



The Federal Council Meeting

The Fleet Air Arm Association's Federal Council Meeting was held at the FAA Museum on Saturday 21 October. This is the pre-eminent meeting of the organisation, at which representatives from every Division get together to discuss its workings and vote on matters of importance.

The Minutes of the meeting will be available on our website in due course.

RANHFV Reunion Report

A reunion was held at Nowra to mark 50 years since the first RANHFV personnel left Australia for Vietnam in October 1967 to join the US Army's 135th Assault Helicopter Company. It also celebrated the 50th birthday of the EMUs, our combined US and Australian family.

The Chief of the Navy, **Vice Admiral Tim Barrett**, unveiled a plaque at the FAA Museum to commemorate the RANHFV and RAN 9 Squadron personnel who served in Vietnam. As a part of the unveiling ceremony the students from the Nowra Hill Public School pinned ribbons on a board with the names of the 37 EMUs who lost their lives in Vietnam as they were read out.

It was a happy reunion over four days with a lot to do and we extend many thanks to the RAN for their wonderful support of the event. There are way too many people to thank personally but you know who you are.

Navy photos of the event have been placed on the website (view [here](#)), but anyone who attended is invited to send their images to add to this collection. You are also invited to give us your thoughts on the reunion, using the 'Contact Us' form at the foot of any page on the website.

REST IN PEACE

We have become aware of the loss of the following shipmates (not necessarily FAAA members) since the last edition of FlyBy: **Col Spence**. You can read of this sad event on our Obituary page [here](#).

DHAT Hears Case for RANHFV Citation



The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal (DHAT) conducted hearings in Nowra on 12/13th October to gather evidence from former RANHFV members in support of the grant of a unit citation to the RANHFV for its 4-year service in Vietnam 1967-71.

The four OICs had made a submission to the Chief of Navy for such an award in 2014, which he forwarded to the



Retirement of S70B/AS350

At the time of going to Press we are still waiting on the detail of the paying off ceremony for the Aerospatiale AS350 and Sikorsky S70B helicopters, that have served the RAN so well over past decades.

The event is locked in for **01 December** however, so mark this date in your diary. You will receive a separate email with all details once they are known.

DHAT. It has only now come up for consideration and a recommendation to the Minister.

Former RANHFV members were given the opportunity to provide written submissions to the Tribunal in May-June this year, and there was a very good response.

Amongst them were submissions from two former US Army officers – COLs **Dunaway** and **Staad** – both of whom had been in the 135th during the time of HFV 3 & 4. Col Dunaway was the Company Commanding Officer. Each expressed strong support for the application. The Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia also made a submission, and our President (Rear Admiral Mark Campbell) was asked to provide evidence at the hearing.

The Tribunal subsequently requested eight of those who had made submissions to appear at the Hearing. Those who attended assessed that the Hearings went well and expressed confidence in a successful outcome, but we will likely not know the result until February next year. The result will of course be published both on our website and in this newsletter.

WANTED

Jack McCaffrie and **Trevor 'Trader' Rieck** are writing up the history of the 47 Pilots and Observers who trained with the USN in 66-68. They are keen to track down the following folk: **Max Smart, Jon Jones, Karl Rutar** and **Damien Lawson**. If you can help with contact details for any of these people please contact Trader [here](#).

50+ Years Ago



The last edition's mystery photo showed an aerial array atop a Wessex 31B, and asked readers what it was for. The photo drew responses from several people. The best answer was provided by **Don Simpson**, who was one of three personnel who did the initial three-week maintenance course on the equipment in April of 1967.

Don explained that "...the aerial was for the AN/APA 161 HUDAT station keeping radar. It was designed by Sierra Research in Buffalo, New York state for the US Navy, and was designed to be a station-keeping radar for up to 8 helicopters in the dunking sonar mode. Our instructor was a fellow called John Heine who I think was possibly the design and project engineer for this radar."

"There were 50 units manufactured for the US Navy but were never used as during trials some one of influence said it was of little use as it couldn't be used to track submarines! This system was fitted into our Wessex when they were updated to the 31B version. I have no idea what our aircrew thought of them but from a maintenance point of view they did rely on the AP/ARN 52 TACAN which used to have a few faults."

Spike Campey (who operated it) added that the equipment was installed in the Wessex 31B to take the guesswork out of "Jump Tables" and Dead Reckoning (DR) Navigation during screening. It was quite successful in keeping station with the other Wessex in the Screen, and some of the more experienced operators used it as a radar. The downside was that during radio silent ops the HUDAT couldn't be used, so they had to revert to DR Navigation...again.

135 EMUs First Day Cover Released

Australia Post have released an official First Day Cover commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the first deployment of the RANHFV. The picture to the left depicts only a part of the cover. You can buy

them at any Post Office worth its salt, or order them on line [here](#). A full view of the cover can be seen on our website [here](#).

Feature Story

On 01 June 1918 HMAS Sydney became the first ship to engage enemy aircraft using its Sopwith fighter launched whilst underway. The pilot was **Lt A.C.(Cyril) Sharwood** of the Royal Navy Air Service, and in a letter penned over fifty years later he gave a fascinating account of the action and of the subsequent ditching, which I've reproduced in part here.

'The fuselage behind the pilot was completely filled with air bags, which would keep the aircraft afloat for about 30 minutes with the engine, cockpit and guns (1 Lewis and 1 Vickers) submerged. The rear end of the fuselage and tail were out of the water vertically, and had hand holes cut [in it] for use of ditched pilots.

We ditched ourselves as follows: The Camel was brought down to about four or five feet above the wave tops and held off until it stalled, then the fun began! The safety belt had been released and when the wheels and fixed undercarriage struck the water perhaps at 40 or 45 knots the tail went up like greased lightning and the nose of the aircraft plunged down into the sea. Just before the cockpit submerged the pilot was flicked out as the tail went up.

If he had done all this nicely he went over the top plane through a semicircular cutaway and went into the sea head first with Mae West inflated and leather coat on, about 20 yards ahead of the Camel.



When I performed this circus trick for the Argus with the Turnhouse based Camel with a much smaller cutaway for visual purposes and not life saving (!) I removed a good deal off my nose and forehead, and when I got back to the Sydney I got my joiner mechanic to

enlarge the cutaway on my Service Camel. McHaffie was his name and he never felt sure that the enlargement was enough. However, when I eventually returned to the Sydney and went aboard McHaffie was there, and no doubt saw that I had all the skin on my face. His first words were: 'well Sir, I see that we did make the cutaway big enough after all!'

You ask how I was picked up by [HMS] Sharpshooter. Having lost myself completely on the Dogger Bank and not being able to find the fleet, there being a westerly wind blowing and not enough petrol to make England against it, I had just decided to try and make Denmark (we all had sewn into our coats £5 in sovereigns to help, as the Danes were friendly). However, I then spotted a Harwich Destroyer, from its taller mainmast than the Grand Fleet destroyers. It was in company with another towing home one with its stern damaged by a mine. They gave me a sterling welcome at about 7000 feet with several rounds of ack-ack, until they looked at my markings, so I went down and landed in the sea about 500 or 600 yards on the starboard bow of the Sharpshooter. She sent a boat over to pick me up handing onto the hand grips of the Camel, and later I heard that the light cruiser Canterbury salvaged most of the Camel.

I must say they were more than hospitable in the Sharpshooter, with the result that I fell into a drunken slumber all the way home, and a headache when I woke up.'

Antarctic Rescue of Downed DC-3

Speaking of repairs, I'm always fascinated by the awesome skill of people who can fix severely damaged aircraft - especially in the field. Like the civilian DC-3 (upgraded to gas turbine engines) that speared in on the Holtanna Glacier in the Antarctic, and how it was repaired in that far-off place. If you haven't seen the video it's worth a look. Check it out [here](#). Also have a look on our website under the menu heading "Posts and Fun Stuff". There's a movie library there of aviation things that have caught my attention over the years. Feel free to email me any links to other YouTube or other clips you feel would be of interest to the FAA community.

Every month, we strike a few people off the distribution list because their email 'bounces'. Please remember to tell us if you are about to change your address so we can amend your details. You can get us through the 'Contact Us' form on any page of our website.

Famous Sea King



In last month's edition I asked for information about the Sea King above, and who the people in the photograph were. **Brett Dowsing** and **Matt Royals** provided the answer.

The aircraft, airframe number ZA298 was struck by an RPG in Afghanistan. The folk in the picture are, from left to right: **Steve Brown** RN (who is now serving as a Flight Commander on 808 Squadron having transferred from the Royal Navy); **LT Jim Shattock** RN, and POA **Matt Jose** RAN who is now flying in Seahawk Romeos.

ZA298 had an amazing history. After entering service in 1980 it was immediately sent to the Falklands where it was attacked by an Argentinian A4 that blew holes in its main rotor blade(s). Several years later it was sprayed with bullets whilst rescuing women and children in Bosnia. It then served in both Gulf Wars before being deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 where it was shot down. Despite extensive damage it was repaired and returned to service.

The aircraft continued to serve with distinction, including flying the Olympic torch up the Thames in 2012, and became the very last of the fleet flying with the Commando Helicopter Force. It was retired in 2016 and is now in the FAA Museum in Yeovil (below).

For those who may be interested, a little more on the RPG damage to, and the repair of ZA298 can be found [here](#).



A refurbished ZA298 about to enter the RN FAA Museum

COMFAA Tenure

A little bird tells me that the current COMFAA, CDRE **Chris Smallhorn**, is likely to remain in his position for a third year. This is yet to be confirmed in writing, however, so watch this space! Whilst such command appointments are ideally for a three-year tenure it is somewhat unusual to see this occur. CDRE Smallhorn has been a good friend to the ex-FAA community and we are delighted to see he is likely to stay until the end of 2018.

Which Detachment?

Barry White (that's him, bottom centre with Ken Fielding stood behind him) sent in the following photo of an A4 detachment on the USS Ticonderoga. I'd love to know the date/story of that det. and the names of other folk in the image. Any ideas?





Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions for FAAAA members will fall due at the end of the year (not far away!) but you can help us out by avoiding the rush and paying a bit early. Our membership numbers have been dwindling year by year and as we rely on our membership fees to keep us going, please assist by continuing your support for the very modest renewal charge. Contact your local Secretary/Treasurer for payment details (list follows). Those readers who are not members might consider joining the Association, which can easily be done [here](#).

If you are a member you can see your membership number and financial status on the website under the "Members Only" menu at the top of the page (you'll need to log in).

If you are not paid up for 2018 you can help by making your next year's payment now. If you use Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) or send a cheque **please use your membership number or your surname+initial as the reference**.

NSW Division:

Renewal \$35.00 pa
EFT: BSB: 112-879 Account: 0496 12 462
Cheques to: PO Box 28, NOWRA 2541.

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Cheques to: 41 Noarlunga Crescent, BONYTHON 2905.

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