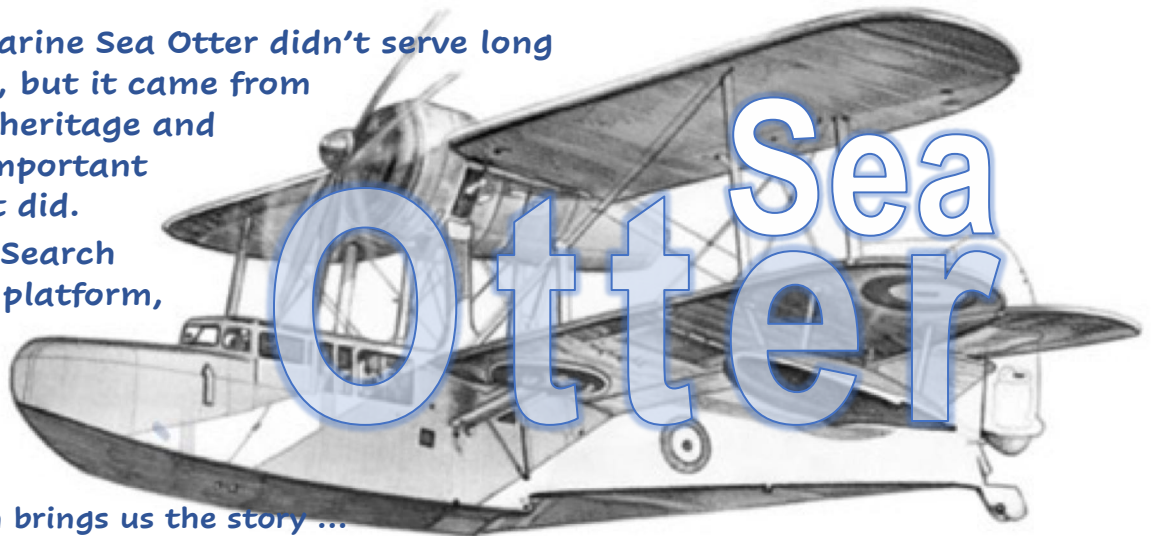




The Supermarine Sea Otter didn't serve long in our Navy, but it came from impeccable heritage and played an important role while it did.

Primarily a Search and Rescue platform, it was tough, reliable and versatile.

Kim Dunstan brings us the story ...



Supermarine, who built the legendary Spitfire, was also known for its amphibians: most notably the Seagull III, which was a wooden craft that could only take off and land from alongside its mother ship, and then the Seagull IV which was capable of being launched by catapult from of a light cruiser. Both had significant limitations, but they forged the early foundations of Naval Aviation.

Towards the end of WW2, the need for these vulnerable amphibians was waning as more capable carrier-based aircraft took on reconnaissance and combat roles. But a niche market for a long range Search and Rescue aircraft remained: one that could take off from a carrier, alight on the sea and return its precious cargo back to Mother.

This role was later performed by helicopters but at the time our Fleet Air Arm was being built, these were crude and limited machines. The RAN needed a dedicated SAR platform and so it acquired three Sea Otters for 723 Squadron – or, more specifically, to serve aboard HMAS *Sydney* and *Vengeance*, our light carriers.

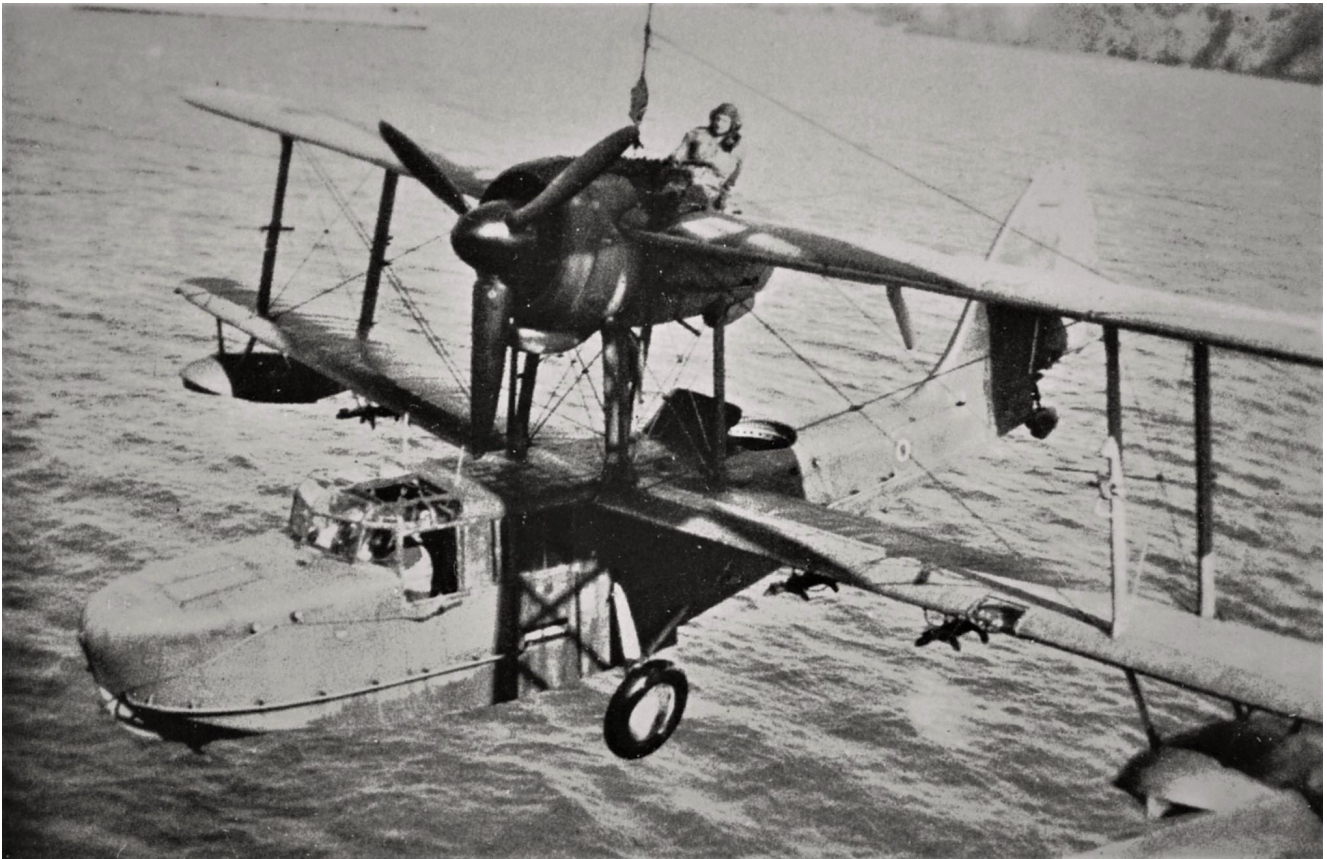
The Sea Otter amphibian biplane was an improved version of the Walrus, which it replaced. The prototype first flew in 1938, but due to Supermarine's Spitfire and Seafire WW2 commitments, Saunders-Roe was contracted to build the Sea Otters, entering service with the RN in 1944 for search and rescue and communications work. A total of 292 Sea Otters were built, variously operated by the RAF, RN, Denmark, Egypt, the Netherlands, and RAN.

The main difference with the Sea Otter (vs the Walrus) was its powerful forward facing 855 hp Bristol Mercury 30, nine-cylinder radial engine and tractor propeller, increasing its speed, range, and load capacity. Flaps were added and the modified hull handled better on water. With retractable undercarriage the Sea Otter could operate both from land or an aircraft carrier, with its folding wings assisting flight deck movements and hangar stowage.

On 12 April 1949 the first carrier, HMAS *Sydney* (111), sailed from the UK for Australia with the 20th Carrier Air Group embarked - consisting of 805 Squadron (Sea Furies) and 816 Squadron (Fairey Fireflies). Two Supermarine Sea Otter amphibians were aboard which were on loan from the Royal Navy for SAR duties.

She reached Jervis Bay on 25 May and on the following day the Sea Furies and Fireflies were ferried ashore on lighters and trucked to NAS Nowra where all protective material was removed, and the aircraft were serviced ready for flying.

On 27 May the two Sea Otters were placed on the water by the *Sydney's* crane, flying-off Jervis Bay to NAS Nowra. Ashore at Nowra they were carefully checked with special attention given to the fabric covered wings. After maintenance at Garden Island, from July 1949 until the end of the year, HMAS *Sydney* then resumed training exercises off the NSW coast, enabling the squadrons to requalify for flight-deck operations and conduct 'work-up' exercises.



After *Sydney's* 1949 refit one of the Sea Otters re-embarked as part of the 'Ship's Flight' for utility and SAR duties. On 11 August it flew to Bankstown airfield with a critical ophthalmic case. A few days later it returned to Bankstown for a mail delivery and to collect urgently needed aircraft spares from Naval Stores.

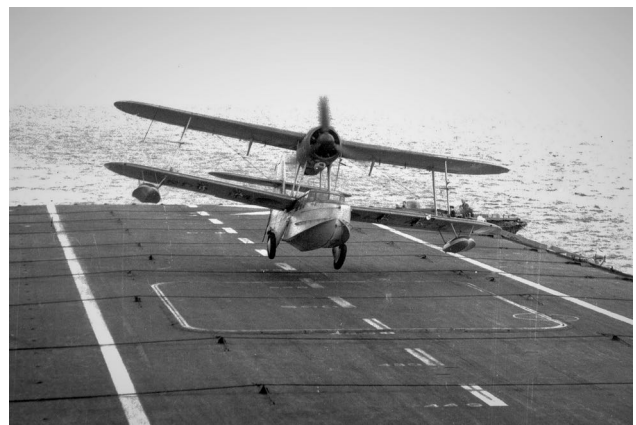
On 8 September, after making a normal deck landing on *Sydney* the Sea Otter was found to have a strained hull and was ferried ashore at Jervis Bay. At NAS Nowra it was taken out of service as major repairs were needed - this was Sea Otter RD-917 - which was returned to the UK in 1950 and exchanged.

In February 1950 *Sydney* steamed to New Zealand for joint exercises with the Royal New Zealand Navy. After visits to Wellington and Auckland, the exercises continued on the east coast of the North Island where a Sea Fury was damaged landing on a grass strip at Onerahi on 23 March. The ship's Sea Otter was used to fly the Air Engineer Officer and maintainers to the airfield to carry out repairs.

On 7 June 1950 *Sydney* sailed for the UK to collect 808 Squadron (Sea Furies) and 817 Squadron (Fairey Fireflies) which formed the 21st Carrier Air Group - on board was the damaged Sea Otter RD-917* for return to the RN. In August *Sydney* commenced 'working-up' with the new squadrons exercising with the RN in UK waters. In September the replacement Sea Otter RD-914 landed aboard having flown from RNAS Eglinton, Northern Ireland. The squadron exercises continued until 26 October when *Sydney* departed for Australia.

During the early months of 1951 the squadrons continued exercising from *Sydney* working up to full operational standard. In March 1951 the Admiralty requested that *Sydney* relieve the RN carrier HMS *Glory* on patrol in the Korea War. This was agreed and *Sydney* set course for Korea on 31 August 1951 with HMAS *Tobruk* in company. You can read of the FAA's role in the 'Forgotten War' [here](#).

Sydney's deployment to Korea included 805, 808 and 817 Squadron aircraft, but the ship's Sea Otter was excluded. This is because she had the loan of RN Dragonfly or USN



A Sea Otter lands aboard HMAS Sydney c.1948

Sikorsky HO3S-1 SAR helicopters. The remarkable rescue of S/Lt MacMillan and CPO Hancox by helicopter after their Firefly crash-landed behind enemy lines finally convinced the RAN to invest in helicopters. You can read of that rescue [here](#).

From mid-1951 onwards the Sea Otters were land-based. For the next year they operated with NAS Nowra's Station Squadron doing 'odd jobs' and SAR work. On 7 April 1952 the Sea Otters joined 723 Squadron, a newly commissioned Fleet Requirements Unit, with a varied collection of aircraft, conducting sonobuoy trials for the Nowra-based RAN/RAAF Australian Joint Anti-Submarine School (AJASS).

In December 1948 when HMAS Sydney was commissioned in the UK, The Royal Navy was trialling the Westland Dragonfly helicopter; a licence-built version of the Sikorsky S-51, similar to the US Navy Sikorsky HO3S-1. At the time, due to manpower and budget constraints, the RAN decided to delay making decisions about buying helicopters. Although the Sea Otter was outdated, they were carrier-capable, and their SAR role was important in the event of a pilot making a forced landing or ditching in the sea far from the ship.



In one of the classic images of our Fleet Air Arm, a Sea Otter prepares to land aboard HMAS Sydney – before the days of mirror sights and angled flight decks. They did carry an arrestor hook which was tucked in behind the tail wheel, not visible in this photo, so it's not clear whether this approach was for a touch and go (Bolter), or a full landing. (Image: FAAM).

However the helicopters superior performance and flexibility, especially for plane guard and SAR duties, spelt the end for the amphibians.

Exit the Sea Otters

Although the Sea Otters were outmoded, they were sturdy and reliable. From their embarkation on HMAS Sydney in 1949 until delisting at NAS Nowra in 1953, they assisted AJASS, did SAR work, and undertook communications and fleet requirement duties which the RAN valued.

In 1954, having been replaced by the Bristol Sycamore helicopters, the Sea Otters were disposed of. RD-914 was sold but details are lost; JN-200 was sold to Air Sea Research in Sydney for civil conversion and registered as VH-BQI. It came to a sad end, as you can read [here](#).

There are no surviving Supermarine Sea Otters, but JN-200's nose and cockpit section are on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Nowra, NSW, and is believed to be the only Sea Otter relic existing anywhere. ✪



JN-200 in a decrepit state on a farm near Awaba. It was discovered by war-bird enthusiasts but when they went to collect it they were told it had been cut up for scrap a few days earlier. Only the nose section remains intact.

Wall of Service Competition!

The FAA 'Wall of Service' was constructed in 2005 and, fifteen years later, now bears the names of over 1000 people.

To commemorate this milestone, the NSW Division has agreed that one lucky person in the forthcoming order (No.47) will get their plaque totally free!

To enter, all you have to do is apply for a plaque in the normal way. When the order is about to be sent to the Foundry one name in it will be picked out of a hat, and will have their money refunded. It's as easy as that!

The competition is open to any person who is eligible to have their name on the Wall with the exception of any elected office bearers or committee members of the National Body or of any Division of the FAAAA.

So, if you were thinking of getting a plaque, now is a really good time to do it.

For the conditions of the competition and simple instructions how to enter, click [here](#).

Wall of Service Update

Order No. 46 was submitted to the Foundry in mid August with the following names on it. The plaques are expected to be manufactured in the next month or so.

K. McLACHLAN R63880 ABATC Nov 64 – Nov 73.
A. DICKINSON O129050 LEUT SLEX(P) May 80–May 90.
B. GRAINGER R59354 CPO ATA3 Jul 62 – Mar 74.
T. NELSON O122334 LCDR GLEX(P) Jan 77 – Jul 95.
A.H WHITTAKER O121002 CAPT(O)(P) May 76 – Aug 13.
M. CARR O114148 LEUT(P) May 76 – Jan 84.
S.G. ELMS O124017 CAPT(O) Jan 78 – Feb 17.
G.P. LUNN O120457 LCDR GLEX(P) Feb 76 – Sep 88.
R.J. HILL O120451 LCDR GLEX(P) Feb 76 – Oct 90.

M.R. GALVIN O113975 LCDR GLEX(P) Jan 74 – Jul 89.
D.S. McKEAN O122250 LEUT GLEX(P) Jun 77 – Apr 95.
R.L. MILLS R43039 CPOA Jan 65 – Sep 87.
G.D. HAWKINS O109072 CMDR(P) Oct 70 – Dec 15.
C.W. MARCOMBE O120458 CMDR GLEX(P) Feb76-
Dec19.
S. HARWOOD O122228 CMDR(P) Feb 77 - Apr 10.
G.L. KNOX O120455 LCDR GLEX(P) Feb 76 – Feb 99.
C.S. PRICE O126713 LEUT(P) Mar 82 – Sep 90.
R.J. FRANCE O114150 LCDR(P) May 76 – May 94.
S. MURRAY O114094 LEUT SLEX(O) May 76 – Jun 83.
M.J. MARTIN O120508 LCDR (A) Apr 76 – Aug 16

The Fleet Air Arm Wall of Service is a facility which records the names of members who have served (or are still serving) in or with the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm. This is achieved by means of bronze plaques affixed to a custom-built wall situated adjacent to the FAA Museum in Nowra, NSW.

It is not a memorial wall so you don't have to be deceased to be on it :-) – rather, it records the names of people as a permanent and proud record of their Service to their country. It is, to our knowledge, unique in the world. Giving someone else a plaque is also a lasting gift, if you are to struggling think of what to do for a loved one.

Order No. 47 is now open for applications with the following names in it so far:

T.R.HETHERINGTON R43207 CPO ATA4 Jan 66–Dec 13.
A.N.MUDGE O43225 LCDR AE Jan 66–Jun 95.
R.I. GAGNON O165860 CMDR (P) Feb 98–Aug 09.
O.L. NICHOLLS O3018 CMDR GLEX(P) Feb 68–Jul 16.
D.A. RUSSELL R51593 LEM(A) Jan 56 – Mar 62.
H.R. HURREN R38167 EM1(A) Mar 50 – Jun 53

If you would like to apply for a plaque, please fill out the simple little form [here](#). The cost is \$190 for members or \$240 for non-members, but under a special deal you could get your money back (see black sidebar on this page). ✈

Memorial Sign in Poor Repair



On 13 March 1993 Errol took off from runway 12 at Canberra Airport with an associate in the rear seat. After becoming airborne, the aircraft entered a climbing left turn levelling out at about 1,200 feet. At that point he detected a technical problem and requested an immediate landing.

(continued on page 10)

TRACKER RECOVERY...

In the previous two editions of *FlyBy* we brought you the story of the S2G which diverted to Whenuapai at night in bad weather on one engine.

In this issue, Tony Di Pietro, one of the SARFLT pilots on Melbourne, tells the story from his perspective.

The story on the S2G recovery brought back some vivid memories and some brain deep dives for detail.

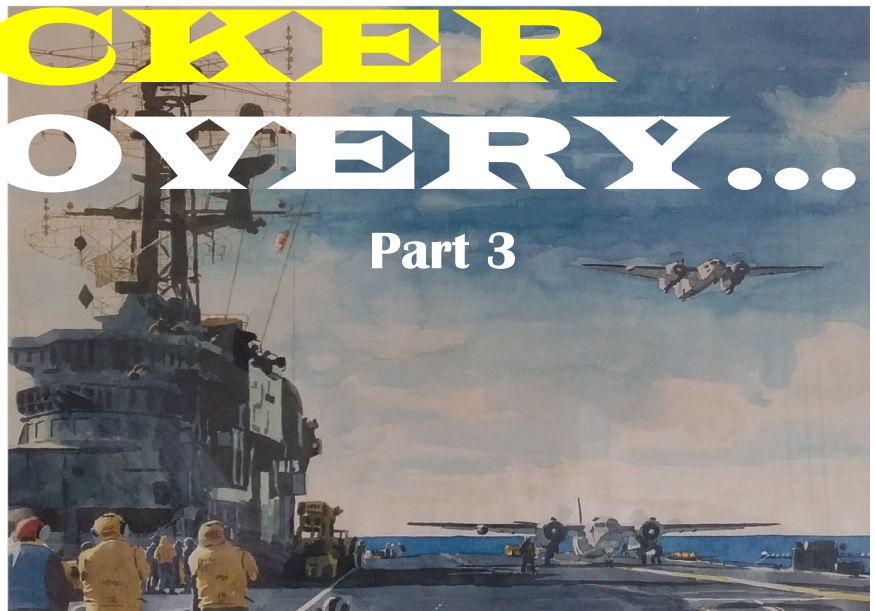
I remember being in Flyco and watching Gary Callow coming in trying desperately to trap on. It was like a black and white horror movie. The air was not quite one of fear but more like emanating courage, hope and strength to the S2G crew and overall apprehension for the safety of colleagues "in peril on the sea". The silence as the S2G approached each time was like a poignant exclamation of emotion, like in an opera as the hero fulfils his destiny, oblivious to the world, the drama of battering weather and seas. With each mistrap or wave off the pitched discussion about diversion or ditching resurfaced with increasing concern and intensity. Bingo fuel was approaching, "Why not divert and have more (fuel) up your sleeve??" (a silent rhetorical question).

For some reason I recall the relief to this mind picture came when someone pipes up loudly, the decision is the aircraft captain's. Gary is now on finals, just aircraft lights visible through the crap we were all engulfed in.....he missed, a white flash and a just audible roar as he passes under Flyco back into the dark. The option was made plausible to him silence.....and finally..... "we're diverting". I remember telling myself THANK GOD.

Off course diverting had issues too ... one engine down..... confidence in the working engine fuel needed/ fuel remaining weather and arrival at Whenuapai..... and of course fatigue onset after a long day and heightened adrenaline subsiding even if for a brief moment and (my thoughts for SAR Flight) how to recover the crew if they ditch enroute. Ditching somewhere between us and land was a possibility that couldn't be ruled out.

Not sure if it's been told in a previous article, but back to picking up the story through a different line of activity to the article.....

While 851 worked on the "what to take", the "how" was gathering a pace in the background and was not a straight forward exercise.



To answer the point in last month's *FlyBy*, the engine was indeed delivered off CV21 by a Sea Knight, from a USN vessel that I think was on exercise with us in Tasmanex (not 100% sure) ... but it was a US Sea Knight.

I was on SAR Flight at the time and its true about questions of a Wessex or Seaking being injected into and out of the planning intensity. After much carry on, Ron Lawrence OIC SAR Flight, was finally "convinced" that deconfiguring (stripping!!) the Wessex and only filling to the minimum fuel required was not a good idea (let alone possible to make the lift). Hence the call for a Sea Knight from somewhere in the planning. Tony Reyne (the other SAR pilot) and I were much relieved as we had already done the figures and concluded the idea was bonkers. The engine stand alone was huge and heavy.



Enter the Sea Knight the same day (timeline a little fuzzy). The ATA of the Sea Knight from off its task, plus doing a late evening / night transfer, complicated by an underslung load hook up on deck in what was still rough seas led to the sensible outcome that its crew would stay overnight as guests of CV21 and 851. The Sea Knight crew were VERY happy about this. Besides, Gary had made it to Whenuapai safely. I'm not sure but I think SAR Flight Wessex, or a Sea King flew that day to Whenuapai? *Continued on page 7*

Website Appeal

In our last edition of 'FlyBy' we reported a problem with our Website, caused by incompatibility between the 'core' software from which it is built and third party 'PlugIn' software (think of PlugIns like an App on your phone). The incompatibility between the two has gradually increased to the point where, late in August, it broke.

The fault means that we can't generate or edit most of the pages on the website, which severely limits its use.

Of more concern, however, is a fear that as the incompatibility between the two grows larger (as successive updates to the core software occur), a point could be reached where we will not only be unable to edit or generate pages, but may be unable to even read them. This would be a disaster as it would undo thousands of hours of work.

Unfortunately there is no cheap fix. Discussions with the service provider and another, independent web developer tell the same story – the site (which is six years old) needs a complete revamp and this may involve each of the 'defective' pages having to be manually transcribed to the new format. If this is the case we're up for a whole bunch of money.

A complete fix to restore a fully-functional site is going to cost in the order of \$17,500 which is a huge financial burden on the Association – so we are appealing for individual contributions to help.

If you value our website because you enjoy reading it or because you know it is a cornerstone of our organisation, would you consider a contribution?

If every FlyBy reader donated \$20 the problem would go away – but even amounts smaller than this will help. In fact, any assistance you can offer at all would be welcome.

It is easy to participate in this vital appeal. Simply follow the instructions in the yellow sidebar to the right. It will take a couple of minutes of your time, but will make an enormous difference to the ongoing viability of the FAAAA, which relies on the website for much of its core functionality.

Thanking you in advance.
Marcus Peake (Webmaster) ✈

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please help by making a contribution to the repair of our website.

By Electronic Fund Transfer:

Bank: Australian Defence Credit Union

BSB: **642 170**

Account No: **100 00 3851**

Ref: **Web+Surname** (eg WebSmith)

By Cheque to:

The Treasurer

PO Box 7115, Naval Post Office, NSW 2540

(Please mark the back "WebAppeal" plus your name and address).

Tracker Recovery *(continued from page 5)*

Met advised we were heading into a wild storm overnight... again. CV21 battened down for a rough night. The Sea Knight which couldn't be put into the hanger deck was diligently and carefully "tucked" in close to the Island, to offer it some protection. The night proceeded as you might think with our guests enjoying some liberal hospitality. I don't think anyone really was bothered by the weather other than the OOW and duty personnel.

Not sure of the timing of events but at some point in the night, the LWO stopped working.

I recall the aviation department awoke very early to news the LWO was inoperable but wait for it... it had actually been bowled over on its mount by high seas and weather and was hanging on by some rather questionable looking infrastructure. But wait there's more ... it was tilted hanging toward the flight deck side of the Island, in such a position as to be threatening to crush the Sea Knight. There was a massive flurry of action already underway as damage control ran up a pace and intensity to save the American helicopter and secure the LWO in place.

Next chapter we had blue skies, patchy cloud and a sea state of some significance after the stormy night. Goofers

on deck watched the Sea Knight man up and launch to hook up the engine and engine stand. If I recall correctly after some attempts (sea state still being considerable), it all culminated with one of the deck crew (or an 851 maintainer - detail has escaped me now) riding a top the engine stand to engage the load to the Sea Knight's hook. I can still see this picture unfolding. The frame and rider were being restrained from moving by others on the deck, only partially successfully, in that they kept the item on at least all four wheels most of the time (due to deck motion), but not stationary. The quandry obvious to those watching was whether the engine, engine stand and rider would achieve a hook-up or go over the side abeam 2 or 3 spot first. I recall wondering at the time, that when a hook-up was achieved, would the rider be hauled into the blue yonder riding his way to Whenuapai (not quite the WW2 image of a shapely figure riding the bomb) or would he dive off into the Tasman or, by some sheer luck, actually have time to climb /jump/dive onto the flight deck prior to the Sea Knight taking the load.

The end is as described in the article, a successful well planned evolution which culminated in no loss of life or assets and a thankful recovery of all concerned. USN included.

Some detail may be better recalled by others involved or watching, but this is best I recall. Thanks for the memory is GOOD.

Ciao, **Antonio Di Pietro** ✈

Federal Council Meeting Coming Up

The Fleet Air Arm Association's annual Federal Council Meeting is to be held on Saturday 24 October 2020. This is the premier event of the year when Delegates from each Division meet, together with the National Executive, to discuss FAAA matters and set various parameters for the year.

This year will be different, as so many things are in our current COVID-19 environment, as the meeting will be via 'Zoom'.

At the time of writing this article there were just two Notices of Motion on the table: one to approve a Standard Operating Procedure to govern all matters to do with the development, production and distribution of 'Slipstream' magazine, and the other to brief Delegates on our current website woes and seek a way forward.

If you wish to listen in via Zoom please contact the National Secretary [here](#).

† REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of **Chris O'Neil** and **Gordon Edgecombe**.

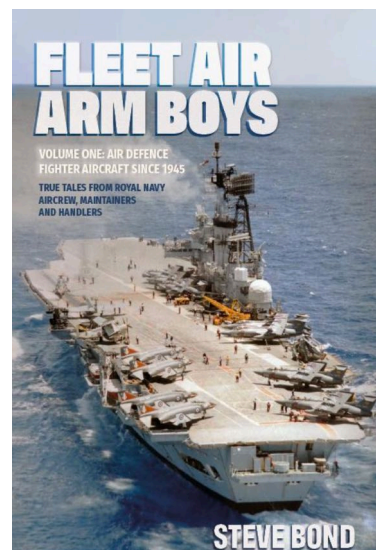
You can read a little more on our Obituary pages [here](#), and, if you are a member of the Association, you can leave a comment there if you wish. ✈

We will bring you the key outcomes of the meeting in our next edition of FlyBy. ✈

New FAA Book

"Navy Wings", which sells a range of products about the (Brit) Fleet Air Arm, is shortly to release its best-selling book of 2020, based on the number of pre-orders it has received.

Called "Fleet Air Arm Boys" (a title which incurred the wrath of some PC-minded people to no avail), the blurb reads as follows:



"The Royal Navy has always been a good source of stories. The maritime environment, worldwide locations, complicated equipment operated in a small space or in harsh weather, great characters within a strongly bonded team and centuries old naval tradition all add up to a recipe for some cracking tales. Author Steve Bond has gathered dits from across the generations of veterans and current serving Royal Navy and Fleet Air Arm. This is a terrific read for anyone interested in British sea based aviation."

Reasonably priced at just £25, you can pre-order this book easily by visiting the Navy Wings website page [here](#) - and you can get 10% off by using the code we negotiated for 'FlyBy' readers. Simply enter **NWF AAAA10** when you place your order. Postage is cheap and the service quick and reliable.

The publication is anticipated in October 2020, so it would be a great early Christmas present!

While you are there, you might also want to look at the huge range of other products: art & books, gifts & homeware, memorabilia and clothing. All profits go to keeping the RN's Heritage Aircraft flying which, although they are in the UK, is a win for any Naval Aviation enthusiast. ✈

Looking For...

We've had a nice letter from a lady called **Shirley Bligh**, who wonders if anyone remembers a friend of hers by the name of **Dale Sharpe**.

Dale was an Observer in the FAA and came from Scarborough in Perth. He served at Cerberus (presumably under training) in 1956. His brother Peter also served.

She wonders if anyone knows of his whereabouts now, assuming he is still alive. Click [here](#) if you think you can help. ✈

Mystery Photo

No 60

Our "Mystery Photo" continues to be our most popular editorial feature, judging by the number of responses the webmaster gets each month.

September's Mystery Photo was no exception, with a bumper crop of readers striving to guess what type of aircraft it was. Most were either correct or in the ball-park, but one or two needed some gentle hints. Well done to all those that had a shot. By the late 40's jet aircraft were becoming faster and more capable, but there were those in Naval Aviation who considered pure jets weren't ready to operate from ships at sea. They believed that turboprops were the way forward, particularly for smaller fleet carriers.

In June of 1947 Douglas Aircraft received Navy's letter of intent and work on the turboprop commenced. It was fashioned around their piston-powered AD Skyraider but featured the Allison XT40-A-2 turboprop engine, which consisted of two T38 engines linked to a common gearbox to provide 5,100 shaft horsepower through two coaxially mounted contra-rotating propellers. The Douglas advertising blurb boasted this carrier-based attack plane possessed "the latest design innovations" and would "outstrip all its predecessors in performance." They called it the A2D Skyshark.

Two prototypes were ordered, designated XA2D-1 (the "X" denoting "experimental" status). They were huge. Each aircraft had a wingspan of over 50 feet and weighed 18,720 pounds at Max All Up Weight (the specifications were similar to the Fairey Gannet, but it was an anti-submarine patrol aircraft, not a Fighter). The Skyshark also boasted a

maximum speed of 435 knots (500mph), which was fast. The Navy was impressed and placed a tentative order for 331.

But engine development problems delayed the first flight until May 1950. It was a short flight, lasting only a couple of minutes as the test pilot had to set the aircraft down with severe vibrations.

Worse was to follow: in December another test pilot was killed when his prototype struck the ground with a high rate



With a wingspan of over 50 ft and an AUP of some 19,000 lbs the Skyshark was roughly the same size as a Gannet – but the latter was designed as an ASW patrol aircraft, whilst the Skyshark was supposed to be a Fighter. The project was plagued with engine problems which eventually spelled its death knell. Ironically, the bloated design inspired the simple, clean concept of Douglas' next offering – the A4 Skyhawk.

of descent. An investigation found the starboard power plant had failed, but did not de-clutch. The remaining engine therefore had to drive the failed engine's compressor, taking much of its available power. Further, the propeller did not feather and the combined effect of low power and high drag induced an irreversible and fatal rate of descent.

Redesign took sixteen months, although serial production was ordered which gave the project new life. In April 1953 test pilot C. Livingston was pulling out of a dive when there was a loud bang and pitch-up, and the windscreen was covered in oil. The chase aircraft reported that Livingston's propellers were gone. The combining gearbox had failed - but he managed to dead-stick the aircraft back to a runway.

This event further delayed development into 1954 by which time the smaller USN carriers were all but removed from service, negating the need for fleet turboprop aircraft. Then a second aircraft crashed (the pilot bailed out but was severely injured).

The project was cancelled and Douglas engineer Ed Heinemann was overheard saying that the Skyshark 'had grown like topsy' and that, in his view, a smaller, simpler aircraft could carry out the mission. Not long afterwards Heinemann went on to design the Douglas A4 Skyhawk which was as far removed from the bloated Skyshark concept as could possibly be.

Of the 12 completed Skysharks, only eight were ever flown (including the two prototypes. Only one survives to this

day, in the Ontario Air Museum. ✈

A Win For the FAAAA



In early September a reader reached out to us through our website, asking if we knew the whereabouts of any living relative of **George John Isaiah Clarke**, (left) who was killed when his Seagull V was shot down by French Vichy fighters during Operation Menace (the bombardment of Dakar).

Witnesses aboard his mother ship, HMAS *Australia*, saw the engagement and observed the aircraft fall into the sea. Some reports say that two of the crew bailed out, but none of the three were ever recovered. You can see Clarke's full story [here](#).

We were able to put the reader in touch with a living relative and she contacted him, as requested. He has apparently a sword belonging to Clarke which he wishes to return once he can see her, post COVID.

This will, no doubt, be a wonderful family heirloom and we were pleased to be able to assist. ✈

Mystery Photo No 61



We can't put the new Mystery Photo on the website but you can have a shot at guessing right from these pages.

It's another obscure aircraft – clearly designed for carrier use, and, by the look of it, on a shoestring budget.

We would like to know what the name of the aircraft is, what it was for, and a little about its history.

Click [here](#) to submit your answer, citing MP61.

ASM(CT) UPDATE



By **CAPT Andrew Whittaker**.

As most FlyBy readers would know, **Op Bursa** was the counter-terrorist operation to defend the Bass Strait gas and oil platforms. For Navy, the CT operations included: CDs operating with the SAS, Attack Class patrol boats which sometimes inserted swimmer attacks, and Naval Air Squadrons.

The scope of this project is to recognise eligible aviation personnel involved in CT operations with the award of the Australian Service Medal with CT/SR clasp (counter terrorism/special recovery). This will include Wessex operations by both 723 and 816 Squadrons and Sea King operations by 817 Squadron. Oil rig surveillance operations by the Trackers of 851 and 816 Squadrons are not covered in this submission.

While the Governor General has approved the award, the terms are still to be signed off. The draft Determination is with CDF pending his approval and signature. It is hoped this will happen within the next month.

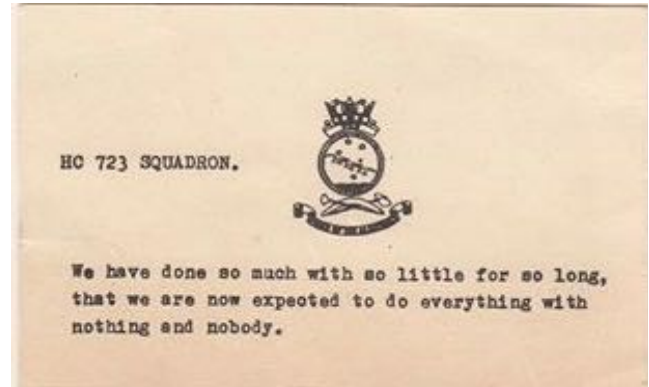
Notwithstanding the Determination still being in draft, Navy has commenced standing up a project team. Initially, this will be myself and **LCDR Murray Lindsay**. Both Murray and I have "skin in the game" as Wessex CT aircraft captains/pilots. Indeed, I was one of the test cases for this award. I am expecting the team to start work within the next couple of weeks.

Before the next edition of *FlyBy*, I expect to have set up a web page with the FAAAA and a Defence email account for Op Bursa. My intent is to process approvals in batches to expedite delivery. Once the Determination is signed, we will have clarity on eligibility criteria. At such point, further advice will be issued. ✈

Errol Kavanagh Memorial (from page 4)

The request was granted and instructions issued to land on runway 35. When the MiG was about 4km from the threshold of runway 35, it was seen to enter a steep nose-down attitude before crashing in open ground in the Canberra suburb of Narrabundah. Both Errol and his passenger were killed instantly.

The Narrabundah sports oval that he avoided using the last few critical seconds of control was named after him, but after many years the sign bearing his name has become decrepit. We are in discussion with the relevant Canberra agency to determine their intent to refurbish it, and perhaps to add additional information advising who Errol Kavanagh was and why the oval is named after him. ✈



*Looks like someone in HC723 was having a bad day!
Date unknown.*