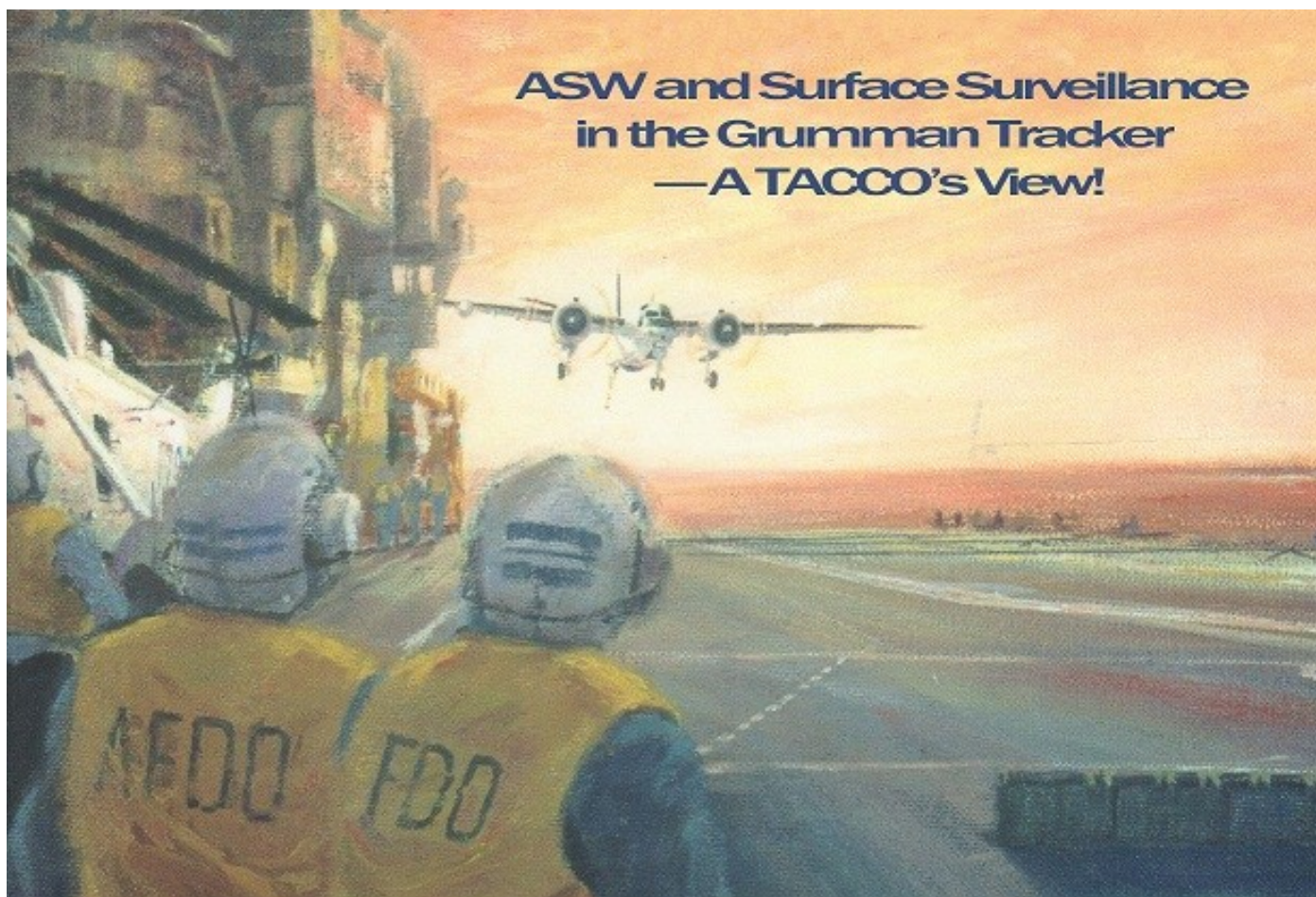


On the left, L to R: Secretary Jan Akeroyd, Eve Gray, Treasurer Gordon Gray, Moira Saywell

Below L to R: Michael Cain, Mal Parrington, Doug Morris, Ruth Morris, Chris Parrington, Kathleen Cain.



Above: Left to right, Ruth Morris, Chris Parrington, Kathleen Cain



Artist David Marshall's painting of a Tracker on short final to HMAS Melbourne

By Jack McCaffrie

From 1967 to 1983 Grumman S2E/G Trackers served in the RAN Fleet Air Arm, primarily as anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft. From the early 1970s VS 816, when embarked in HMAS Melbourne, also undertook surface surveillance and strike direction, in conjunction with VF 805's A-4G Skyhawks. The Trackers also conducted coastal surveillance from Broome and Darwin from the mid-1970s.



This article describes embarked ASW and surface surveillance sorties from the viewpoint of a Tracker tactical coordinator – TACCO. I am grateful to Pete Coulson and Rod Coles, who have bolstered and corrected my own memories, to Chris 'Daffy' Donald for his contribution on the 'back seaters' role and to Lyall O'Donoghue for reflections on flying the beast. My thanks too to Stuart Harwood, Manager of the Museum and John Mortimer, for the Tracker interior photographs.

The Tracker had a crew of four; initially comprising two pilots and two sensor operators, with the junior pilot in the right-hand seat acting as TACCO. The two sensor operators (the 'backseaters') were generally an aircrewman and an observer, with each able to do the job of the other. The front seat crewing

changed after LEUT Theo Burdorf flew a trial period as TACCO while Senior Observer of VS816 in 1970. Then in early 1971 a few of us underwent TACCO Course on VC851. The crew structure change probably came about because the junior pilots were frustrated as TACCOs and the additional costs associated with having two pilots for each aircraft were significant. We observers were also less than happy with our lot. Over the years we developed the concept of mission commander, which had the TACCO responsible for employment of the aircraft, subject of course to the approval of the pilot who was always the aircraft captain.

The sensor operator directly behind the pilot in command (No.3 operator) worked the dry sensors. These were radar, electronic support measures (ESM), magnetic anomaly detector (MAD) and 'sniffer'. The radar was quite effective, although its capability against submarine snort masts was limited in rough seas. I recall once gaining a snort detection at about 20nm. That it was in calm conditions in the South China Sea and that 50 years later I can still remember it, tells you everything. That said, experience and some informal experimenting enabled the operators to achieve some excellent radar results over the years. The ESM detected radar transmissions from either submarines or surface ships and provided a visible bearing and an audible signal, which could also be used to identify particular radars. The main limitation of the ESM against submarines was the reluctance of submariners to trans-



The S2G Tracker Cockpit - the office for the Pilot on the left and TACCO on the right

mit on radar. Our MAD, being short range, 1500 feet swept width at best, was essentially the attack sensor. The recorder pen deflection was very explicit as to how close to the submarine we were.

‘Sniffer’ was an expression of the desperation sometimes involved in trying to find better ways of detecting submarines. It sampled the air through which the aircraft was flying with the aim of detecting the exhaust fumes of snorting submarines. I am not aware of anyone ever having any success with it.

The back right-hand seat No. 4 operator, controlled the wet sensors or sonics. In the S2E, they comprised a vertically mounted recorder with a paper trace which was used for our active sonics – known as Julie. It provided a visual and aural signal of active sonobuoy transmission and (hopefully) return echo from a submarine contact. It could display information from two sonobuoys simultaneously. The passive system (known as Jezebel) displayed information on another paper trace from a recorder lying almost flat at waist level for the operator. This recorder could display sound data from four passive sonobuoys simultaneously. These sonobuoys picked up hull, machinery, and propeller noise from dived or snorting submarines and displayed it as lines at particular frequencies (from 0 to 200Hz). Submarines could be identified by type from the displayed frequencies and the associated analysis of these acoustic signals remains one of the truly dark arts of ASW.

In the S2G model of the Tracker, active and passive sonics information was displayed on a vertically mounted screen and a horizontal paper trace giving 10 times the spectral coverage of the S2E, increasing detection and localisation capability quite significantly. It was an S2G re-sized version of the larger systems in the USN’s P3s at the time.

Information from each of the sensors was fed into the tactical navigation system – the ASN-30 – operated by the TACCO in the front right-hand seat. It could then be displayed on the system screen, located between the pilot and TACCO, as bearings or ranges from the aircraft to the target. Based on the sensor information provided, the TACCO could de-

termine subsequent actions and give the pilot heading and distance to fly. The system was electro-mechanical and depended on doppler information for its navigation input. It also had a very limited information storage facility. The location of the screen made writing on it difficult for us left-handers but nightmarish for the mostly right-handed TACCO tribe.

ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE (ASW) PATROLS

Briefing and Pre-flight

Our ASW sorties from the Melbourne were generally four and a half hours long, whereas surface surveillance sorties were normally six hours. This reduced sortie length took account of the possible exhaustion of ASW stores like sonobuoys and sound underwater signals and the higher fuel usage from the low level manoeuvring associated with ASW localization tactics.

Sortie preparation began well before launch time

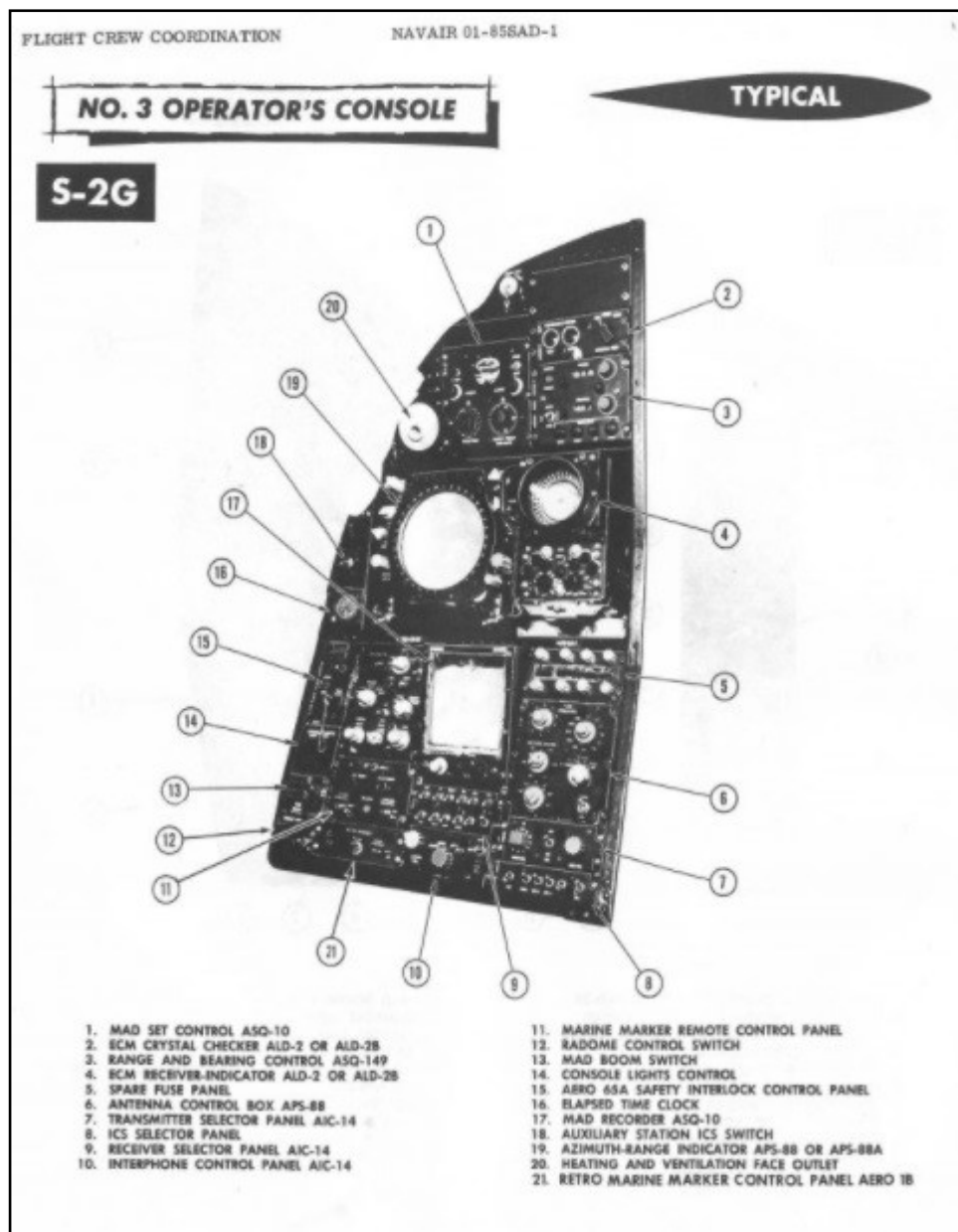


Tracker 844 on anti-submarine patrol with radar down and MAD boom out

and most had a meal before going to the briefing room on 2 Deck, immediately beneath the island. Sortie briefing began 90 minutes before launch, but for the TACCO this was preceded by a visit to the Lower Operations Room, where ship's staff maintained the surface and sub-surface picture and controlled the tactical employment of Melbourne's ASW aircraft. The Ops Room Officer (ORO) gave the TACCO a general idea of the current tactical situation and of the disposition of friendly and other surface ships and hopefully submarines. The TACCO would also speak with the Anti-submarine Air Controller (ASAC) on watch, mostly to establish face to face contact with the person who would pass airborne tasking instructions to the aircraft.

The briefing proper began with a time check to ensure that everyone would be operating with the same time reference – if not necessarily the correct time! It was followed by a weather brief by one of the Meteorological Officers. This was vital for us as, for example, accurate knowledge of the wind was key to accurate navigation. Similarly, whether or not we would require an instrument approach on return could impact on when we would begin our return flight to the ship. We also hoped for an oceanographic forecast, although they were rarely available. Knowledge of the water temperature, at the surface and in the water column, determined how and where sonobuoys would be laid and the preferred depth settings for the hydrophones that extended from them.

The air traffic brief followed, including reference to restricted areas and the state of the ship's air navigation aids. Another important piece of information was the base recovery course (BRC) which was the course the ship expected to be steering for aircraft recovery and around which we planned our holding patterns and instrument approach if needed. Where instrument approaches were anticipated the brief would also include initial approach times and altitudes. These determined the altitudes at which individual aircraft conducted holding patterns at the initial approach fix, departing on the set instrument approach pattern at the allocated initial approach time.



No.3 Operator's console on the left side of the aircraft behind the pilot

The aim was a smooth well-spaced arrival of aircraft at the deck.

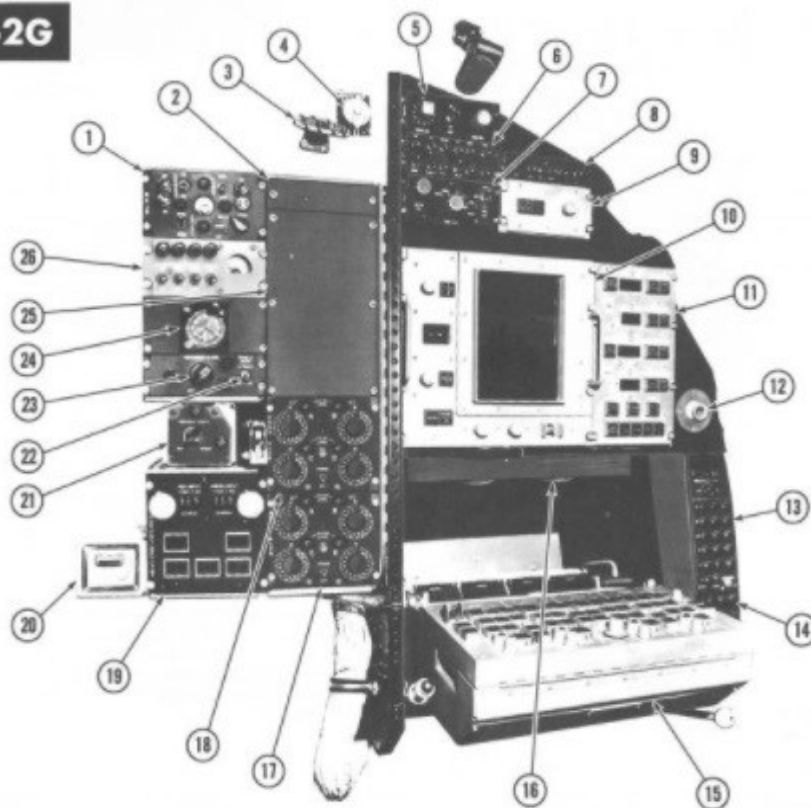
The operations brief was provided primarily by ship's staff but especially with VS 816, the squadron operations officer would also contribute. The brief provided crews with the most up to date tactical picture and with the expected employment of the aircraft after launch. Tactical callsigns for aircraft and ships were also given as well as details of electronic emission procedures. Generally, in major exercises we operated on radio silence and a very limited radar transmission regime. Radio silence meant that while we would broadcast enemy contact reports, we would not expect a response from surface ships. It also meant that the carrier's air navigation aids (and those of the DDGs if any were in company) would be operated only on a very limited basis, if at all.

After the formal brief crews gathered to discuss the tactics to be used for the sortie, after which all but the TACCO of each crew would head for the flight deck to pre-flight their aircraft. Invariably, the TACCO would spend several minutes preparing his

NO. 4 OPERATOR'S CONSOLE

TYPICAL

S-2G



1. MC/R CONTROL INDICATOR
2. BLANK PANEL (PROVISIONS FOR CASS GENERATOR CONTROL)
3. MK4 LIFE RAFT RELEASE HANDLE
4. UTILITY RECEPTACLE
5. TRANSMITTER SELECTOR PANEL AIC-14
6. RECEIVER SELECTOR PANEL AIC-14
7. INTERPHONE CONTROL PANEL AIC-14
8. ICS SELECTOR PANEL AIC-14
9. DIRECTIONAL LISTENING CONTROL AQA-7(V)
10. BEARING FREQUENCY INDICATOR AQA-7(V)
11. BEARING FREQUENCY INDICATOR CONTROL PANEL AQA-7(V)
12. HEATING AND VENTILATION OUTLET
13. GROUP I SONOBUOY RELEASE INDICATOR LIGHTS

14. GROUP II SONOBUOY RELEASE INDICATOR LIGHTS
15. SIGNAL DATA RECORDER AQA-7(V)
16. RECORDER ILLUMINATION LIGHTS
17. SONG NO. 2 RADIO SET CONTROL ASB-75
18. SONG NO. 1 RADIO SET CONTROL ASB-75
19. SONAR RANGE BEARING CONTROL ASQ-149
20. ASH TRAY
21. CONSOLE LIGHTS CONTROL
22. SONG 2 AUDIO SWITCH
23. RECORDER ILLUMINATION SWITCH
24. ELAPSED TIME CLOCK
25. BLANK PANEL
26. TAPE RECORDER REMOTE CONTROL PANEL AQH-5(V)

A-SAD1 MAR-7

No.4 Operator's console on the right side of the aircraft behind the TACCO

charts and the plastic overlays that fitted on the screen of the ASN-30. TACCOs would then participate in the pre-flight inspection, having checked the aircraft maintenance release to determine whether there were any 'acceptable and deferred' unserviceabilities in the aircraft. Thus, for example, the doppler system, which fed the tactical navigation system, could be an acceptable unserviceability which would not prevent the aircraft from flying. It just meant that the TACCO would have to work a lot harder. The TACCO also received the armament loading sheet from one of the squadron armourers. This would indicate which sonobuoys were in which sonobuoy chutes and how many of each particular store we carried. Once airborne, even though the pilot released all stores and weapons the TACCO was responsible for ensuring selection of the correct stores for each drop.

After manning the aircraft, each crewmember conducted equipment pre-start checks, with the pilot and TACCO conducting the standard multi-crew

challenge and reply procedure in the cockpit. Following engine start and the arrival of electrical power the pre-taxi checks were done, wings were spread, flight control surfaces were checked for full and free movement and engine run ups were conducted. At this point, the crew door would open and a piece of paper would be handed in to one of the back seat crew, for the TACCO. This contained the most up to date 'estimate' from the navigator of the ship's most likely position for our recovery at the end of the sortie.

After completing pre-take off checks the aircraft taxied onto the catapult and the stop was attached between the aircraft and catapult shuttle – this was the means by which the aircraft was pulled forward when the catapult fired. A small metal fitting, the holdback, was also attached to the underneath of the aircraft near the tail. This held the aircraft at full power before shearing when the catapult fired.

With the engines at full power both pilot and TACCO made a final check of all instruments before the TACCO saluted the Flight Deck Officer and awaited the thump as we accelerated along the 30m of

catapult track before getting airborne.

On Patrol

Once safely airborne, wheels and flaps up, after take-off checks completed, we made our way to patrol altitude, often just 1,000 feet. If radio silence was not in force the TACCO would establish tactical communications with the ASAC in Melbourne's Ops Room and also with any surface units involved in the sortie. The sensor operators got busy too and both radome and MAD boom would be extended and sensors tuned for the search.

At this point too, the tacco generally disconnected his control column, folding it against the instrument panel and providing a little more working room. This was needed because we used a chartboard resting on our knees as our 'desk'. The chartboard was simply a piece of three-ply cut to the TACCO's preferred size and on which the navigation chart and logs were clipped – very fancy! Note pads which could be used for logs were also carried on knee

pads which were strapped to our thighs. Logs were used to record navigation details and provide a narrative of the sortie, including such information as tactical employment, communications and time and location of sonobuoy and other stores deployment. The TACCO also kept the fuel log.

With ASW sorties generally conducted relatively close to the carrier, we were 'on task' within minutes of launching and would navigate with the ASN-30, which worked well on the larger range scales, or 'manually' on the chartboard. Once in the assigned search area we would lay a passive sonobuoys pattern in a position of high submarine probability. Patterns normally comprised eight sonobuoys laid in two rows, with the buoys spaced about five kilometres apart and each of the two rows separated by a similar distance. The buoy positions would be memorized in the ASN-30 which could store up to 20 positions – luxury indeed! These passive buoys listened for the sounds made by submarine machinery, propellers and even hull motion through the water. Detection ranges were usually respectable when submarines were 'snorting' to charge batteries, as they generated more noise. Dived submarines operating on batteries were a much more difficult proposition.

With a pattern laid, the No 4 operator would begin monitoring, four sonobuoys at a time. The paper trace on his recorder showed frequency against time and the four pens (one per sonobuoy channel) that swept across the recorder and burnt into the paper built a picture of fuzzy non-discrete sound from background noise and lines at specific frequencies that came from sound sources on a submarine. It could take up to 10 minutes before a recognizable picture was generated.

Simultaneously, the No. 3 operator would monitor the ESM for submarine radar transmissions – rare events in our experience. He would also be conduct-

ing an intermittent radar search, with brief scans followed by several minutes of silence. The radar search was used mainly to keep the submariner honest, if he was trying to expose radar or other masts above the surface.

All this time, both pilot and TACCO, using the Mk One eyeball, kept up a visual search – a daylight only option of course. This search phase could be quite relaxed and often provided the opportunity, at least for pilot and TACCO, to try the inflight meal – or box lunch - comprising a cold meat salad with a piece of fruit and some fruit juice. Of course, if anything was ever going to happen it did so once the meal was spread out on one's lap; most memorably for me not off the ship, but during the Bass Strait oil rig patrols in the early 1980s. It was a Sunday afternoon, I was just about to tuck in and while glancing out towards the nearby oil rig, to my astonishment saw a periscope not more than about 500 metres from the rig. That was the end of lunch, as we sent a locating report to Operations at Nowra and had a closer look. We had neither sonobuoys nor a No. 4 operator and so were unable to take advantage of our discovery. It was one of our boats, engaged in special operations training and no one was supposed to know of its presence. Sprung!

Localization

If the No. 4 operator gained a submarine contact the fun started. The TACCO would transmit an enemy contact report, including position and an estimate of contact course and speed, with an assessment of the confidence level of the detection. Apart from alerting the carrier, the enemy contact report would attract any surface units in the area to assist with a sonar search. Similarly, any dipping sonar helicopters close by would seek to join in. Thus, as well as directing the pilot and sensor operators, the TACCO could now find himself having to keep the other

units apprised of developments and recommending employment for them. For this period the TACCO would be Scene of Action Commander, a task that we would normally hand over to a surface ship because of its greater capacity to manage.

If he hadn't already done so, the TACCO would now stow his chartboard and begin to prosecute the contact using the ASN-30 – it just wasn't feasible to manually navigate through localization patterns in any timely way. The sonobuoy on which the No. 4 operator had contact became the datum – the best known posi-



Tracker 845 ready on the catapult of HMAS Melbourne



***Trackers 856, 851, and 847 in formation along
the south coast of NSW***

tion of the submarine and we made haste to get to that position, to limit the distance that the submarine would have moved from it. For the Tracker, localization involved active sonobuoys and there were two variations on this. In either case, the standard tactic was to place a pattern of five buoys in the water, with one on the datum and the other four spread around the datum 90 degrees from each other and at a radius of 3,000 yards (It was yards then!). These patterns were laid at as low a level as was allowed – 100 feet by day and 300 feet by night – so that the No. 3 operator stood the best chance of gaining a random MAD contact if we overflew the submarine while laying the pattern.

The simpler of the two active localization options was to use the SSQ-47 active sonobuoys. These buoys transmitted a sonar pulse and received echoes in the same way as the active sonar in helicopters and surface ships – only over a shorter range. This was the simpler but much more expensive option, so we rarely carried more than six of these buoys.

The more complicated option was known as Explosive Echo Ranging or Julie. The system was called Julie in honour of Miss Julie Gibson, an exotic dancer at a club near the system's Canadian development laboratory (largely to match the name given to the passive system – Jezebel.) It involved using the more numerous passive buoys (SSQ-41) and exciting them with an explosive charge called a Signal Underwater Sound (SUS). Charges could be laid at varying activation depths coincident with a buoy and/or distant from it to produce echoes and ranges. Today it would be called multi-static sonar. Julie required very high levels of crew co-operation, as indicated below, to render results.

In both options the aim (or hope) was to get what we called 'double echoes', which meant getting an echo from each of two buoys. This would give us a

pair of range circles which intersected in two places; thus providing us with two possible locations for the submarine. Then we would put another buoy in the water in a position such as to create the possibility of another set of 'double echoes' and intersecting range circles and thus solving the ambiguity in submarine position.

While straightforward when using the SSQ-47 active buoys, the process was complex and time-consuming with Julie. To create every sonar transmission a SUS had to be put into the water and to get an 'accurate' range the SUS had to be placed on the extension of the line joining the two selected sonobuoys. This made for almost constant low level manoeuvring

by the pilot and total reliance on the navigation system to provide accurate bearing and distance to run information, to enable accurate sonobuoy and SUS placement. Needless to say, the navigation system did not always cooperate.

Another complication associated with Julie was that SUS could be dropped to explode at two different depths, 60 and 800 feet. This meant that the No. 4 operator had to start his clock when the pilot dropped the one or two SUS and wait about 10 seconds for a shallow SUS to explode and about 40 seconds before the deep obliged. Often, before that deep SUS had exploded the pilot had dropped one or two more on another buoy. Keeping track of this was no mean feat in the back seats and more often than not the No. 3 operator helped by running his own clock for EER timing and telling the No. 4 which buoys to listen to. In my time as a No. 4 operator I often added another degree of difficulty, by holding a sick bag in one hand, while trying to measure ranges on the Julie recorder with the other....yes, like a one-armed paper-hanger in a snow storm.

If we gained an unambiguous submarine position, the next step was to refine the localization enough to allow for an attack. With two or three sets of double echoes we would normally have a reasonable idea of the submarine's track and would then turn to the MAD for attack criteria positioning. We did this either by flying up the submarine track and looking to gain a MAD contact or by setting up a small diameter (1,500 yards) low level circle around the last known submarine position and hoping to gain a MAD contact as the submarine continued on its way.

Ultimately, the aim was to gain three MAD contacts along the track of the submarine; thus providing attack criteria. Needless to say, submarines rarely cooperated by steering a straight course. Localization in this way was an incredibly intense activity and a

real test of crew coordination. After 45 minutes to an hour of it we all tended to be pretty well wrung out and quite often we would also have exhausted our store of SUS and maybe even sonobuoys.

Night flying provided some additional challenges, not least for the pilot, as flying at 300 feet over the dark ocean demanded great concentration. Once engaged in localization he had to take account of the lights in the water denoting the sonobuoys and the flame from the markers dropped with each buoy, as they could sometimes be confused with stars. Night vision was vital and this often led to a 'conflict' with the TACCO. The instrument lighting was red and while it was ideal for night vision retention it had its limitations otherwise. The TACCO needed enough light to be able to see his chart and logs and the only light available was from the so-called 'wander light,' a movable flashlight which fitted onto the cockpit coaming in two positions; directly above and in front of the TACCO or off to starboard above his right shoulder. The light position directly in front worked just fine until bending one's head over the chartboard, when the helmet blocked the light.

The wander light had a variable setting, allowing anything from full red light to full white light. The ideal amount of white light for the tacco was inevitably just too much for the pilot and his need for night vision, so there was a constant game of minor adjustments in the hope of a suitable compromise.

One of the few enjoyable aspects of night flying for the TACCO was the opportunity to use the searchlight – all 70 million candlepower of it – which was located on the starboard wing, outboard of the weapon stations. It was operated by a pistol grip trigger positioned at waist level to the TACCO's right. The TACCO relied on the radar operator to con the aircraft to a position from which the searchlight could illuminate the target, 'lighting off' at one and a half miles (about 3km) range. It really did light up the night and many of us will remember chasing Singapore Navy patrol boats amongst the merchant shipping traffic in the Straits.

Getting back on board on completion of the sortie was almost always an interesting evolution, although far more straightforward in daytime. 'Charlie time' ruled everything and was the time – plus or minus 15 seconds – each aircraft had to cross the round down. Everything about the launch and recovery procedure was focused on the ship remaining on a steady course for the minimum time, especially if there was a submarine threat. So, we always aimed to be in the 'Delta' or holding pattern above the ship a few minutes before Charlie time. This was rarely a problem on ASW sorties because we operated relatively close to the ship but for surveillance sorties it was sometimes trickier with longer transits, especially if the ship was not in the briefed or expected position.

Pre-landing checks were done before joining the circuit and the landing checklist was normally done on the downwind leg - flown at 350 feet in daytime

and 600 feet at night, after which the TACCO would separately review and report that the checklist was complete – especially hook, flaps and wheels down. Soon after turning on the base leg we would pick up the lights from the mirror landing system and once the pilot was satisfied, the TACCO would call the 'Ball' together with fuel state. After straightening up on finals the pilot flew the glideslope provided by the mirror, focusing also on lineup with the angled centre line and on airspeed. In those final seconds, the Landing Safety Officer (LSO) from his platform, aft on the port side of the flight deck, also gave the pilot guidance relating to glideslope, lineup and airspeed. The TACCO also weighed in if he noted the need for any corrections.

Once the aircraft was arrested the TACCO retracted the flaps so that the wings could be folded prior to the aircraft taxiing forward to whichever parking spot was available. Then post-landing and shutdown checks were done. Debriefing was normally an informal chat with the crew to cover any matters of importance from the sortie. In the event that there had been any 'action' the tacco would also go to the Lower Ops Room and discuss the situation with the ORO on watch, not least to ensure no misunderstandings relating to any reports made by the aircraft during the sortie.

If the sortie was part of a major exercise, the TACCO would then normally produce fair copies of his narrative and navigation logs and charts so that post-exercise reconstruction and analysis could be conducted. This often took the best part of an hour.

SURFACE SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance sorties tended to be more straight forward than ASW missions. Everything up to the point of getting airborne was the same as for an ASW mission, except that we generally carried no more than six sonobuoys and at most a small number of SUS.

We usually relied on manual navigation – on the chartboard – rather than using the ASN-30 – for these sorties, because if there was a large number of surface contacts, then they were more simply and more accurately plotted with HB pencil on the chart than with greaseproof pencil on the ASN-30 overlay. Generally our task was to find and track either a single warship or a force of ships, often with the complication of merchant shipping amongst which the target ship or ships tried to 'disappear'.

Surveillance sorties sometimes involved quite long transits to the allocated search area: I recall one of 300 miles (about two hours) during Exercise Kangaroo One. Transit would normally have been at 1,000 feet. Once in the search area radar became the prime sensor with ESM as a backup. Our targets were most unlikely to radiate on radar as the naval search radars had distinctive signatures which we

would have picked up easily. They would have relied on their own ESM systems in trying to detect our radar transmissions. So, we always used intermittent radar search patterns, limiting transmissions as much as possible, consistent with building our surface picture and then maintaining it.

Identifying targets was difficult in the presence of heavy merchant shipping traffic and often it was only when the 'target' did something different that suspicions were aroused. We relied on visual confirmation of any ship we considered to be the 'target' and of course this was possible only in daylight. It meant approaching the suspect ship at very low level and frequently the authorized minimum altitude of 100 feet would be well and truly challenged. We aimed to get a visual confirmation, using the good old Pussers binoculars, as quickly as possible, and outside notional missile engagement range for the target ship, after which we would make a very shallow turn away. Our aim was not to appear above the horizon for any sharp-eyed lookouts on the target.

Once having established target identity, the task then became one of shadowing the target and providing guidance for the A-4 strike that would usually be launched as close to first light as possible. This involved remaining at low altitude and beyond radar/ESM range of the target, and frequently checking with our own radar the target's position, course and speed.

To coordinate the strike we passed a coded track and distance from the carrier to an initial point (IP) which we established some 20 to 30 miles from the target. We used our own patented 'NOSLUOC'

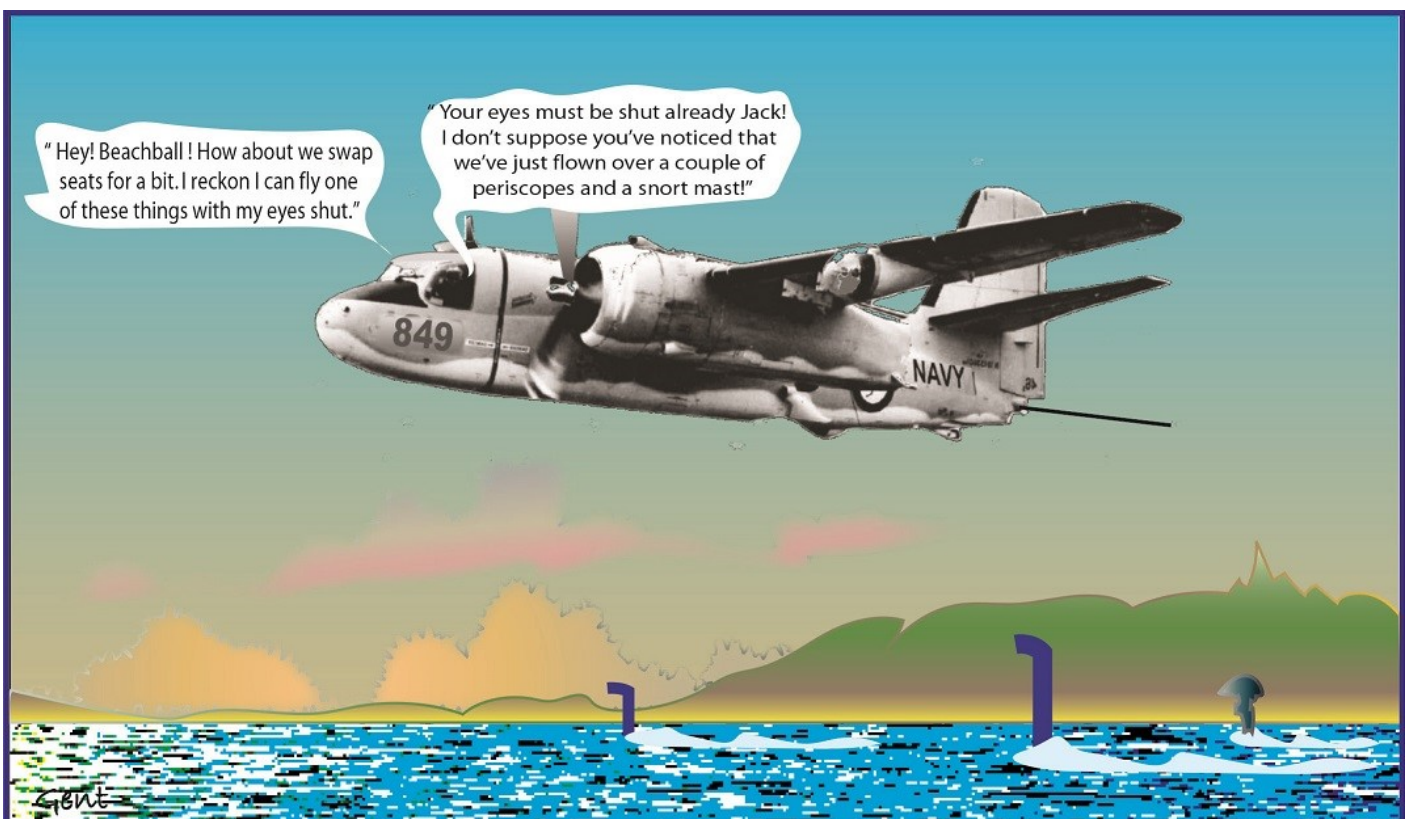
code, devised by Peter Coulson, for this. Once we had established the initial point and knew that the strike was airborne we generally laid a number of smoke floats in a line from the initial point along the track towards the target, as a guide to the strike.

The strike leader made very brief radio contact with the surveillance aircraft as the strike neared the initial point at which stage the TACCO passed to him the coded track and distance from IP to target. Once the strike departed the IP – at very low level – our job was done and so began the long flog back to the ship.

Conclusion

We all found the TACCO job in the Tracker to be immensely rewarding and challenging. Similarly, the opportunity to fly from the *Melbourne* was a career highpoint for all of us who did it, however long we served. We were fortunate to have been part of a very capable Air Group and to have been very well supported by the ship in all that we did.

Within the limits of the number of aircraft embarked, the Tracker, Skyhawk and Wessex/Seaking Air Group was a very capable unit and proved itself to be so in the major exercises in which we participated. I think we would have backed ourselves against any surface force that didn't have airborne early warning – and that was virtually all surface forces then. I would not necessarily make the same claim in respect to submarine threats but we still provided a very capable ASW effort for the carrier and other supported units.



No. 1 Naval Airmen Recruits Basic Course. . . continued from Page 31



HMAS Gladstone preparing to come alongside

tine and movement at sea. Slings and sleeping in a hammock was different also. Actually seeing the construction of the ship and its compartments and hatch markings, and witnessing how it was controlled from the bridge, reinforced recent instruction. Heaving the “lead” by line from the bow of the ship to ascertain the depth of water in fathoms and the nature of the bottom was also demonstrated.

After disembarking at FND the trainees were informed they were to proceed on home leave before joining HMAS *Kanimbla* for sea passage to the UK to undergo aircraft technical training.

No shore leave had been allowed for the first six weeks of training, after which non-duty personnel were free to take weekend leave. Victorians within easy travel distance usually went home. Others spent their free time in the Depot or surrounding countryside. Crib Point railway station was a short distance from the Depot main gate and less than an hours train travel from Flinders St station, Melbourne. There were frequent trips to the city for sightseeing, the races, movies and the theatre. Two popular musicals, *Oklahoma* and *Annie Get Your Gun*, were featured during this time. Many also called into Young and Jacksons public bar to sample a few ales and ogle “Chloe”, the renowned nude masterpiece displayed there. On the other hand all trainees who remained on board during the weekends were required to attend a church service.

Without private means, recreational aspirations were somewhat limited as a recruit’s pay amounted to eight shillings and six pence (85 cents) per day, plus a clothing upkeep and replacement allowance of one shilling (10 cents) per day. This amounted to the princely sum of three pounds six shillings and six pence (\$6.65) per week. Even though the price of goods and services was a fraction of today’s charges, budgeting was essential.

As in all disciplined services, the Navy had its own corrective measures for dealing with misdemeanours and crime. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, the punishment awarded could range from discharge (SNLR — Services No Longer Required), cell confinement, rifle drill outside training hours, stoppage of leave or pay, or both. The accused was paraded before a senior authorized officer for a summary trial where the charge was presented by a member of the Naval Regulating Branch (“Crushers”), usually the Master at Arms. The accused Divisional Officer would proffer evidence or favourable comments on his client’s behalf. If found not guilty of the charge, the case was dismissed, otherwise punishment to fit the crime was awarded.

Although there were a few misdemeanours, none of the trainees committed any serious offences during the training period.

Three months had elapsed since 60 raw recruits, most between eighteen and twenty years of age, had arrived at FND. Living in such close quarters they quickly got to know one another and to appreciate individual eccentricities and abilities. Friendships that would strengthen in the years ahead had taken root. Basic naval training had been successfully completed and all had come through with flying colours.

**(Next issue ‘Sea Passage to the UK’ and
‘Naval Aircraft Basic Training’)**



HMAS LaTrobe leaving Port Melbourne; circa 1950

G'Day from WA—Report for Period Sep-Dec 2020

By Sharron Spargo

There is little doubt that 2020 has well and truly earned the title of 'annus horribilis', although for us here in the West, it has been business as usual, for the most part. Our division has been able to meet again since August and our attendance figures remain as healthy as ever. As Covid has impacted the rest of Australia and the world, we here remain thankful for our good luck and look forward to being able to welcome friends and family from the eastern states again soon.

This year we lost member Jeff Moore, who served with the first contingent RANHFV 1967/68 recently and Lyle Donahue, a former Tracker pilot, is battling pancreatic cancer while former aircrewman Brian Wilkinson is also unwell. Our thoughts are with them and their families.

I was one of many members who attended the funeral of the beloved wife of Alan Winchcombe, the lovely Sandy (Sandra) this week. Attendees were asked to wear colourful outfits and Alan and Sandy's friends rose to the occasion with all colours of the rainbow on display. It was a beautiful service and after a long illness, Sandy, the much loved, compassionate, funny, caring, and ever elegant Lady, is now at peace.

November marks the 100th Anniversary of the Naval Association and the W.A. section held a commemorative ceremony on Sunday 1 November which was held indoors as the weather was unusually wet and windy. Greg Kelson, Keith and Doris Taylor, Theo Bushe-Jones and I attended, along with a good crowd of Veterans and serving members and Commodore Bret Dowsing (Rtd) was a popular keynote speaker.

A formal dinner was held on Wednesday 4 November with Greg Kelson, Theo Bushe-Jones and I again in attendance. The State President Ian Holt-house and Commodore Robert (Bob) Trotter OAM (Rtd) addressed a good crowd and Bill Ritchie, as the oldest member present, cut the impressive cake.

Jack Douperouzel celebrated his 90th birthday on 8 November with his daughter and son-in-law hosting his party on a lovely Sunday afternoon.



Jack was the life of the party and thoroughly enjoyed sharing stories with his loving extended family and friends and remains in good health. So much so that his stamina on the day put us much younger guests to shame!

The home of the West Australian division, Rosie O'Grady's in Northbridge for the past 20 years is not going to close in the immediate future and will continue to be our home base. Our thanks to the new Management.

At our October meeting the members were asked for their thoughts regarding the quoted cost of the software update needed for Slipstream/Flyby and how it would be funded, with donations from members being one option. Joint member and National

Continued Page 44

DEATH NOTICES

COOK, Colin. Ex-LCDR. Passed away on 29 August after a lengthy battle with brain cancer. He is survived by his wife Joan, their three daughters, a son and six grandchildren.

DeBOECK, Henry. Passed away aged 90 in late November. He was a member of the SA Division since 2000. Sadly, no one in the SA Division was aware of his death and no further details are available at this stage,

Roger Harrison, Vice President

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

(Published previously in Slipstream Sep 2020 on-line issue only)

FALKINER, Graham, ex-LEUT. Passed away on Saturday 17 October 2020, in Perth WA, Graham was aged 84 years. He is survived by his wife Susan, children Digby and Kathy and grandchildren Daniel, Dylan, Jemima and Jescinta.

McGOWAN, Alan (Smiley). A member of the Victoria Division died in late November aged 88. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

Mal Smith, Sec Victoria Division

PIERSON, Bob ex-WO EA died on Saturday 21 November in Wollongong Hospital from medical complications. Bob's burial service was held in the Chapel, Shoalhaven Memorial Gardens, Worrige Road Worrige on 30 November. He is survived by his wife Betty.

Warren Baker

STANTON, Paul, ex-Leading Seaman SAR Diver passed away early on 8 November at Wesley Hospital Brisbane aged 71. Paul's cremation service was held on 13 November and was attended by several Fleet Air Arm personnel. He is survived by his devoted wife, Margaret.

Mick Storrs

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

Victoria is out of Lockdown—Report for Sep-Dec 2021

By Mal Smith

Greetings to all members from the Victoria Division.

As you are all no doubt aware, we here in Victoria are out of lockdown after a fairly dismal winter. There has not been much to report for many months but as we are coming out of lockdown, and once again able to enjoy a relatively normal life, hopefully we will have some good news in the New Year.

By the time this issue of Slipstream goes to print we will have had our December Meeting/Christmas Breakup. This will be our first opportunity to get together since last February and the numbers who have indicated that they will attend should make this an enjoyable day. This is something we are looking forward to and it will be great to catch up with some old friends.

Sad to report the passing of Alan (Smiley) McGowan since our last report. Many older members will remember Alan fondly. He was 88, a Korean and Vietnam Veteran who served from 1950-1974. Alan served in HMA Ships *Sydney* and *Melbourne*. Other drafts included naval estab-



lishments: HMA Ships *Kuttabul*, *Harman*, *Melville*, *Lonsdale*, *Albatross* and *Cerberus*. Unfortunately Alan passed away during our lockdown which meant that we were unable to attend his funeral. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

I'm sure the details will be well covered elsewhere in this issue but our Federal Council Meeting was held in October on Zoom. The meeting went well and my thanks to Terry Hetherington for his splendid organizing. Whilst I accept that there was little option in the current climate, I am not a great fan of these Zoom meetings. I much prefer face to face meetings. I guess I'm just getting old and grumpy.

I mentioned in my last Victoria Division newsletter that The Museum at HMAS *Cerberus* is closing. I'm sure a lot of members have had a nostalgic stroll through the museum over the years and it is sad to see it closing. The exhibits are being distributed to several local service organizations. The massive amount of work being undertaken at *Cerberus* means space is at a premium and the area that holds the museum is required for other uses.

Wishing all members a safe, happy and healthy New Year.

Yours Aye
Mal

WA Report Continued from Page 43

Executive was another proposal discussed as was the full funding by the National Executive and our members voted that the funding should come solely from the National Executive.

Mr Peter King, Deputy Commissioner DVA (WA) accepted the division's invitation to talk to the members about the new initiatives that DVA have developed and are now in use. Peter is making himself available to all Ex and Serving Members groups to explain how the new initiatives will improve communications between members and DVA with emphasis on the partnership with Defence which will allow members and their families a meaningful connection with DVA and its services, before their separation from the ADF.

The new system aims to streamline processing for 40 of the most common claims; reducing paper-based forms; increasing use of MyService and the very comprehensive support network now in place. The Australian Defence Veteran's Covenant enshrined in legislation in November 2019; the use of e-news bulletins to reach veteran communities and regular engagement with Ex-Service organisations within the boundaries of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

We would like to wish all members and their families and happy and safe Christmas, and we live in hope of a much brighter, healthier New Year.

Sharron

Obituaries

LCDR Colin Cook RAN (Rtd)

Fleet Air Arm veteran Lcdr Colin Cook (Rtd.) sadly passed away on 29 August after a lengthy battle with brain cancer.

Colin joined the RAN as a Junior Recruit in 1962 and had a long and distinguished career in the Fleet Air Arm both in Australia and overseas. He gained an SD commission in 1980 and dedicated almost 50 years of his life to the RAN FAA.

Colin was highly respected throughout the service. A good all-round sportsman, he represented Navy in rugby and squash and was prominent in Dempster Cup rugby in the 60's and 70's.

In later years, Colin also made a significant contribution to Legacy and was an active member for more than 20 years in the Shoalhaven and South Coast areas.

Col was a champion bloke, one of the best. A great friend to many and well thought of by all. A wonderful family man, he is survived by his wife Joan, their three daughters, a son and six grandchildren.

Alan (Smiley) McGowan RAN (Rtd)

Alan died in late November aged 88 years of age. He was fondly remembered by members of the Victoria Division.

He served from 1950-1974 in the Fleet Air Arm with service in HMA Ships *Sydney* and *Melbourne*. With service in these two ships, Alan was recognised for his service in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Alan had several drafts to Naval Shore Establishments including: HMA Ships *Kuttubul*, *Harman*, *Melville*, *Lonsdale*, *Albatross* and *Cerberus*.

Mal Smith, Secretary Victoria

LS Paul Stanton RAN (Rtd)

Paul had suffered from lung cancer which was in remission – but, it quietly reappeared and he was admitted to hospital a few days before his death.

A qualified Ship's Diver, Paul was posted to *Albatross* in the late 60s to become a SAR Diver. He paid off some ten years later and lived at Dayboro in Queensland.

Paul was cremated at the Pinaroo Crematorium Bridgeman Downs, Brisbane on Friday 13 November 2020. His funeral was well attended including by several ex-FAA mates from 723 Sqn.

Mick Storrs

LCDR Gordon Edgecombe RAN (Rtd)

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

LEUT Graham Falkiner RAN (Rtd)

LEUT Graham Falkiner, died on 17 October 2020 in Perth WA, aged 84 years.

Graham joined the Navy in early 1955 as a member of Naval Airman Aircrew Course 18. After earning his "Wings", he was posted to HMS *Gannet*, Eglington, Northern Ireland, for training as an anti-submarine warfare pilot on Gannet aircraft. He was posted to 816 Squadron (Gannets) on his return to Australia in 1958 and thereafter undertook service in HMAS *Melbourne* (816) and HMAS *Albatross* (724) until his retirement in 1964 on completion of his Short Service Commission

John DaCosta

WO Bob Pierson RAN (Rtd)

Bob died on Saturday 21 November in Wollongong Hospital from medical complications. His funeral service was held in the Chapel, Shoalhaven Memorial Gardens, Worrigee Road Worrigee on 30 November.

He is survived by wife Betty and other members of his family.

Bob will have been known to many, particularly the Fleet Air Arm community. One aspect of his life that will be remembered by many Naval Apprentices (MOBIs) is of a larger than life Naval Apprentice from the early years belting out the marching beat from the MOBI Band on the big base drum!!

Warren Baker and Bob Mummery

The Fleet Air Arm Boys

by Steve Bond

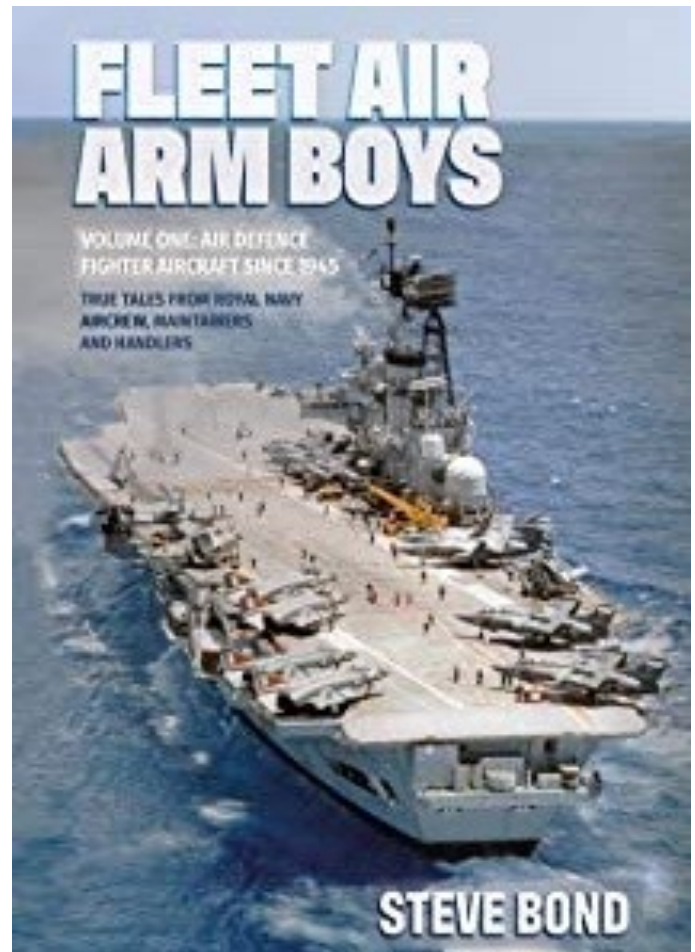
Any three hundred page book striving to cover 75 years of aviation will inevitably have a tension: how to do justice to that broad span of history but avoid the ignominy of becoming a desiccated historical dirge. Steve Bond, the author, solves this dilemma in two ways: firstly, by limiting its scope – this is Volume 1, covering only RN Air Defence Fighter aircraft since 1945 so those who hanker for a historical account of earlier days, or who were hoping to see rotary wing in the mix, will not find it here.

The other is to tell the tale through the eyes of those who were there – the pilots, observers and ground crews who together welded the Fleet Air Arm into what it was, and who bring hundreds of delightful little stories neatly threaded together under common themes. Stories of their training, what it was like to live on a front-line aircraft carrier, of the machines they worked on or flew, and the tasks and routines of the day. The result is a stunning compendium that captures the very essence of what naval aviation is all about. It is full of the credibility that eye witness accounts bring, together with rich variety as each story presents a different style and, of course, a different perspective.

There is something here for everyone – stories of how the highly skilled Artificers, Handlers Aircrew and Engineering Officers of the Royal Navy were trained. Accounts of living and working on both British and foreign aircraft carriers, and tales of the transition from WW2 generation fighters to the early jets.

But mostly the stories are about flying - from the big piston-engine machines like the Sea Fury and Firefly to the jets: the Sea Venom and the Scimitar, the Vixen and the Phantom, the Harrier and the Lightning. Each story teaches us more of that aircraft type and its strengths and foibles. There are tales of near misses too, like the one where a pilot was ordered not to land because the runway was blocked - but did so anyway as he was out of fuel. He solved the problem by folding his wings as he hurtled past the obstruction. Or the

BOOK REVIEW



unfortunate Observer whose seat initiated an underwater ejection sequence whilst on deck, and how he caused a deck handler to faint. There are accounts of the war in Korea and of the Falklands, and the brilliance of the Sea Harrier as an air-to-air fighter; of technical problems solved in innovative ways, and in the final pages, of the bold steps to rebuild a fixed-wing Fleet Air Arm with the very latest in ships and aircraft.

Told with a crisp professionalism sprinkled with typical British understatement and filled with delightfully wry humour, *The Fleet Air Arm Boys* is an absolute treasure trove. I have no hesitation in recommending it to anyone who loves Naval Aviation – and once you've read it once, you'll come back for more.

Let us hope that Volume two follows swiftly.

Marcus Peake

The British Pacific Fleet

by David Hobbs

David Hobbs is a retired commander in the Royal Navy who served as a naval aviator for 33 years flying both fixed and rotary wing aircraft. During this time, he completed 2,300 flying hours with over 800 carrier landings, 150 of these at night. Upon retirement, he was appointed as the curator of the United Kingdom's Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton.

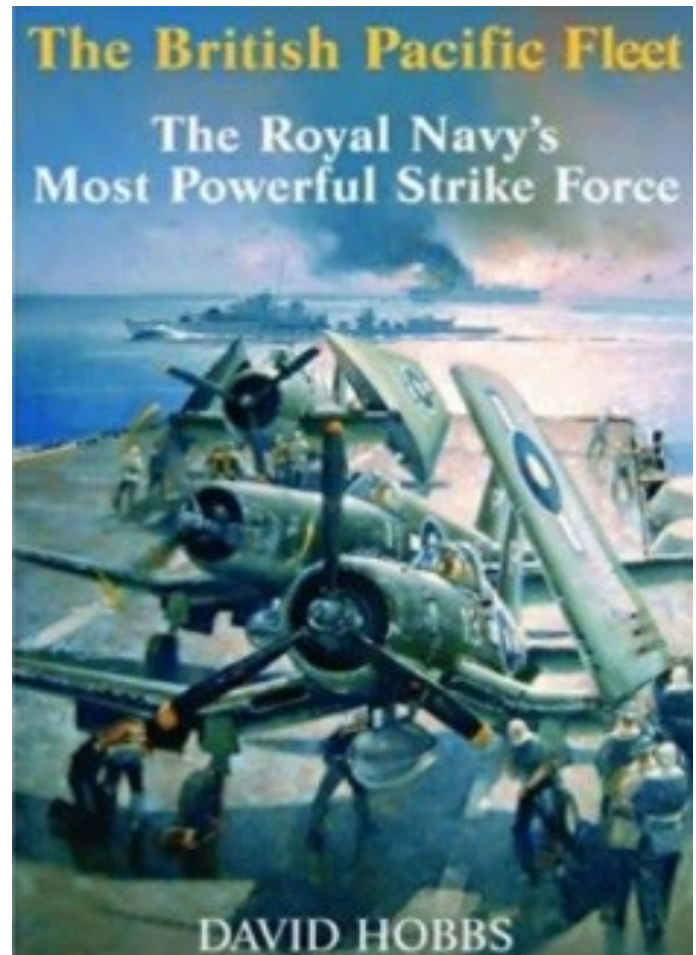
The book opens with a brief history of Singapore as a naval base to support Royal Navy operations in the Pacific. Central to the history of the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) is the decision to send HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* to the Far East without adequate air support, to counter the emerging threat posed by Japan prior to the Pearl Harbor attack. The account of the sinking of these warships by Japanese aircraft highlights the significance of naval aviation thereby introducing the main theme of the book.

Although Britain had agreed to a policy of fighting Germany first, the surrender of Italy, and the gradual defeat of much of Germany's surface navy enabled the Royal Navy to commit ships to the Pacific. Consequently, the Royal Navy formed the BPF under the command of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. Structured with an emphasis on airpower, the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) eventually consisted of 21 carriers, more than 750 aircraft, (including Chance Vought Corsairs, Grumman Hellcats, Grumman Avengers, Supermarine Spitfires and Fairey Fireflies), 4 battleships, 11 cruisers, 35 destroyers, 14 frigates, 44 smaller warships, 31 submarines, and 54 large support vessels. To support this force, an extensive logistics organisation was created afloat and ashore.

The BPF entered the Pacific war in January 1945 attacking oil production plants in Sumatra thereby reducing oil supply to the Japanese Navy. In March, the BPF joined the USN in the invasion of Okinawa, attacking airfields which supported Kamikaze aircraft. Unlike the American carriers, the British carriers had armoured flight decks which were resistant to Kamikaze attacks. Towards the end of the Pacific conflict, the BPF commenced attacks on the Japanese home islands in preparation for invasion but these plans were halted when Japan surrendered.

With the cessation of hostilities, the BPF sailed to Hong Kong where it took control from the Japa-

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nese and released the thousands of prisoners-of-war who then had to be returned safely to their home countries. Having returned many former prisoners to Australia, some BPF ships were then converted for the purpose of transporting Australian war-brides, married to British servicemen, to the United Kingdom. Although the BPF was significantly reduced at war's end, it remained a powerful operational fleet maintaining British influence in the Pacific until the late 1940s when the restructuring of British defence led to changes in the organisation of Royal Navy operations in the Far East.

The British Pacific Fleet offers an excellent overview of the Royal Navy's role in the Pacific war. David Hobbs provides a detailed account of the BPF's operations from air strikes to the development of an immense logistics infrastructure required to support the fleet. The book is supported by an excellent collection of photographs and detailed maps.

Stephen Jeisman

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)