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# Slipstream

Established HMAS Albatross 1957



28 July 1999 - Sea Venom WZ 943  
being lowered from its pole at Nowra  
for extensive refurbishment.

Photo courtesy RAN and ANAM

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## FOREWORD

by

**Admiral Sir John Woodward**  
**GBE KCB RN (Rtd)**

I have never been lucky enough to come to Australia, professionally or privately. Nor have I ever got any closer to aviation than an 'A' licence at gliding, one week in the CVA *Ark Royal* and a few weeks as 'Flag', resident on board HMS *Hermes* in 1982. It is thus a strange honour for a professional submariner to be asked to write a foreword for your Association.

Naturally, a submariner regards all aviators with a degree of astonishment, but there is always also a degree of respect in it as well. Perhaps the feelings are mutual, but I can only speak for the submariners. There is also a well-placed fear in the submariner's mind, that if the aviator doesn't actually drop something nasty and explosive in the water, he may simply fall out of the sky on him.

At some stage however, the submariner is expected to grow and realise that aviation, naval aviation in particular, is an essential part of any maritime force and its weapons systems. And that if you ever wish to do your maritime business more than a couple of hundred miles off-shore, you can't just manage with helicopters and missiles. My exposure to the naval aviation world took

a sharp turn in 1982, obviously enough, with the totally unexpected requirement to conduct a small war 8,000 miles from the home base. The Sea Harrier, the Sea King Mk2, 4 and 6, the Wessex 5 and the Lynx were my basic aviation kit. The RAF helped out with a few Harrier GR 1's for ground attack as well. It is absolutely certain that the operation would not have been undertaken without the Sea Harriers, albeit we only had 34 of them in service. It is also absolutely certain that the Sea Harriers were by far the most effective defence system against the Argentinian Air Force, making some 80% of the total kills and effectively breaking their will to continue. This is not to say that the Sea Harriers did it all on their own, the MSAM system Sea Dart caused the Argentinians to fly low, and not fly top cover, so the Harriers had a field day. This is how weapons systems interact – all are necessary on the day.

The irony of it all was that the offer of HMS *Invincible* to the Royal Australian Navy was withdrawn, essentially on emotional grounds. The Argentinians' obsession with sinking her, her consequent media visibility, and British Government ministers' reluctance to risk the domestic public 'outcry' they thought might greet her sale so soon after the battle, spelled the end of fixed wing naval aviation in the RAN. Only history is written this way, fiction couldn't make such a story credible. Along with all that, has been a further erosion of the close and valuable ties between the RAN and the RN, very much regretted by myself and many, many others back here. I remain appalled at that decision. That alone has been as good a reason as any for writing this foreword.

I am told by 'Toz' [Dadswell] (we trained together in the early 50's, *Kippers* and *Colonials*) that a history of the RAN Fleet Air Arm has been written and I applaud this project. It is very important that a record of people, their excitements, experiences, in good and not so good times, be preserved for future generations to read. Perhaps in the reading of the history, those in power might be reminded of the vital role fixed wing naval aviation has in the military scenario and act accordingly.

I wish the members of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia the very best in the years ahead.





## EDITOR'S CORNER

**PLEASE** – don't ask me how I got lumbered with this job again, I just can't be sure.

When I've questioned some of my friends about how it occurred, there are mutterings of 'old', and 'stupid'. There are occasions when the words have been reversed and an extra adjective tacked on; I tend to agree with the latter.

Anyway, this time around I have two good seconds in the ring with me to mop up the blood and fan the towels.

The 'crew' usually have lunch at the ANA Museum on Wednesdays at 1230. If you are a visiting member, come and say 'Good day' and join us for a coffee

The **CLOSING DATE** for input to the next edition is :

**10 DEC 1999 – Precisely!**

**Be kind to each other. Ed.**

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT



*Slipstream* has now come under a broader editorial team whose membership is John Arnold, Bob Perkins and Jim Lee, all of whom are stalwarts of our Association and who have already given much valuable service to it. We are most grateful to the team for undertaking the important task of compiling and producing our magazine and we're all very confident that ' ' will develop further as a result.

All would wish me to thank very sincerely Bob Perkins for his work in maintaining *Slipstream* over a long period and we owe him a great debt of gratitude. He has shown terrific loyalty by staying on in the new team.

However, as has often been said before, the team needs contributions from you, the members. They can be in the form of letters to the editor, or articles about topics of likely interest to readers. You are bound to have a view on the role of Australia in East Timor, or PNG. What about the RAN today? Do you know of a good holiday or other deal likely to interest others? Can you tell a story of a unique experience? You may wish to comment on whether you are receiving what you want from the Association as an organisation that caters for your interests. There are dozens of topics which should engage other's interest and you have many colleagues who would like to hear from you.

I mentioned East Timor and I imagine that many of us have thought about the role of an aircraft carrier in this context. When I saw poor old *Tobruk* being loaded up with elements of the peacekeeping force, I wondered about the current level of Navy's capability and, for that matter, about the current ADF's' capability when the Government sought US assistance in conducting the peacekeeping operation.

Topical also, is the extent of major new works at HMAS *Albatross*.

*Slipstream* hopes to bring you a more detailed account of these works because you will be interested to know of their extent. Most members may be aware that the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has appointed a panel comprising, Hon. Bob Mohr RFD ED and Rear Admiral Philip Kennedy AO RAN (R'td), to conduct a review of service in South East Asia during the period 1955-75 to establish whether there are any anomalies in service entitlements. The review will produce a report that is to have regard to:

- RAAF Ubon in Thailand
- service in the naval component of the Far East Strategic Reserve, comparing the conditions prescribed for the naval contingent with those of the other two services.
- service in Malaysia during Confrontation
- other service in SE Asia 1955-75 where prima facie evidence is presented of possible anomalies regarding this service

Submissions were invited to be made by 9 July 99 and a series of public meetings are in the process of being conducted around Australia. Our Patron, John Goble, is involved in presenting a case to the panel along with many other members and we look forward to his advice on its progress.

We became involved in an issue about the preservation of RAAF Point Cook as a national heritage site because of its role as the birthplace of service aviation in Australia. The airfield is to be disposed of during the period 2001-2006, but the RAAF Museum is likely to remain there. The Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Bruce Scott, has advised that Defence would ensure the protection and preservation of the important and environmental values of Point Cook when negotiating disposal.

Those who served with him will be saddened to learn of the recent death of former RADM Geoffrey Gladstone AO DSC and Bar, who was a very popular figure in the RAN and was once the Executive Officer at HMAS *Albatross*. During this period he excelled himself during a Wardroom Mess function by falling from the rafters of the old Wardroom and breaking a leg. He was FOCAF during *Melbourne's* last cruise to the UK.

Divisions are preparing for the next National Association AGM to be held at Nowra on 30 October 1999. If you wish a particular issue to be raised at the meeting, you should contact your Division executive.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Slipstream* and please think about your article for the next edition.

Best wishes, *Neil Ralph* – National President

## Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in Respect of South East Asian Service 1955-1975

By John Goble

The July '99 edition of *Slipstream* (Pg4), gave details of the review and the composition of the Panel appointed to inquire into a number of matters relating to the above service.

So far as the RAN is concerned, the terms of reference state: 'Service with the naval component of the Far East Strategic Reserve (comparing the conditions prescribed for the naval contingent with those personnel from the other two services)'.

Broadly speaking, there are two aspects under consideration within the period 1955-1975. The first period being between 1955-1960, which was the period of the Malayan Emergency, and within the second period 1960-1975, there are a number of 'sub-periods' including Confrontation, and the movement of certain ships into areas of tension which have previously not been recognised for benefits. Personnel involved in mine disposal in the PNG area seeking an EOD clasp as opposed to PNG.

The Review has received submissions and presentations from both Army and RAAF, plus a number of civilian organisations, for instance, medical teams in operational areas, the position of Qantas crews flying into Vietnam (Qantas transported more than 40,000 personnel during Australia's involvement), and observers in Kashmir, among others.

To date, over six hundred submissions from all sources throughout Australia have been received.

About eighty or more people attended the first day of hearing in Sydney, with reducing numbers over the succeeding days.

Forty-seven submissions were made to the Panel, forty-nine of those being from the RAN. The hearings were conducted informally and the presenters allowed to take their time. Submissions were received and further details sought in a friendly manner. All of the RAN speakers gave very good presentations, concentrating on the issues.

Space prevents a précis of everything that was placed before the Panel. The Naval Association submission, which contained as annexes all of the material retrieved from Commonwealth archives, amounted to some forty pages, without the annexures.

One cannot speculate on the final outcome which will be made by the Review, but I am sure those who made presentations were grateful for the opportunity to do so, and can rest assured they were given a very fair hearing.

\* \* \* \*

## A NEW KIND OF WAR

From Space Today Online

Four dozen satellites from nearly two dozen nations supported the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) military campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in south-eastern Europe.

It was the largest Armada of spacecraft ever brought to bear on a single war in history.

More than a dozen different kinds of American, British, French and NATO satellites gathered intelligence via photography, infrared and radar imaging, and radio and television intercepts and report weather conditions; communicate command and control messages and data; and pinpoint targets and locate people on the ground.

War machines have become so sophisticated that even the bombs dropped by B-2 bombers home in on their targets with signals from Navstar Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites.

Spy satellites are very important. The US National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) operates two radar-imaging satellites known as Lacrosse. Each weighs 15 tons and as big as a school bus. They orbit 400 miles above the Earth's surface.

Each Lacrosse crossed the Balkans twice a day, peering down through bad weather to show commanders where to strike and what damage was caused by strikes. They can see objects as small as a foot across at night and in bad weather. Big objects on the ground, like tanks and surface-to-air (SAM) missiles, can be seen even if hidden in woods.

NRO also has three digital-imaging satellites known as KH-11. They deliver very high resolution pictures in visible light and infrared. They can't see through foliage, but they can see at night in good weather.

The KH-11 satellites are in egg-shaped elliptical orbits ranging from a low of 175 to 625 miles above Earth. These flew over the Balkans twice a day. There are also Defence Support Program (DSP) satellites.

How does the satellite information get to commanders in the field? NRO personnel from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA) package the data and send it on via American command and

(Continued on page 5)

control satellites to strike planners on ships at sea, and at naval and air bases and army forts.

Weather conditions in Europe can vary widely, which highlights the importance of Defence Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) satellites, as well as other civilian weather satellites, used to read conditions in target areas. Weather not only affects the timing of air strikes, but also the timing of damage assessments by overflying spacecraft.

At least ten American and European weather satellites deliver images of Balkan conditions. There are four DMSP satellites in polar orbits 500 miles above Earth. Their pictures show areas as small as 1,000 feet in diameter.

In addition there are four weather satellites operated by the National and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) flying in polar orbits.

Two European Meteostat satellites are in geosynchronous or stationary orbit over the area. Meteostat -6 and -7 peer down continuously from the same place in the skies over Europe.

How do we know where things are? There are 24 Navstar Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites orbiting Earth. Cruise missiles and some 'smart bombs' are guided by precise timing signals received directly from GPS satellites. Planes and ships navigate the globe with the same GPS signals. Even troops and trucks locate themselves with GPS receivers.

Around the world a wide array of communication satellites are used to relay messages and data. The American spacecraft include the US Defence Satellite Communications Systems (DSCS) satellites, the so-called UHF Follow-On satellites, the Fleetsatcom satellites, and Milstar Satellite Communications System satellites.

Communication satellites from other nations include Great Britain's Skynet satellite and France's Telestat Syracuse satellite. The NATO-4 satellite is also used. All of these coordinate land, sea and air forces.

Russian spysats have not been supporting NATO operations, but are peering down on the scene. It has been reported that the Russians have only one digital image spysat and one radio signal gathering spysat in operation.

\* \* \* \*

**Well... it survived Myxomatosis and Calicivirus, but it couldn't beat the developers at RANAS Nowra. The 'Rabbit Patch' is moving OUT!**



This large house, photographed on the corner of Jervis Bay and Wool Roads, was on its way from *Albatross* to Sanctuary Point. The house was one of forty naval houses sold to private buyers.

*Photograph courtesy South Coast Register*

## GETTING THE CORRECT ATTITUDE

*From the Tod Maffin Future File*

### New Prodding Jacket may save lives

While the investigation into the fatal crash of John Kennedy Jr.'s plane continues, researchers are working on a futuristic flight jacket that prods pilots in the torso if they become disoriented during a flight. It was that disorientation investigators believe may have played a role in the Kennedy crash.

Spatial disorientation can occur quite easily in aircraft for a number of different reasons. Planes taking off from carriers, for instance, are accelerated from zero to 240 kilometres per hour in just two seconds by a steam catapult. The sensation experienced when accelerating at this rate often misleads rookie pilots, making them feel like the aircraft is pitching up, when in fact it may not be.

The jacket gives the pilot sensory cues about the direction of the plane instantly, without having to check the instrument panel. It alerts them when the plane ceases to be level by prodding part of his or her torso, depending on the direction of the plane.

### JUST ONE OF THOSE DAYS

A British Fleet Air Arm pilot was towing an anti-aircraft gun target for a ship's gunnery practice. This particular ship was not doing very well and the shots were going all over the place.

Their shooting was so bad that some of the shells began exploding closer to the plane than to the target. After several minutes of dodging shots and trying not to get shot down, the pilot expressed his irritation perfectly when he radioed to the ship: "I'm *pulling* the bloody target, not *pushing* it!"



*'Before starting on the mail, how about reading this small article from the United States Postal Service web site.'*

## GRAB YOUR HARD HAT...

### THE MAIL'S COMING!

On June 8, 1959, in a move a postal official heralded as *'of historic significance to the peoples of the entire world'*, the Navy submarine USS *Barbero* fired a guided missile carrying 3,000 letters at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station in Mayport, Florida.

'Before man reaches the moon,' the official was quoted as saying, 'mail will be delivered within hours from New York to California, to Britain, to India or Australia by guided missiles'.

History proved differently, but this experiment with missile mail exemplifies the pioneering spirit of the Post Office Department when it came to developing faster, better ways of moving the mail.

...however, they didn't mention if the 3,000 letters were ever delivered.

*Dear Ed,*

Browsing through copies of *Slipstream*, a story in the July 1995 issue, re-Wet Ditching Drill, jogged my memory of the salvage of Bristol Sycamore (XD 654) piloted by Lt. Jim Ferguson, which had ditched in St Georges Basin.

I was on Duty Watch that particular day and called to muster at the guardhouse with swim gear, we were then transported to St Georges Basin.

My hand was the first up at the question, 'Who can row a boat?' I duly rowed Cdr Air and Cdr 'E' to the ditched helicopter. The other poor 'bods' had to walk and swim out to the aircraft and manoeuvre an air bag under the 'chopper', then the recovery vehicle eventually winched it in. The locals were very keen spectators and supplied tea and coffee.

I'm sure those (cold) Duty Watch bods who had taken to the water for the salvage will remember this. Maybe someone can give a more detailed story of the operation. This could be a sequel to the July '95 story.

Regards, *John 'Bluey' Devery*

*Dear Ed,*

I refer to an article in the January 1998 *Slipstream* (Vol 9 #1) page 15. my reply intended for the following edition was not published.

However, Max [Gant] and I met at the beginning of the Reunion March last year, and the outcome of our 'gas-bag' is this letter, which I hope you will publish.

In 805 Squadron we had two aircraft with 103 as the side number: VX-624, which was the first aircraft I flew on joining 805 Squadron on 14 Jan '53: and VW-129 which came onto squadron strength at least by mid-September.

On 16 September 1953, whilst flying 103 (VW-129), Stanley slid across my line whilst strafing at Beecroft Range, showering me with 'golden rain' composed of 20mm cartridge cases. This action resulted in damage to the starboard wing, which had to be changed.

Now, if Max can examine his photo of 103 and establish whether it is a VX or VW number, we will be able to prove a point – was it *Vengeance* or was it *Sydney*?

Incidentally, the delay in landing-on, which Max also mentioned, was due to Tex colliding with the Boss in the Deck Park (see 805 Sqdn Diary 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov).

As for helicoptering, the other I did well; but after 8,000 hrs I still couldn't get the hang of it, so I gave up!

*Jim Ferguson*

*[A helicopter is just a collection of rotating parts going round and round and reciprocating parts going up and down – all of them trying to become random in motion. Helicopters can't really fly they're just so ugly that the earth repels them. Ed]*

*Dear Ed,*

I read with special interest Ron Sunderland's letter in the July [99] edition of *Slipstream* about those early days at *Schofields*, *IIMShips Implacable* and *Indefatigable*.

I was fortunate enough to have served in all three during the time Ron talks about, so that makes us shipmates. I too went to England in *Implacable*. 'Curly' Brydon died about seven or eight years ago while, as many of you know, poor old 'Bunny' Hare was killed in a Sea Fury at Nowra.

There were originally twelve of us from the RAAF who became RANVR pilots on loan to the RN in June 1945 but, alas, only very few are still around.

The two pilots Ron mentioned as being lost from the *Implacable* were Sub/Lt's Smith and Faulks. Smith told us he was bailing out of his Seafire but we could find no trace of him. That was the 7<sup>th</sup> March 1946. Faulks flicked on free take-off on 12<sup>th</sup> March and was not recovered.

On a lighter note, there were some 'hairy' moments at Schofields when 801 Squadron was being equipped with Seafire 15's but still had a number of Seafire 3's. The 15's needed full rudder trim one way (I forget which way) for take-off.

while in the 3's you had to wind it on the other way. The trouble was, that half the time you didn't remember just which aircraft you had jumped into. Whilst it didn't normally matter too much, as you soon found out when the aeroplane started veering off to one side of the runway early in the take-off, it was a bit more frightening when doing tight formation take-offs and somebody got it wrong.

All the best. A J 'Nat' Gould

*Dear Ed,*

I am enclosing a newspaper cutting (*The Express*) that will be of interest to many members of the Association. Another of the old Naval icons 'gone by the board', like 'Tickler', 'Tot' and fixed wing aircraft. You might like to publish it.

Best regards to all at Nowra.

Roy Hathaway Qld Div.

### **Navy's gun run gets the bullet**

*By Suzanna Chambers*

The Field Gun Race, star attraction at the Royal Tournament, is to end this year.

Ministers have decided that the race is too dangerous and too wasteful of time and money to let it continue.

A senior Ministry of Defence source said: 'The whole thing is an expensive anachronism. In this day and age it is a waste of time, men and resources.

'It doesn't represent what the modern Royal Navy is about at all. It's simply a competition of needless danger and brute force.

'It's a complete waste of money and it is time it was stopped. We have to concentrate on essential core activities. The armed forces are not there to provide entertainment at shows after all.'

The Royal Tournament, which has taken place annually at London's Earl's Court arena, ends this year in its current format. Whatever replaces it will not include the gun run.

However, armed forces chiefs are furious at yet another cutback in tradition that they believe helps maintain service morale and assists with recruiting new people.

Former Chief of the Defence Staff and First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton said: 'It is a total misunderstanding by this Government of what modern warfare is all about.

'The field gun display is a marvellous advertisement to the young for the Royal Navy. It is all about teamwork and facing danger together. It is a very sad end to a great tradition.'

The race dates back to an event in the Boer War in 1899. A naval brigade was called to assist the

relief of a British garrison at Ladysmith. In the process their oxen died, so the six ship's guns and ammunition had to be carried over rough and rugged terrain by a detachment of the ship's crew.

Their bravery caught the imagination and in 1913 an annual race was incorporated into the Royal Tournament.

Competition is fierce between the teams - Portsmouth, Devonport and the Fleet Air Arm - to be one of the two teams in the final. Competitors train for a few weeks and then race fifteen times during the tournament.

Each run consists of dismantling a wheeled cannon weighing a ton and hauling the pieces over an obstacle course before reassembling the gun and firing off a round. All this is achieved in less than three minutes.

*Dear Ed,*

I am responding to your request for material that may be used in *Slipstream*...

*Norman A Thomas*

### **850 Squadron - 'Courage conquers all'**

...having completed a commission with 800 Squadron and her Seafire Mk 47 aircraft in HMS *Triumph*, which was Mediterranean based, the squadron as part of the 13<sup>th</sup> Carrier Air Group (CAG) saw extensive service in Malaya and the Korean campaign.

I joined HMAS *Albatross* on 'On Loan' service in February 1952, and took up a billet at the station armoury, responsible to W/O Harry Stone, who may be remembered, as he drove a soft-top, buff coloured Morris 8 around the station. One year later, I was drafted to the newly formed 850 Squadron as the Senior Leading Hand (O).

850 Squadron formed up in February 1953, equipped with Hawker Sea Fury Mk11's, and under the command of LTCDR 'Oscar' Wilde.

Gradually, a steady flow of ratings and pilots started to arrive, along with a mass of stores and equipment, which were manhandled to various points around the air station. The armourers, who were in the thick of this, also had to get to grips with an assortment of explosives, by this time, most of the ancillary 'helpers' had 'shot through'. However, all this was fairly typical of commissioning a new squadron.

During this early period, two Sea Furys, the pilot of one being the CO, flew to Wagga Wagga. During take-off for the return flight, a Tiger Moth collided with the CO's aircraft which resulted in his death, a tragic accident indeed, to lose such an experienced pilot.

From UK, LTCDR Peter Austin (later to be knighted) arrived as the new commanding officer.

*(Continued on page 8)*

with LTCDR John Roberts as Senior 'P' (later to become RADM); other pilots arrived to bring the squadron up to flying strength. The new CO's influence was soon apparent as the squadron started to 'work up' with seemingly endless hours of flying. Eventually, we embarked in HMAS *Vengeance*, along with 816 Squadron, to sharpen up the whole exacting routine of deck landing skills, aircraft handling and air to ground armament practice. It wasn't long before *Vengeance* and her squadrons became an accomplished force.

Of course there were many other skills which needed to be taken into account as part of the overall team effort. For example, one of the difficulties that armourers had to contend with, was to plug in each rocket motor while the aircraft was on the catapult. Crawling beneath the wings with a 20 knot wind over the flight deck, together with the slipstream, virtually single-handed and endeavouring not to get things cross-threaded, before leaping back into the safety net or sponson was no mean feat. In my formative years I spent many hours performing this task.

One day, on completion of flying off the Whit Sundays, the all-important pastime of fishing was under way, when a bizarre incident occurred. To the amazement of everyone present, someone hooked up a brand new belt of 20mm ball ammunition which had been ditched over the side the previous evening. Fortunately, Mr Goodyear, our armament officer, was not on the scene.

On our return to Nowra, various events were being staged in support of the forthcoming Coronation Ball. A party of ratings was sent out to secure animals for the children's party. Eventually they returned with three very reluctant donkeys whose humour didn't improve with children on their backs. Parents and two ratings per donkey, desperately trying to move them on, it was a hilarious scene.

Quite suddenly, the squadron personnel were transported by road to an RAAF airfield at Canberra. A flying display was to be carried out in support of their Coronation Day's celebration; thus we missed out on the big Coronation Ball at Nowra.

Whilst roaming around the Canberra airfield, some armourers discovered a very dilapidated Lancaster Bomber dumped behind a rusting hangar. Judging by its operational markings it had seen a lot of action over Europe during WWII. This same aircraft was eventually refurbished and now stands in the magnificent Canberra War Museum.

On our return to Nowra, the armourers were kept busy as the squadron intensified its air activities, particularly with practice bombing.

At very short notice, squadron personnel from 850,805 and 816 were sent out into the bush to exercise with the Australian Special Forces. Our

brief was, in my opinion, very vague. On arrival at the designated area, we were detailed off to go to a clearing and, much to our amazement watched Special Forces parachuting from a Dakota aircraft. Our task that night was guarding a bridge, I seem to remember the biting insects and, with their deafening noise, our powers of concentration suffered accordingly.

Early morning brought forth much activity, my patrol having found a rubber dinghy which was duly 'taken out of action'. Two of the opposition were brought in by another patrol, they immediately stated that our camp HQ was now destroyed as they hadn't been searched. All this was much to the distress of the RN LTCDR in charge. From our point of view, which was limited, good old-fashioned naval humour prevailed to the very end.

The squadron continued its working up process prior to embarking on HMAS *Sydney*. Aircraft were taken to the butts for gun sight and camera alignment, a scissor-lift being used to get the correct aircraft alignment. The lift was at times unpredictable in its movement when trying to achieve the correct position.

We embarked in *Sydney* and set sail for Korea: ready to put into practice all the disciplines and hard work that the squadron had absorbed in the preceding months. En route, the 'crossing the line' ceremony took place on the flight deck, with all the pomp that is traditional in the Navy. One and all was found to be 'worthy', and duly initiated into the 'Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Orders of the Deed'.

During *Sydney's* further tour of duty in Korean waters, she operated mainly down the western coast of Korea, using the Japanese port of Kure as a supply base. The squadron had a very fine record of 'clean shoots', and the occurrence of gun stoppages were minimal.

Shortly after leaving Kure, the CO engaged on a sortie with the squadron, SBLT Beardsall and his aircraft went missing, presumed lost at sea. On completion of flying stations, the squadron mustered on the flight deck. During the CO's address, he mentioned that SBLT Beardsall's brother had been recently killed whilst flying from HMS *Eagle*.

March 1954 was the last time I saw *Sydney*, she was leaving the harbour at Kure. By this time I had been drafted to the troopship *Devonshire*. My memories of serving with the RAN are beginning to get a bit hazy, but without doubt, it was a memorable part of my service life that I cherish.

**A male pilot is a confused soul who talks about women when he's flying and about flying when he's with women.**

## DOES THE NAVY HAVE ITS OWN MASS GRAVE?

*A tale in two parts...*

The American converted aircraft carrier HMS *Dasher* was on passage in the Firth of Clyde on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March 1943, bound for Greenock. The ship was in home waters and land could be seen on either side. The Ships Company felt safe and no one was wearing a life jacket.

At 4.40pm, Captain L A K Boswell announced over the ship's loudspeakers that they would arrive in Greenock at 6.00pm and all non duty personnel could go on shore leave. The off duty crew made their way to the mess decks or to the washrooms. All were looking forward to a run ashore. Suddenly there was a horrendous explosion...

*This next section forwarded by Arthur Conway, the extract courtesy 'British Carrier Aviation' by Norman Friedman, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1988.*

'The ship had just completed flying on her aircraft, all but one having been struck down in her hangar, and two Swordfish being refuelled.

The carrier exploded suddenly with the audible 'pouff', characteristic of petrol vapour explosion rather than a bomb or a depth charge detonation. The explosion vented through the after bulkhead of the engine room low down, up through a large hatch just forward of the lift-well, up through the ship's side to starboard via the FAA messdeck, and presumably through the bottom in several places.

All light and power failed immediately (the emergency generator cut-in but failed after twenty seconds), the lift was blown into the air, the after end of the flight deck was visibly damaged, a violent fire started in the after end of the hangar, the engine room also started to burn, and the ship flooded rapidly from the forward engine room bulkhead to her stern. She listed to starboard at about ten degrees and then set quickly by the stern, sinking in about eight minutes. Only the Captain and 148 crew of the 526 were to be saved.

The board of enquiry noted that there was a one inch diameter hole between the petrol stowage and the main shaft tunnel, and that there were probably also several openings below. Men had been working in the after depth charge stowage, immediately abaft the petrol compartment, and that a man smoking in the shaft tunnel, or throwing a lit cigarette down from the FAA messdeck (and into the petrol control compartment below) had ignited the vapour. Another possibility was a spark from the hangar lighting system, which was not up to the standards imposed in British fleet carriers.

Precautions were immediately taken. The trunk between the engine room and the shaft tunnel was sealed off permanently, existing magazine and petrol regulations were ordered to be enforced more rigorously, and smoking on messdecks over petrol storage prohibited.

For the longer term, the *Dasher* accident emphasised what the Royal Navy considered the unsafe design of the US escort carriers, in which petrol was stored in bulk. An interim was that petrol stowage was reduced from the original 75,000 gallons to 44,000. Tanks not required for stowage were filled with water and their petrol pumps blanked off. Hangars and petrol control departments were fitted with artificial ventilation in order that fumes could not build up in either. Standard British style asbestos fire curtains were fitted in hangars to contain fires if they occurred.

Wiring and internal lights were removed from the petrol control compartments with exterior light boxes (as in British built carriers) substituted. Doors to the funnel uptakes were made gas-tight, and the doors between the engine room and the shaft tunnel sealed. Finally, the petrol carried outboard on the hull was fitted with a protective casing. As a long-term policy, it was decided that British escort carriers would be fitted with Admiralty-type petrol stowage consisting of cylindrical tanks in compartments flooded with water.

*The first story continues...*

No command was ever given to abandon ship.

All on board knew that the ship had been mortally wounded. The Fleet Air Arm mess deck took the brunt of the explosion, few of the aviators survived. No fireproof asbestos curtains had been installed in the hangar, as was the normal practice in British aircraft carriers. With no fireproof curtains to contain it, the fire spread rapidly.

As the bow rose higher and higher, the ships company and Fleet Air Arm personnel made their way as quickly as possible to an upper open deck then leapt or dived into the cold waters of the Clyde. No abandon ship drill had ever been practised on board HMS *Dasher*.

As they swam away from their sinking ship they turned to watch her dying moments.

### AIRCRAFT CARRIER REPORTED SINKING

Every Royal Navy ship within ten miles of the disaster area received a signal, which included the position of the *Dasher* in the Clyde.

*(Continued on page 10)*

The port of Androssan, with the wartime name of HMS *Fortitude*, was the biggest mine sweeping base in Scotland. Every available mine sweeper took part in the rescue operation, heading at full speed to the disaster area seven miles out from the base.

As the survivors swam or clung to wreckage awaiting the arrival of the rescue armada, the sea around them suddenly caught fire, burning many of them to death and badly injuring others.

As the survivors came ashore at Androssan, it was realised that 82% of the Ships Company and Fleet Air Arm personnel had perished.

Of the large number of bodies brought ashore, only 24 burials were accounted for. Where were the large number of other bodies buried? Evidence points to an unrecorded mass grave in Androssan Cemetery, on the West Coast of Scotland.

Secrecy was the order of the day regarding the sinking of the ship in home waters with the loss of so many lives.

Even to this day, survivors are finding out for the first time what happened to their shipmates and bereaved families are discovering what happened to their loved ones.

The book, *'They were never told. The tragedy of HMS Dasher'* may still be available from the authors, Noreen and John Steele, 104 Eglinton Road, Ardrossan KA22 8NN, Scotland.

[HMS *Dasher* (D37) of 12,000 tons, was a lend lease carrier, it was originally the merchant ship *Rio de Janeiro*, it participated in Operation Torch and saw limited service as a convoy escort.]

### SCIENCE REPORT

The heaviest element known to science is managerium. The element has no protons or electrons but has a nucleus composed of one neutron, two vice-neutrons, five assistant vice-neutrons, twenty-five pro vice-neutrons and one hundred and twenty-five assistant pro vice-neutrons all going round in circles.

Managerium has a half-life of three years at which time it does not decay but institutes a series of reviews leading to reorganisation. Its molecules are held together by means of the exchange of tiny particles known as morons.

### ORGANISATIONS

An organisation is like a tree full of monkeys, all on different branches at different levels, some climbing up. The monkeys on top look down and see a tree full of smiling faces. The monkeys on the bottom look up and see nothing but .....

## IF I ONLY HAD WINGS

By Peregrine

I suppose it all started with Icarus: that's if you believe in Greek mythology.

It would appear that King Minos was a bit miffed with Daedalus and had him locked up in a tower on an island. At the same time, he decreed that no passing ships were allowed to rescue him. With the help of his son, Icarus, Daedalus managed to escape from the tower, only to find himself still a prisoner on the island.

Daedalus, an ingenious artist, was not discouraged and thought to himself, 'Minos may control the land and the sea, but he doesn't control the air'. With this thought firmly in mind, he told Icarus to collect all the feathers he could find from the rocky shore. With wax and thread to hold the feathers, he fashioned two large wings, fastened them to his shoulders and found himself lifted upwards where he hung poised in the air. Filled with excitement after his test flight, he proceeded to make another pair of wings for his son.

Icarus donned his wings, became airborne and soared upwards through the clouds and out towards the sun. The heat began to soften the wax holding the feathers, as they began to drop out, Icarus plummeted earthwards to his death.

It was probably at this juncture, that the old expression, 'Only birds and fools fly', was coined.

It is now 1997; man has walked on the moon and space flights are the norm. Despite this daily high-tech proof of man's ability to fly, the urge to do it, 'my way', burns as strong as ever in the hearts and minds of some people. In a small backyard in a Los Angeles suburb, this 'urge' blossomed in Larry Waters.

When Larry graduated from high school, he joined the Air Force in high hopes of becoming a pilot. Sadly for Larry, his poor eyesight disqualified him. When he was finally discharged, the closest he came to flying was watching the jets flying overhead.

One day, the 'urge' became overpowering ... he decided he *had* to fly. He went to the local Army-Navy surplus store and purchased 45 weather balloons and several tanks of helium. The weather balloons, when fully inflated, would measure more than four feet across. Back home, Larry securely strapped the balloons to his sturdy lawn chair. He anchored the chair to the bumper of his jeep and inflated the balloons with the helium. He climbed on for a test while it was still only a few feet above the ground.

**The secret of success is sincerity.  
Once you can fake it you've got it made.**

Satisfied that it would work, Larry packed several sandwiches and a six-pack of Miller Lite, loaded his pellet gun...figuring that he could pop a few balloons when it was time to descend...and went back to the floating lawn chair. He tied himself in, along with his pellet gun and provisions. Larry's plan was to lazily float up to a height of about thirty feet above his back yard after cutting the anchor line, and then come back down a few hours later.

Things didn't quite work out that way. When he cut the cord anchoring the lawn chair to his jeep, he didn't float lazily up to thirty feet or so, instead, he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon. He didn't level off at thirty feet, nor did he level off at one hundred. After climbing and climbing, he levelled off at eleven thousand feet. At that height, he couldn't risk shooting any of the balloons, lest he unbalance the load and really find himself in trouble. So, he stayed there, drifting, cold and frightened, for more than fourteen hours!

Then he *really* got into trouble. He found himself drifting into the primary approach corridor of Los Angeles International Airport.

A United pilot first spotted Larry. He radioed the tower and described passing a guy in a lawn chair with a gun. Radar confirmed the existence of an object floating eleven thousand feet above the airport. LAX emergency procedures swung into full alert and a helicopter was dispatched to investigate. LAX is right on the ocean, night was falling and the offshore breeze began to flow. It carried Larry out to sea, with the helicopter in hot pursuit.

Several miles out, the helicopter caught up with Larry. Once the crew determined that Larry was not dangerous, they attempted to close in for a rescue, but the draft from the blades would push Larry away whenever they came near. Finally, the helicopter climbed to a position several hundred feet above Larry and lowered a rescue line. Larry snagged the line and was hauled back to shore. The helicopter crew flawlessly executed the difficult manoeuvre.

As soon as Larry was hauled back to earth, he was arrested by waiting members of the LAPD for violating LAX airspace. As Larry was led away in handcuffs, a reporter dispatched to cover the daring rescue asked why he had done it. Larry stopped, turned and replied nonchalantly, 'A man can't just sit around.'

In conclusion, Ginger Meggs probably had the right idea when he said: 'The secret to flying is to throw yourself at the ground...and *miss*'.

**An expert is nothing more than an ordinary person away from home.**

## A Letter from Home

Dear Pete,

Nothing much doing here. I certainly envy you up there in the thick of things. I bet you never have a dull moment.

Went to see your wife last night and we read some of your letters, a bit mushy but I don't blame you. Louise is a swell girl, wonderful figure, and loads of personality, the blokes still whistle when she walks down the street.

Your brother-in-law, Joe, dropped in while I was there; he was wearing that brown suit you bought just before you left. Lou said she gave it to him because it will be out of style by the time you get home.

A few others dropped in and we killed a couple of cartons of xxxx. We all wanted to chip in but Lou wouldn't let us. She says she is getting plenty with your allowances and all that.

She was the life of the party as usual. I thought she'd be a bit shaken-up after pranging your car, but you'd never know she'd been in a head-on collision, so I guess you're lucky again. Bad luck about the insurance though, but I suppose it's hard for her to remember everything while you're away.

The other bloke is still in hospital. Lou said the police told her he'd have a hard time proving his story. Even if he does, that bloke Alistair, you know, the solicitor, says he'll fix it up and is prepared to wait for his money if Lou lets him hold the papers to the house for security. It's really lucky that you transferred them to her before you went away.

We all left fairly early, Lou looked a bit washed out and we left her and Bob, the boarder, doing the dishes. Bob is very grateful to get your room. It's near his work and he saves a lot on petrol and lunches (he comes home every day for lunch).

Poor old Lou must have forgotten to pay the gas bill, or something, because when I went out into the kitchen to get some beer, she was talking to Bob about it. She said something about being a week overdue. Bob said not to worry about it, so I guess he'll help her out with it. There's no need to worry because Bob works for the Gas Company.

Nothing new with me, mate. Paula got a raise from her boss last week and with my eighty dollars a week, thanks to the new union rate, we're doing pretty well; but then, you must be too, seeing that you have nothing to spend it on.

Well, from my window I can see Lou and Bob having a nightcap on your front porch, so I guess it's my bedtime too. I certainly would like to be up there with you, but remember, we are all behind you and keeping the place here just the same for when you get back.

Your pal,

George.

By courtesy 'The Anzac Battalion' 1970-1971

**The work of the individual still remains the spark that moves mankind forward. Igor Sikorsky**

❧ MOMENTS IN TIME ❧



**BEER ISSUE AT SEA (1958?)**  
 Photographic Section of HMAS *Melbourne*  
 L to R: Bryan Dunne, George Self,  
 Jack Collins, Clarrie Frencham (rear)  
 and Jack Tamkin.

*Photo courtesy Bryan Dunne*

**BILL AND THE BATAVIA**

Ex-CPO Air Fitter, Bill Gault, was also a diver during his time in the Navy. In 1963, the WA Museum was engaged in recovering the remains of the Dutch East Indiaman, *Batavia*, that had been wrecked on the Abrolhos Islands in 1629. Bill was a member of the Navy diving team asked to assist. The picture shows Bill and one of the five bronze cannon recovered, it is on display outside the Administration Centre at HMAS *Stirling*. The other cannon are displayed in the Fremantle and Geraldton Maritime Museums, another was presented to the Dutch Government. The date of the photo?

*Photo courtesy Bryan Dunne*



**Albatross 'Phot Shop'**

Minister for the Navy, John Gorton, checking out a photograph taken of him leaving the control tower thirty minutes previously. Others are, CO of Albatross, Captain V A T Smith, Lt Brian McKeon (Phot. Officer), Fred Duggin at rear, and ??? Photo circa 1957.

*Photo courtesy Bryan Dunne*



**DIVISIONS  
 HMAS *Melbourne* 1958**

Suzie's Side Party, fallen in for Divisions, dressed by the right and wearing their No.1's.

Captain Otto Becher is the inspecting officer.

*Photo courtesy Bryan Dunne*



**PREPARING FOR THE WESSEX**

Photograph taken at D.Napier & Sons Aero Engine Factory at Acton, United Kingdom, in 1962 during the 'Gazelle' Course.

L-R: C.Mech.AE Ron Hay, CAA Noel Jolly  
 LT. SDEN AE Ted Springett, Mr. Maurice Quick,  
 Senior Technical Officer, Directorate of Aircraft  
 Maintenance and Repair, Navy Office, Melbourne.  
 Mr. John Barker (standing) 'Gazelle' Engine  
 instructor, D. Napier and Sons.

*Photo courtesy Napier Aero Engines & John Selby*

**GAINING THE KNOWLEDGE**

1962 - L-R: Mr. John Barber, instructor,  
 CPO Errol Dreher, LT SDEN AE Arthur Sara,  
 CPO 'Chips' Raftery, CPO George Meacham,  
 CPO Frank Rankin, CPO Bob Willis.

*Photo courtesy Napier Aero Engines & John Selby*



**And...THIRTY FOUR YEARS LATER**

March 1996, Mr John Barber (Right), ex-Napier Aero Engines,  
 handing over the original Napier Engine Notes to Bob Geale,  
 Curator at the Australian Naval Aviation Museum.

*Photo courtesy John Selby*



**HMAS Sydney**

24 March 1955

This photograph was taken during a visit to Melbourne.

The original newspaper caption reads: 'Here are some of the pilots who flew over the city before the aircraft carrier berthed.'

L-R:  
 SBLT R.Waites  
 SBLT G. Litchfield  
 LTCDR F.T.Sherbourne CO  
 LT J.R.Salthouse  
 SBLT D.Davidson  
 SBLT J.Williams

*Photo courtesy 'The Argus'*

## WELFARE REPORT *Compiled with the cooperation of the Regular Defence Force Welfare Association (RDFWA)*



Our association is pleased to have been asked to contribute to this popular, and eagerly awaited journal.

Our logo says it all with regards to whom we represent. We have keen and loyal members from right across the Defence Force community, many of them are also members of the Fleet Air Arm Association.

The RDFWA was founded in 1959 to promote and protect the interests of serving and former members of the Regular Defence Force, their spouses, dependants, widows and widowers. The Association has Branches and Groups throughout Australia and is highly regarded by the Federal Government and Service Chiefs.

Staffed by an energetic team of volunteers, a close eye is kept on how things are going in the Defence Force. Our work at Branch level centres on the case management of claims to ComSuper, Military Compensation (ComCare) and Department of Veterans' Affairs. There is also a steady stream of requests for help in miscellaneous matters from finance, help with children's education, legal advice, housing, awards problems etc.

We have a number of Authorised Pension Officers trained and approved to various levels under the DVA Training and Information Programme. Most of them can assist claimants through the maze of 'red tape' that is essential in the bureaucracy. Thankfully, the amount of paperwork has been reduced over the past decade with the increasing use of Information Technology, but the initial 'pen to paper' is the first important part of a claim.

Improvement has been pushed along by RDFWA lobbying and being involved in review committees, such as the one that has refined the Guide to Assessment to Repatriation Pensions. We consider it most 'unwise' for individuals to attempt to manage their own case without some sort of help or advice. Having comprehensive Records of Service and Medical History is a good starting point.

Whilst you are serving, ensure that your records are correct and that every incident is recorded, or in your possession, particularly if you have at times used your Medicare Card with a civilian practitioner. Even after discharge or retirement, Service Records are accessible. We find that a claimant may have forgotten some incident or injury over time that could be a crucial factor.

Whilst it is not impossible to successfully present a claim that could have been made decades ago, the whole exercise is somewhat easier 'while the tracks in the snow are still fresh'. A case needs to be prepared as soon as possible, but we have assisted in having claims re-opened or initiated for incidents that occurred as far back as the 1960s and 1970s.

We have a case file where a Leading Seaman, due for promotion, was diagnosed with bowel cancer. He underwent mutilating surgery, was fitted with a stoma bag and discharged from the RAN. Over thirty years later, he contacted the RDFWA and we discovered that nowhere in his Medical Records was there evidence of pre-operative exploration, by skin biopsy for example, but there was a post-operative pathology report that identified a oleogranuloma, not a carcinoma. He had undergone an unnecessary and debilitating operation.

ComCare was informed, and as a result the man was awarded a pension and back pays at the Petty Officer rate, less what had been paid in Commonwealth Sickness Benefit Allowance. Income Tax at the various annual rates was re-examined and full reimbursement of what he estimated he had spent on medical supplies and special clothing for the past thirty years was made. Further surgery was carried out at ComCare expense. These results enabled him and his wife to live out their lives in relative comfort.

RDFWA presented an almost 'bullet-proof case and obtained media support through the then current 'Hinch Report', to assist in this long-standing inequity.

Turning to our other activities, the RDFWA issues a magazine called *Camaraderie*, which keeps members informed. We are constantly involved in lobbying ADF seniors and politicians to preserve or improve Conditions of Service. Recent examples are our success in having the Fringe Benefit Tax impost reduced, and removing the inequities in the Military Compensation Scheme.

Further afield, the RDFWA is a member of the Australian Veterans and Defence Services' Council. This peak organisation comprises some forty member organisations, all of which are of national structure. It meets monthly, is chaired by an ex-RAN 'two-star', and acts as a forum for all Service and ex-Service concerns.

Like all volunteer groups, this band of ex-Service, unpaid volunteers, needs strong membership from which to draw ideas, some financial support and the occasional volunteer. If you would like to help, please consider taking up membership, if not for yourself, then for your spouse, at only \$10, tax deductible.

\* Further details can be obtained by contacting the Editor, *Slipstream*.

**'Air Mass' - an impromptu religious service held on board an aircraft immediately following an announcement by the pilot that he is lost, having an engine problem, or running out of fuel.**

## A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

By Peregrine

On October 27, 1967, the *Melbourne* steamed into San Diego to pick up the long awaited Skyhawks and Trackers. The American news services reporting the event, constantly referred to our beloved old ship as, 'the *pocket* carrier, *Melbourne*'. *Pocket*, indeed! Light Fleet, maybe, but not *pocket*!

'Let's face it, pal. She is a *tiny* little sucker', was the comment made by a USN friend of mine.

'Well, she's big enough to operate the Skyhawks and Trackers', I responded.

'Hell, man! The last flat-top I was on operated a C-130', he replied.

At this point in the conversation, I figured that this was just another load of 'old cobblers' and didn't proceed with the discussion. Let's face it, commonsense dictated that it was impossible to land and fly a Hercules from an aircraft carrier.

But he was right! The details are as follows:

'The trials were conducted aboard USS *Forrestal* (CVA-59) on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1963. The aircraft involved was a USMC KC-130F.

Modifications to the aircraft comprised the installation of an improved ant-skid braking system and the removal of the external fuel tanks. A sink rate of 9 feet per second was employed, with the first landing made with a 40-knot wind over the flight deck.

The crew consisted of the pilot (Lt James Flatley III), co-pilot, flight engineer and a Lockheed flight test pilot.

First of all, twenty-nine touch and go's were carried out, followed by twenty-one full-stop landings which were made without the benefit of arresting gear ( the propellers were reversed while the aircraft was still a few feet above the flight deck). These were followed by twenty-one unassisted takeoffs at gross weights ranging from 85,000 to 121,000 pounds.

To put that into perspective, the maximum take-off weight for the C-130E, on which the KC-130F is based, is 135,000 pounds, with 155,000 pounds permitted in emergency wartime situations.

At the lower weight, the aircraft came to a stop in 270 feet, which was just over twice its wingspan of 132 feet. At the higher gross weight, landings required 460 feet. Take-offs required 745 feet. A special offset 'centreline' was painted on the flight deck for the trials.'

Oh well, you can't win 'em all. Sleep tight, 'pocket carrier *Melbourne*', whatever bathroom cabinet you may now reside in.

\* \* \* \*

## NOW YOU SEE IT...NOW YOU.....

A few years ago, a newspaper reported that bored RAF pilots stationed on the Falkland Islands had devised what they considered to be a marvellous new game. The pilots search out an area of coastline habited by penguins and fly slowly along the water's edge. Ten thousand or so penguins turn their heads in unison as they watch the planes go by, when the pilots turn around and fly back, the birds turn their heads in the opposite direction; just like spectators at a slow tennis match.

The pilots then fly directly away from the shore, out to sea, then turn and fly straight back in and right over the top of the penguin colony. Heads go up...up...up...and ten thousand penguins very gently go base over apex.

## CHECK...AND MATE!

In an attempt to trick the Allied pilots into wasting their bombs on a target of no value, the Germans constructed a phony airfield. The 'airfield', constructed with meticulous care, was made almost entirely of wood. There were wooden hangars, wooden oil tanks, wooden gun emplacements, wooden trucks, and, of course, wooden aircraft.

The German took so long in building their wooden decoys that Allied photo-reconnaissance experts had more than enough time to observe its construction and report it.

The day finally arrived when the decoy was finished, down to the last wooden plank. Early the following morning, a lone RAF plane crossed the Channel, came in low, circled the airfield once, and dropped a single, large, *wooden* bomb.

*Excerpt from the book, 'Masquerade: The Amazing Camouflage Deceptions of WW2', by Seymour Reit.*

## KEEP US POSTED

While practicing autorotations during a military night training exercise, a Huey Cobra screwed up the landing and landed on the tail rotor. The landing was so hard that it broke off the tail boom.

However, the chopper fortunately remained upright on its skids, sliding down the runway doing 360's. As the Cobra slid past the control tower, trailing a brilliant shower of sparks, the following radio exchange took place...

*Tower:* 'Sir, do you need any assistance?'

*Cobra:* 'I don't know, Tower...we ain't done crashin' yet!'

## SHIP'S MACABRE DATE WITH DESTINY

By Max Thomson

*'Forty-seven years ago this month, of all the ships that have come to our shores over all the decades, none came with a stranger and more dramatic mission than one.'*

Appropriately it was a frigate, for frigates always have been involved with exciting events, right back to the swashbuckling days of the Nelson era and beyond.

But this frigate – HMS *Plym*, had a macabre date with destiny.

HMS *Plym*, a unit of Britain's Royal Navy, steamed all the way from the United Kingdom carrying some of the key components of the atom bomb to be used in Britain's atomic bomb tests conducted off Australia's north-west coast near the Monte Bello Islands in October 1952.

The irony of the part to be played by *Plym*, was that she was to suffer total and absolute destruction in the holocaust of the atomic explosion that was to be triggered aboard her.

### Atomic Squadron

Frigates were very much to the fore in the special British atomic squadron assembled for the project, co-ordinated by naval authorities in Sydney. Five frigates of the RAN joined the test fleet – HM Ships *Culgoa*, *Macquarie*, *Murchison*, *Hawkesbury* and *Shoalhaven*.

HMAS *Hawkesbury*, actually spent seven months on the entire project before, during, and after the test explosion, acting as official guard ship for the test programme.

Flagship of the squadron was Britain's aircraft carrier, HMS *Campania*, which brought out from England a great deal of the test equipment. Our own aircraft carrier, HMAS *Sydney*, joined her for the tests off the Monte Bello Islands, and the Atomic Squadron, as it became known, included the destroyer HMAS *Tobruk*, the sloop HMAS *Warrego*, and the RAN vessels *Karang*, *MRL 252*, *Warren*, *Reserve*, *Limicola* and *MWL 251*.

A great deal of work was done by the Navy's general purpose vessels around the Monte Bello Islands, such as surveys, establishment of moorings and the positioning of marker buoys.

Other ships of the RAN concentrated on patrolling a wide area to keep ships and small craft well clear of the test site. Other RAN units accommodated key test personnel when they were not ashore on the islands.

Britain's HMS *Alert* and HMS *Tracker* completed the Royal Navy element along with HMS *Zeebrugge*.

### Lord Penney

Dr William Penney, Britain's renowned atomic scientist, who died in 1991 at the age of 81 as Lord Penney; headed a large team of atomic and British Ministry of Supply scientists who came to Australia for the historic test programme. It was conducted in a

combined sense by British and Australian services in conjunction with the British Ministry of Supply.

Crewmen, on the warships of the squadron, wore 'geiger-counter' plastic squares on their clothing featuring materials sensitive to radiation. They even slept wearing the square and were instructed to report immediately should the colouring of the squares change.

### Detonation

The atomic device was detonated at 8:00am on October 3, 1952.

It wasn't without some degree of feeling, that the navy men, especially those aboard the frigates involved, observed the countdown knowing that another frigate, HMS *Plym*, was purposely being blown to pieces in the experimental explosion.

Immediately following the detonation, HMAS *Hawkesbury* (built by Mort's Dock at Balmain) raced Dr Penney to Onslow where a special aircraft awaited to whisk him back to London so that he could report personally to the Prime Minister and the British Government.

At the outbreak of World War II, Dr Penney had been drafted to the Ministry of Home Security. For three years he worked, measuring the effect of blasts on buildings, humans, and ships; as well as studying the structure of the atom.

He became principal scientific officer at the Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico, where he advised on the construction of the first atomic bomb. The US Government later awarded him the Medal of Freedom; Britain gave him a knighthood, followed by a peerage in 1967.

Dr Penney, as he was at the time of the tests here, got to know the ships and the men of the RAN quite well, for he spent a great deal of time with them, especially on the *Hawkesbury*, which was on station for so long.

At the Naval Repository on Spectacle Island, in Sydney Harbour, the RAN still holds the pewter tankards presented by the Scientific and Associated Staff of the British Ministry of Supply to HMAS *Hawkesbury*. These were in appreciation of the association, work and hospitality aboard the frigate during the test programme.

A whole room of HMAS *Hawkesbury* memorabilia is housed in the Hawkesbury Historical Society museum at Windsor, on the Hawkesbury River. Aboard the museum ship, and former corvette, HMAS *Castlemaine*, in Melbourne, there is preserved the great, long paying-off pennant which *Hawkesbury* flew on its last entry into Sydney Harbour. Shortly afterwards she was towed to the Far East to be broken up at the shipyard of the Tolo Engineering Company.

Some key items from HMS *Plym* were taken back to England for preservation, but as for *Plym* herself, nothing survived the explosion, the warship disintegrated in the great fireball of the atomic explosion – her macabre mission completed.

\* \* \* \*

## ONE FOR THE ENGINEERS

A thermodynamics professor had written a take home exam for his graduate students. It had one question:

*'Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)? Support your answer with a proof.'*

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools off when it expands and heats up when it is compressed) or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following:

First we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So, we need to know the rate that souls are moving into Hell and the rate they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Some of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there are more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all people and all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially.

Now we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand as souls are added. This gives two possibilities:

#1 If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.

#2 Of course, if Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it? If we accept the postulate given to me by Ms. Theresa Lovejoy during my Freshman year, 'That it will be a cold night in Hell before I sleep with you,' and take into account the fact that I still have not succeeded in having any kind of relations with her, then #2 cannot be true, and so Hell is exothermic.

The student got the only 'A' in class.

You know that small indestructible 'black box' that they use on aircraft? Well why can't they build the whole 'plane out of the same material?

## WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS...

*...read the directions*

It seems that the Federal Aviation Authority in the US have a unique device for testing the strength of windshields on aircraft. The device is a gun that launches a dead chicken at a plane's windshield at approximately the speed the plane flies. The theory is, that if the windshield doesn't crack from the carcass impact, it will survive a real collision with birds during flight.

The British were interested in this piece of equipment and thought it would be ideal to test the windshield on a brand new, high speed train they were developing. They borrowed the 'chicken launcher', loaded a chicken, and fired.

The ballistic chicken shattered the windshield, broke the engineer's chair and embedded itself in the back wall of the engine cab. The 'Brits' were stunned and asked the Federal Aviation Authority to re-check the test to see if everything was done correctly.

The test was reviewed thoroughly and had one recommendation only: use a *thawed* chicken.

## LATERAL THINKING

During an address by Sir David McNee, who headed the crack London Metropolitan Police Force, he gave an example of British police humour by quoting the following parody of a Metropolitan police examination question.

'You are on patrol when an explosion occurs on the next street. Upon investigation you find a large hole and an overturned van lying nearby. Inside the van there is a strong smell of alcohol. Both occupants, a man and a woman are injured.

You know the driver is an unlicensed driver and his passenger is the wife of your Inspector. A motorist stops to offer assistance, and you immediately recognise him as a felon wanted for armed robbery. Suddenly, another man runs out of a nearby house shouting that his wife is expecting a baby and that the shock of the explosion has brought the birth imminent. You then hear someone crying for help having been blown into an adjacent canal by the explosion. He cannot swim. Describe in a few words what you would do.'

After some thought, one officer picked up his pen and wrote: *'Remove uniform and mingle with the crowd.'*

Why is it that when you transport something by car it's called a shipment; but when you transport something by sea it's called cargo?

## NATIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Photo  
required  
Gordon  
Edgecombe

Well, here we are, almost 12 months on since I 'volunteered' for this job. Believe me, it seems longer and yet I am still to achieve some of the tasks I set myself,

For those who are not aware, the Federal Council meeting, which was programmed for Canberra at the end of the month, has unfortunately had to be moved back to Nowra. The meeting will now be held on Saturday 30 October starting at 1000 in the First Lieutenant's cinema (the old AJASS complex). After the meeting there will be a light lunch in the Museum and, hopefully, a get-together BBQ that evening. Observers are most welcome, however, I will need an indication of numbers.

Now, I would not be a 'good' secretary unless I wanted to change something. While I am aware of the history as to how our Association evolved, I have found the present process of administration somewhat confusing, and at times, downright frustrating.

Firstly, I must point out that my comments are in no way intended to erode the present position of the State Divisions, however, I pose the question: *'are we members of a Division first and then the Association, or, the other way around?'*

When I was posted to the good ship *Melbourne*, I was a member of the Ship's Company – bound by the standard QR's and AI's and the Ships' Standing Orders, and then became a member of a particular Division.

As the Association is now structured, members belong to, or join a particular Division, and then become members of the Association. Different Divisions charge different rates for membership, and some operate to constitutions which are different to the Federal Constitution. For example – it is possible to be awarded Life Membership of a particular Division based on different criteria than that to be awarded Life Membership of the Association. Such a Divisional award is NOT transferable to another Division, whereas an Association award IS. As a consequence, confusion reigns.

In order to administer the existing structure, it is necessary to maintain individual registers for each Division, plus the National Register. Every action, entry, change of address, new members etc. must be duplicated. Time and space does not allow me to explore the constant exchange of cheques between treasurers.

I fully support the Divisional structure and accept that those Divisions which are 'incorporated' in their own right are legally required to have their own constitution, nor do I have a problem with local rules, or for that matter local charges. What I would suggest, is that the Divisional Constitutions should reflect the basic requirements of the Federal Constitution, and that membership charges covering capitation fees and *Slipstream* fees should be standardised and paid on an annual basis. Such a structure, I believe, would result in a more cohesive and effective Association.

In closing, I would like to thank Bob Perkins for all his efforts as Editor of our magazine. Bob put his hand up and took on a most demanding task when no one else came forward, without his efforts this magazine, which is the 'lifeline' of the Association, would quite possibly have folded. I am sure being part of the John Arnold, Jim Lee team takes quite a load off Bob's shoulders. If I remember rightly, the signal should read 'Bravo Zulu' – well done, Bob.

## NEW SOUTH WALES DIVISION

Time has a habit of just slipping by – it's hard to believe that almost twelve months have elapsed since our 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 'big bash'.

Our 51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Dinner was held at the Naval Aviation Museum on Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> of August. Due to last minute cancellations, only sixty members and guests were able to attend. Despite the low numbers, it was a very enjoyable evening, with musical interludes being most capably provided by Teesha and Teena Downton.

The special guest and speaker for the evening was Federal Parliamentary Member for Gilmore, Joanna Gash. We also had the pleasure of the company of our Patron, CDRE John Goble RAN (Rtd), and National President of the FAAA, RADM Neil Ralph RAN (Rtd) and Mrs Judy Ralph, and the Commanding Officer of RANAS Nowra, CAPT Geoff Cole. During the evening, Captain Cole gave a very enlightening talk on the many changes occurring at *Albatross*.



(Continued on page 19)

The highlights of the evening included the presentation of a Life Membership Certificate (NSW) to Les Matterson, an award that was approved at our AGM earlier in the year. The National President presented Jim Lee with a Diploma of Merit in recognition of his past service to the Division and also his term as National Secretary (plus all the many other things he does). During the President's speech, he acknowledged the assistance given to Jim and the Association by Jim's wife, Norma.

The day after the dinner was the Museum Family Air Day. The weather didn't appear very promising at first with rain and low cloud, fortunately this was to clear later. By about 9:00am, many prospective visitors had decided that the weather wasn't the best and found something else to do. As things improved, a couple of thousand people turned up and had a good day. There was no incoming air traffic due to the conditions, but as usual, the Navy 'choppers' and the Kiwi Air Force Skyhawks were great entertainment.

Now, to mention things financial. Despite careful budgeting, our income from member's annual subscriptions has always been less than the amount required to 'keep the ship afloat'. This shortfall in income has always been covered by our food stall operations at Family Air Days, where we provided the labour and shared in the nett profit with the museum. The museum is now 'flying solo' with the food outlets and we are now trying to meet our shortfall by other means. If 'other means' do not prove effective, things will have to be reassessed as we move along.

Our first fund-raising effort is as follows. The NSW Division is licensed to conduct raffles and, in the view of the committee, this was the way we should go. Three magnificent pieces of artwork have been purchased from the celebrated naval artist, Mr John Downton, FBAS, ARAS, ASMA, who is a resident of the South Coast of NSW.

The First Prize, is a large oil painting of 'Melbourne' with a Sea King in the foreground. The work is professionally mounted and framed and has a valuation of \$2,000. It is magnificent piece of work and, like the following prizes, greatly admired by guests at the recent FAAA Dinner.

The Second Prize, also in oils, depicts a small ship's helicopter 'landing on'. A much smaller painting than the first prize, but well executed and presented. The painting is professionally mounted and framed and has a valuation of \$500.

The Third Prize is a carbon drawing of Sea Fury (115). This work is also professionally mounted and framed and has a valuation of \$200.

All in all, three excellent prizes. NSW members will find enclosed with this edition of *Slipstream* a book of five raffle tickets that it is hoped you will either purchase or sell. We acknowledge that there are some people who do not like receiving unsolicited raffle tickets, not knowing who those members may be, we apologise in advance. Anyone wishing to purchase tickets may do so by dropping a line to: The Secretary, PO Box 28, Nowra NSW 2541. Please state how many tickets you require together with the money (\$2 per ticket), your tickets will be forwarded by return mail.

And how do winners receive their prize? Prizes will be professionally packed and forwarded to anywhere in Australia - free of charge. If you happen to be a winner living outside Australia... well...it's about time you came over here for a holiday and, while you're here, pick up your prize.

That's about all for now, I hope all members and their families are well. Greetings from NSW to all other Divisions.

I nearly forgot...NSW members subs (\$22:00) are due 1st January, 2000. Why don't you send them in now before you forget? Thank you.

Yours aye.

Max Altham - President



'Juke' Matterson cuts the cake while Max Altham appears to be giving him a 'hand'.

Photo courtesy Peregrine



National President, Neil Ralph, presenting the Diploma of Merit to Jim Lee. Both looking suitably relieved that they hadn't been asked to cut the cake.

Photo courtesy Peregrine

## VICTORIAN DIVISION



Where has this year gone? It seems that it was only yesterday that we were handing out Christmas presents. At least, if you are reading this, then you are in your bonus period.

To all our state counterparts, we send you all our best wishes for now and the future. To those on the sick list, we pray for a speedy recovery to good health and happiness.

Our National Padre, Monsignor Francis 'Tiger' Lyons is still in the rehabilitation centre and I have conveyed as to where he can be contacted to our National Vice President. I believe that 'Tiger' has suffered a second stroke which has left his limbs slightly impaired – the good news, is that his speech and sense of humour have not been affected.

Many of you will have seen Colin C Price at the reunion where, in my opinion, he didn't look too well. I have only just found out that he has had surgery for a heart problem and, by all accounts, is doing well.

Ron Breadon, and his wife Fay, are also not so well and it is becoming difficult for them to join in at our usual get-togethers. 'Chins up', to you both.

Some time ago, when most of the divisions produced their own newsletters, we all agreed that we should use the NSW produced *Slipstream* as a National Journal; any division wishing to put out a flier of their 'coming events' were welcome to do so. This worked well to begin with, but no one could foresee what was to occur, *Slipstream* boomed and the effort of producing it became too difficult for one person to meet deadlines. John Arnold tried valiantly, and his successor, Bob Perkins, did likewise, but they were overworked. There is a rumour afoot that there have been some changes made in the production of the Journal, whatever they are, we wish all concerned the very best.

We will still be sending a Divisional Newsletter to our membership to keep them updated. One of our problems is, that although we have a permanent place to meet at the Melbourne Naval Centre, other naval associations use this venue and it is not always possible to get the date we require. Members are reminded that our Committee Meetings are open for any member to attend. When all business before the committee is finalised, we have an open forum to receive suggestions for the betterment of the Division.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> August (the date the 20<sup>th</sup> CAG formed up, and close to the date of the commissioning of *Albatross*) we ventured to HMAS *Cerberus* for our Annual Memorial Service, held in either the Catholic or Protestant Church. This year we did it with a difference, thanks to the hard work of our Social Coordinator, Val Christie, and our Secretary, Ron Christie. They arranged dinner and overnight accommodation aboard the *Xanadu*, which was moored at the Hastings Marina. The beauty of this venue was, besides having a fantastic dinner, we had only a short run to Flinders for the service next day.



John Ikin, pictured after his presentation of Life Membership whilst aboard Motor Vessel *Xanadu*.

Photo courtesy Vic. Division

The dinner was 'top class' and I estimate that we had in excess of sixty for dinner, the majority taking use of the accommodation. During one of the breaks, President Ralph Meyer called everyone to order, thanked everyone for their attendance, made a short speech and then presented John Ikin with a clasp and certificate of Life Membership.

For those of you who are unaware of his contribution to the Association, Victoria formed up on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1984, and John has held the position of Treasurer ever since. He has been a delegate at national level several times and was one of the three-man team to form what is now the National Constitution.

At the presentation, no one had ever seen such a look of surprise on John's face before, in fact the surprise was so great it made him cut his response speech to just under an hour. Normally everyone would have gone and left him talking to himself. Sincere congratulations, John Ikin.

The next date for your diary is the 5<sup>th</sup> of December for our final Committee Meeting for the year. Once again, all members are invited to attend. On conclusion of the meeting, a BarBQ lunch will be supplied, BUT...PLEASE notify the social coordinator if you are attending, on 9764 5542, so that Val can organise the catering. The venue is the Melbourne Naval Centre, at 1100.

(Continued on page 21)

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:** With the blessing of those involved, I have the honour to announce nationally, the forthcoming marriage of Les Jordan to Loris Siegle, both members of our Division. The ceremony will take place on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1999, in a lovely garden setting with just a few friends and family as witnesses. I'm sure you will all wish them happiness for the future.

Yours Aye, *Clem Conlan*

**Addendum  
from the Secretary:**

One of our newer associate members, Judy McIntosh, was involved in a serious motor vehicle accident recently and is now in a rehabilitation centre. Our thoughts go out to Judy, and husband Don, during this very traumatic period.

A traditional 'Welcome Aboard' is extended to our newest associate member, Selpha Mann.

**From the Editor**

In the previous report, Clem asked for a very special prayer for a very strong lady and her devoted husband, referring, of course, to Marion and Barry Lister. He then made an analogy between the WW2 aircraft carrier, the USS Yorktown, which was known as the *Fighting Lady* and Marion's battle for survival, she too, being a *Fighting Lady*. Unknown to Clem at the time, Marion had just passed away. As he concluded in his original report, *'May God bless you both in your time of need.'*



Victorian members of the FAA Association enjoying themselves at the 51st Anniversary Dinner aboard the MV Xanadu.

L-R: Margaret Mayer, Ralph Mayer, Val Christie, Ron Christie, Sylvia Ikin, John Ikin, Loris Siegle. Bill Martin and John Champion in the background.

*Photo courtesy Vic. Division*



Victorian members in fine spirits after the Annual Memorial Service at HMAS Cerberus.

*Photo courtesy Vic. Division*

*[I wonder how many of these stalwarts hid in the 'donga' roof to avoid Church call at RANAS Nowra? Ed.]*

**A.C.T. DIVISION**

**NOT RECEIVED**

Photo  
required

## QUEENSLAND DIVISION



Greetings to all out interstate colleagues in this month of spring.

I believe that John Arnold is taking over the job of Editor again and we extend our welcome back to the fold. Our sincere thanks go to Bob Perkins for the job he has done for us. we know it's not an easy task.

On the home front, my wife, Marian, spent July in hospital following a major seizure. we didn't think that she would survive. However, she's fighting back and is now at home, which is much more comforting. Sadly she has lost her sight, and most of her speech and mobility. We have Blue Nurses coming every day and they do a great job. I've finally sold up the business and I'm now officially retired – so far! It's good to be at home to look after the 'girl'. Many thanks to all who have 'phoned, visited and sent cards, we really do appreciate your support.

We enjoyed seeing 'Toz' and Gwen Dadswell, who were up here recently staying with Paul and Jenny Hamon at Buderim. Marian was especially thrilled to see them. 'Toz' is still conducting tours at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, so look out for him if you are visiting. You may even bump into Eddy Bell, who is also doing the same job.

'Toz', Ian Lawson and myself, had a game of golf. The conditions were a bit wet underfoot, but it was very enjoyable, apart from 'Toz' and I doing a bit of 'ploughing'.

The Dadswells located Brian Dutch and his wife at the Mooloolaba Yacht Club Marina. They are catching some of our winter warmth whilst living on there boat, 'Oiseau' [bird]. I haven't made contact with Brian yet, but intend to do so.

Ian is about to take up a new residence in Buderim and is looking well after travelling around a bit. He met Ian Henderson in Darwin, whilst spending some time there.

Ian and Florence Henderson have arrived back home, much sooner than expected. They were in Kunnunara when they received a message that Florence was needed at home. She flew back and Ian drove the rig home. A friend flew up to Mt Isa to accompany Ian for the rest of the trip. The Hendersons came up here recently and look fit and well. They met up with Brian and Kathy Sargeson, who were only going to be away for a short time, but that idea seems to have changed as they are still going.

About forty of our members had an enjoyable day out on the old steam tug, *Forceful*. More members would have gone, but the trip sold out too quickly. They went out into Moreton Bay and then, on the way back, there was a challenge from Fort Lytton. The *Forceful* crew had intended to mount a cannon in the bows, they weren't allowed to, so a big 'banger' had to suffice. There was much smoke and noise from both sides and a draw was agreed on. The *Forceful* then sailed safely back to the Maritime Museum.

[Fort Lytton, located near the mouth of the Brisbane River, is one of the few 19th century military establishments surviving in Queensland. It is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Ed]

Dulcie Blair and Lorraine Tite have had some successful 'Ladies Day' lunches at the Treasury Casino, about a dozen or so attended the last function. Some of the husbands also turned up and I'm told there were plenty of 'salty' stories on the go. All were delighted that Mary Vincent attended and enjoyed the day out.

It's pleasing to see that more of our members are achieving disability pensions from Veterans' Affairs for hearing loss/tinnitus. I have heard that some of the applicants are being knocked back, my recommendation is that they contact Terry 'Boxer' Banks, at 12 Richard Street, Maryborough 4560, who is doing an excellent job as an advocate. Don't give up! It took me quite a few attempts to get mine. I will soon be appearing before the Appeals Tribunal over my claim versus the Defence Department. I am currently in the process of getting an electronics expert to reproduce the tinnitus 'noise' in my ears, so that we can let the board hear the noise for themselves. It will drive them nuts! Specialists say that once you remove the source of the damage, 'the noise', then it doesn't get worse. That's why my hearing loss has gone from 12.5% to 23%.

Harry Harkness and Ron Forrest are making arrangements with the Bundaberg RSL for our proposed Mini-Reunion next year, at this stage it looks as if September will be the go. The top room of the RSL will cater for five hundred or so by that time. I'm expecting a call from Harry at anytime now to give me a definite date. We'll set up golf, bowls, tours etc., once we have a date we will keep everyone advised as things progress.

I have received cards from, Paddy, Jan, Ron and Gwen, when they were in Kunnunara, they were enjoying their trip. Ted 'Blue' Ditcham and Betty sent a card from Hong Kong, 'Blue' reckons it's not as good as the old days but they're enjoying the trip.

Well, we're getting close to the 'millennium bug' day. A client told me she was drawing most of her

money from the bank and stocking up with food and water for the event. I guess I'll just be firing a couple of shots from the old 'double barrel' to welcome the New Year in. I did that last year at a friend's place, Zac, a poodle who belonged to a friend, has been deaf ever since! There was some talk about suing (jokingly) the party host (Peter Ryan); he promptly denied liability because he hadn't invited the dog.

I now have an e-mail address at home, it is [blister@ats.com.au](mailto:blister@ats.com.au).

Barry Lister – President

**FOOTNOTE:** *Marian passed away peacefully on Wednesday night, 8<sup>th</sup> September. She fought hard and we had some quality time over the past two years, and great times to reflect on. Her funeral was held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>, followed by a wake at the Golden Beach Power Boat Club. BL*

## TASMANIAN DIVISION

Photo  
required of  
Matt  
Jacobs

There isn't much to report from the 'Apple Isle' for this edition..

Our AGM was held at the Ulverstone RSL on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August. The turn-out was good with all the usual 'regulars', but this time we had a number of people on the sick-list, others were away touring the 'big island'.

It was good to see these 'new/old faces' again. We welcome aboard Walter and Clifford Batchelor. There are many ex-FAA types out there who haven't joined the Association yet; it's just a matter of tracking them down.

There were some changes in Office Bearers at the AGM:

President: Geoff Singline

Vice President: Les Kube

Treasurer: Gus Tuck

Secretary: Les Kube

Scribe: Matt Jacobs

Committee: Everyone

Alan 'Andy' Andrews, elected not to nominate for secretary this year and we take this opportunity to thank him, and other office bearers, for their efforts whilst in office.

President Geoff Singline, presented John Nobes with a Certificate of Appreciation for his contribution as secretary in previous years.

On an extremely sad note, I must advise of the unfortunate death of Maxwell Clifford Ackerley, who was accidentally killed in a vehicle accident at Fitzroy Crossing, in the Northern Territory on 25 July 1999. He and his wife were on a round Australia trip in their

'van when the vehicle rolled. Max was thrown out and died as a result of his injuries.

Max and I were good mates in our service time – shipmates and messmates on *Vengeance*, and later on worked together in 'Civvy Street'. We send all our kind thoughts to his family.

During the last weekend of October, the All-Ships Reunion is being held once again at Ulverstone. All ex-matelots are welcome, and I know that Bob Boyd and his Bos'ns Party will have 'Shropshire Park' better than any botanical garden. For those who haven't seen this park, they are really missing something. Come down – or up, and have a look and a good weekend.

The next meeting of the Tasmanian Division will be at the Ravenswood 50 and Over Club, Launceston, late November. When the actual date has been confirmed, members will be advised by newsletter.

Where has the year gone? Can anyone tell me? They seem to be disappearing at a faster rate and are harder to keep up with nowadays. It's hard to believe that it is almost a year since the big reunion.

Our regards to you and yours for the future, from all your 'taswegian' mates.

Matt 'Jake' Jacobs



Geoff Singline, presenting John Nobes with his Certificate of Appreciation, while John's wife, Miriam, shows her delight.

*Photo courtesy Matt 'Jake' Jacobs*

## SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION



On behalf of the fellow members and their families here in South Australia, I take this opportunity to wish you all good health and good cheer, as we drag ourselves from the clutches of 'old man winter'. Surprisingly, we have had a fairly mild winter, and yes, we could do with more rain. A bit different from members in the Eastern States.

Unfortunately, one of our long time members did not make it through the winter, I speak of Frank Payne, who after a couple of weeks in hospital, gave up on the 13<sup>th</sup> August '99. The funeral service was held at St Bartholomew's church four days later, it was well attended by family, friends and FAA members. We extend our sympathy to those who remain behind.

President Peter Coulson and Sandra, have returned safely from a three week tour of England and all the European States. I believe his 'rubber neck' is in traction at present. Sandra has returned to pick up the responsibilities of being Senior Naval Officer for SA, and is taking fire for those Collins Class submarines again. Apparently the latest sub has run- aground and damaged the periscope...think about it!

Our Social Secretary, Dinsley Cooper, organised a winery tour last month, more news on this in the next edition. Dinsley has also planned our final gathering for the Christmas break; it is to be held at the Links Hotel on Tapleys Hill Road, Seaton. At last the venues are getting closer to the southern suburb dwellers. More details will be provided in the SA newsletter, *Fly Navy*. I strongly urge you to respond to Dinsley ASAP.

Another job for the 'whipping boy' prior to the publishing of this journal, is to attend a State Naval Conference. Mary Rayner, as Naval Association Secretary will be in attendance, and, I believe, Peter Coulson. Thank goodness!

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, our local coastal resort town of Goolwa hosted some of the 817 Squadron members attending the unveiling of a Dedication Memorial. This was in support of the close links between Goolwa and the squadron. Once again, the members and families turned up in great numbers to support the occasion. Included in the event, was the State Naval Reserve Band and a Colour Party, with a very loud Petty Officer, not unlike Bruce Burns, God bless him.

The Navy flew in a Sea King 'chopper' to add a bit of excitement for the simple country folk. The smell of AVCAT brought tears to my eyes – or was it the dust the helicopter created on take-off? All the same, we all had a great day, and the local RSL gave us a cheap lunch while the navy band played outside the window.

The speech that Commander Sandra Coulson made at the dedication, was one of the best I have heard for decades. I must get the name of her speechwriter as soon as possible. While this dedication was being held, I believe that member Jack Kreig represented the FAAA at the Korean Memorial on Port Road, where he also laid a wreath for the occasion. Someone had to stay back and carry the banner, this time it was Jack's turn, along with family and friends, of course.

Member Ian Laidler, with his first wife, Dee, are at present touring England and Europe with at least several more weeks to run. How do they manage it? It's not as if he's been Treasurer recently and managed to crack John Saywell's 'Banco de Brazil' code numbers. This would have given him access to all our 'buried' millions this Association has squirreled away. Come to think of it, I haven't seen John or Moira for several months; he'd better show up at this month's meeting or - lookout!

Our local Cadet Fund has enough cash in hand to send another worthy cadet off to sea for several days sailing. This Association has always



**Pictured in front of the '817 Squadron Memorial' at Goolwa, South Australia**

L-R: Ian Laidler, CMDR Sandra Coulson (Senior Naval Officer SA), Peter Coulson (State FAAA President) and Roger Harrison ( Vice President)

*Photo courtesy Roger Harrison*

supported this fund, and still believes it to be very worthwhile. Reading some of the cadet's reports of their trip away, always gives off a glow from the inside.

Our local Review of Service Entitlements convened at the Adelaide RSL Head Office over the 5-6th of August. It was attended by Ambrose Boulter, Mary Rayner, Dinsley Cooper, Warren Seip, Mike Cain, Richard Widger and the 'whipping boy, who was standing in for our overseas President. Ambrose (Kevin) represented several members' submissions and spoke clearly and precisely. From his later report on the hearing, he concluded that we got a fair trial, so now we have to wait. As Vice President, I would like to thank Ambrose Boulter for being the 'up-front' man for us here in South Australia.

Two new members have joined us recently, they are John Clinch and Tom McGuire. We look forward to seeing you both at a function or two, so come along and meet the other members. I'll keep you away from Mary Rayner, if that will make a difference.

Mary has circulated a notice for a request to have any ex-naval person's ashes scattered at sea by the appropriate naval authority. You must state that this is only a request and that you are not as yet dead. I gather that your ashes sit in a 'shoe box' until a visiting RAN vessel calls in. The ashes are then taken onboard, the ship's padre gives the ashes a ceremonial send-off somewhere in the Gulf.

Anyway, time to close down, I leave you with my normal 'quote to ponder'....

*'The Almighty in His infinite wisdom did not see fit to create Frenchmen in the image of Englishmen.'*  
*Winston Churchill*

### RIP Frank Payne

Thomas Frances Rowland Payne was born in Enfield, Sydney, on 23rd November 1921. His father, Kenneth, came from England, his mother, Elvira, was born at Ivanhoe of Italian parentage. Frank, and his brother and sister, Ken and Esther, grew up in the NorthWest slopes of NSW.

He was a RAAF Spitfire pilot during the war, based in Darwin. In 1945, he accepted a commission in the RAN to be part of the newly formed Fleet Air Arm.

Frank was an active supporter of the Democrats, the Fleet Air Arm, the Spitfire Association, the RSL and permaculture.

He is greatly missed, but will be long remembered.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DIVISION

Photo  
required

Greetings, to all Fleet Air Arm Association members to the east of here, from those of us in the Western Australian Division.

It seems like only yesterday that I sent my report for the July edition of *Slipstream*, an issue I enjoyed as much as any before it.

The photo's and dits, letters and names, provide a walk down memory lane that is indescribable to me. It leaves me with a 'beaut' feeling of the 'good old days' whilst reading of something that actually happened to us all at one time or another.

Before I get off the subject of previous issues, I thank the retiring editor for his excellent contribution to the national journal.

But...down to business. Our social scene has been active over the last couple of months. A get-together at one of Fremantle's better eateries with over forty members, partners and friends was a highlight. Good food and good friends make a fine menu. More so when the day is a levy on cost to all, in other words, an inexpensive day, thanks to Ron and Kay.

After the luncheon, an invitation was extended to go aboard Jack and Shirley Suriano's vessel, which was anchored not far from the hotel. It seemed to be about half the size of the *Melbourne*; the lucky 'so and so's' live onboard. So...with that experience and the hotel luncheon, it was a terrific outing. I hope to have some photographs for the next edition.

Our attempt to hold a Division meeting on a Sunday, followed by a BarBQ and drinks, didn't go too well. Anyhow, we will try again, check with Secretary Colin for future meetings and functions.

Our Golden City has been a destination of choice for visitors from the other Golden City on the Gold Coast. We recently had the pleasure of the company of Ron and Gwen Powell, and 'Paddy' and Jan Williamson. Ron is an Ex-AH and 'Paddy' an ex- AE, or was that 'A' only. Not sure 'Paddy'.

Anyway, both couples are on a round Australia trip. We wish them, and all the readers of this great magazine, all the very best for the future.

*John Green*

## Memorial dedicated to 'chopper' Squadron...

Article courtesy *The Times*, SA – 27 July 1999

GOOLWA – The town of Goolwa was a hive of activity on Sunday as the Navy Sea King helicopter squadron came to town.

A dedication ceremony attended by about 200 people was held near the Goolwa National Trust Museum to recognise the memorial acknowledging serving members and deceased members of the HS 817 Squadron.

The Navy Sea King helicopter squadron is based at HMAS Albatross, near the city of Nowra, NSW, and over the years their visits to Goolwa have resulted in a strong bond between the men and women of HS 817 and the people of Goolwa.

The Navy visits have usually involved the local schools with talks on the roles of their unit, in particular their participation in search and rescue.

The impact of the death of two members this year brought home the fact that Goolwa had no physical marker of its squadron and no place to pay respects to any 817 member who has died.

This situation brought about the construction of a memorial to all HS 817 members serving and deceased.

The Alexandrina Council and community funded the memorial and many tradesmen also donated time and materials. The Goolwa RSL provided the dedication plaque.

The dedication ceremony was performed by Senior Naval Officer of SA, Sandy Coulson, and was attended by the Commanding Officer of HS 817 Squadron, LCDR David Gwyther.

The band of the Royal Australian Navy of South Australia [under CPO Antonoff] put together a recital later in the car park of the Goolwa RSL.



### THANK YOU, from the Editor...

News article and photographs courtesy LTCDR Steve Dunning, Naval HQ, Keswick, SA.

TOP: HS 817 Squadron Memorial at the Goolwa National Trust Museum  
CENTRE: Naval Reserve catafalque party  
BOTTOM: Royal Australian Navy Band of South Australia

## AND WE WHINGED ABOUT THE WEEVILS !

By Peregrine

There was no point in complaining about the weevils in the bread whilst aboard the carrier *Melbourne*; after all, it was the only fresh protein available.

The old menus in the archives record other gastronomic delicacies that the ship's crew had to survive on: tripe, mince, liver, kidneys, brains to name a few. If you pardon the pun, it sounds 'offal', and it was.

Even back in 1915, *Melbourne* obviously had food problems. records show that an ordinary seaman was charged with: '*Did commit a nuisance in a mess kettle on the mess deck*'. Whatever this 'silent protest' was about isn't elaborated on, however, the episode earned him fourteen days cells.

The weekly menus obviously left a lot to be desired, but consider the Seaman's diet of the year 1704.

**'The following is an account of what provisions the Queen allows each Sea-man per Week, and what sort of Food they have each Day of the Week.**

Sunday:  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of Peas, 1 pound of Pork

Monday:  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of Peas, 1 pint of Oatmeal, 2ozs Butter, 4ozs Cheese

Tuesday: 2 pounds of Beef

Wednesday:  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of Peas, 1 pint of Oatmeal, 2ozs Butter, 2ozs Cheese

Thursday:  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of Peas, 1 pound of Pork

Friday: 1 pint of Oatmeal, 2ozs Butter, 4ozs Cheese

Saturday: 2 pounds of Beef

Each Sea-man is allow'd for every Day of the Week, a Pound of Bread and a Gallon of Beer.'

On the negative side, this is a diet of poor nutritional value; but on the positive side, I doubt if they would ever be becalmed.

## BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME

Two hunters hired a bush pilot to fly them to a remote lake in Alaska. As he dropped them off, the pilot said, "Now, you can legally shoot one moose apiece, but don't do it. We can't possibly get out of here with two moose strapped onto the pontoons".

The hunters promised, but temptation was too great and they shot two. When the pilot returned to pick them up he screamed and hollered, but finally, they strapped a moose to each pontoon. He went to the downwind end of the lake, gave it full power, and finally lifted off just at the far shore.

The plane struggled to climb, but the terrain rose faster and they ended up in the trees. When the noise finally stopped, the pilot looked at one of the hunters and said; "I *told* you idiots that we couldn't get out of this lake with two moose aboard!"

The hunter replied, "Well, at least we got about half-a-mile further than we did last year".

\* \* \* \*

In the early 1960's, a Japan Airlines captain was given an ATC clearance to hold at a fix before landing at Hawaii.

He responded, "I am not familiar with that fix, it has been a long time since I've flown into Hawaii."

The controller queried back, 'How long has it been?'

After a quiet pause, back came the reply, 'December 7th, 1941...'

## USN STYLE

...At another time, some of the officers were feeling pretty elevated and complacent. Our wily Captain didn't say anything. BUT...at a time when the ship was anchored off some peaceful island, he called the officers together and indicated that they were to stay together and take no part in the drill he was having.

He then called the rest of the crew together and ordered them to weigh anchor and move to such and such a position. The crew carried out this order with no detailed instructions. The captain called the officers and said; 'Now move it back'. They couldn't. The parting shot of the Captain, '*And don't you forget it!*'

## THE GOLFING COMMODORE

It was a sunny Saturday morning and the Commodore was beginning his pre-shot routine, visualising his upcoming shot, when a voice came over the clubhouse loudspeaker: 'Would the gentleman on the ladies' tee back up to the men's tee, please!'

The Commodore, still deep in his routine, seemed impervious to the interruption.

Again the announcement: 'Would the *man* on the *women's* tee kindly back up to the men's tee!'

The Commodore, by now quite red in the face, had had enough. Breaking his stance, he lowered his club to the ground, faced the clubhouse and bellowed, 'Would the announcer in the clubhouse kindly 'belt-up' and let me play my second shot?'

## THE STATUS OF THE FLEET AIR ARM AT THE DAWN OF THE 21st CENTURY

By Captain C. F. George, AM, RAN, COMAUSNAVAIR

*'Naval Aviation is what we do. The Fleet Air Arm is who we are.'*

A number of Association Members have recently asked about aspects of the Fleet Air Arm. Those questions, asked in the present environment of considerable change, led me to draw up an overview of the Fleet Air Arm. I think it is important that we all have a feel for roughly where we are headed, because the understanding and support of the wider Naval community – in this case (mainly) ex-uniformed members of the Fleet Air Arm, is a tremendously important and positive influence on our still small and fairly fragile branch of the service.

**The Environment.** Money is very tight across the ADF and operating budgets are constrained. That said, the Fleet Air Arm, amongst all of the other 'arms' of the service (or Force Element Groups, as they are now known), including surface combatants, submariners, the hydrographers etc, is probably closest to having allocated the resources needed for it to perform business to the level of performance required.

That level is still short of optimum however, but does now provide generally for a safe, satisfactory basic level of operational performance both embarked and ashore.

There is a significant gap between this achieved level of performance, and that which we would like to see in our operational Squadrons, flights and aircrew. As has always been the case, this gap is not a deficit that can be closed overnight, but requires long lead times of training and time needed to cover the procurement of the necessary capacity in the logistic system.

As a small Naval Aviation Force (and this has often been our situation), we generally suffer from operating too few aircraft to provide for the level of operating, training and the numbers of embarked flights we deploy. Operating five various types (i.e. Seahawk, Sea King, Squirrel, Kiowa and HS 748) is a further complicating factor.

The shortfall in capacity is felt in the squadrons at NAS, where the shortfall of airframes to provide for training is a very powerful choke point in the aircrew and maintainer training pipelines.

Our embarked flights continue to perform well and are highly valued by their parent ships. No matter what they might try and lead you to believe (i.e. never having sufficient hours allocated) they (embarked Sea hawk and Sea King) are flying at

about the average embarked rates flown by other mainstream navies.

However, in general, the ASW crews are suffering from a lack of exposure to submarines and other specialised operational conditions. Our Seahawk and Sea King simulators do not fully compensate for the shortfall of training airframes.

As part of this equation, it is sometimes claimed that what is reported to be the 'poor availability' of particularly Seahawk and Sea King, is the cause of our inability to generate more flying hours. It certainly is one of the more significant factors and a more responsive supply support pipeline would enable us to achieve some more aircraft availability.

But we have to be mindful that there is probably a rule of diminishing return for more investment past a certain point (we haven't reached it yet) in that direction, and importantly, we are achieving about the availability other mainstream operations get from an equivalent fleet size.

The key to a successful future, therefore (as I see it), is to balance our operating and training requirements against our available capacities. I think that we will have to achieve and manage (i.e. in the face of emergent operational requirements—they always happen) this balance to successfully navigate our way through the next several years of major changes.

A prime consequence of our lack of training capacity, is that we are experiencing about a 30% deficit of aircrew (Lieutenant Commander and below inclusive) and we are also not flush with experienced Flight Senior Maintenance Sailors (FSMS) or engineers now.

This results from a somewhat complex equation, and military aviation is not presently the attractive option it once was (and will be again), so recruiting and retention are not providing and keeping us the numbers we need.

Our basic flying and maintainer training remains first class, but we, led by Chief of Navy and the Naval Training Commander, carefully consider any scheme to reduce training investment in terms of time and money, and closely evaluate the potential for a reduction in the quality of the training outcomes arising as a consequence of change.

Our aircrew training continuums – both for pilot and observer, have been in a constant state of

change in terms of aircraft type, syllabus content and duration, for about three years now. This is turbulence that we could well do without as we begin to introduce complex modifications to our Seahawk fleet and procure (in terms of crew workload), our most demanding type yet – the SHZG Seasprite.

However, it has to be remembered that Navy is the smallest operator of aircraft in the ADF so to an extent we have to adopt the realities imposed by Air Force, who provide basic pilot, observer and maintainer training (primarily basic pilot training is now performed under civil contract at Tamworth, PC-9 is still flown at Pearce) while Army manage the ADF Helicopter School at Fairbairn – probably moving to Oakey within 3 years).

Another effect of our inability to generate more Rate of Effort (ROE) is the slowing of the rate that we can accumulate the vital operational experience in our future Flight Commanders and Flight Senior Maintenance Sailors (FSMS). This remains a process which takes years and these people are our most difficult to replace.

#### A quick run through the types:

**Seahawk:** 12 aircraft whose primary role is ASW, operated by 816 Squadron – 4 in 'attrition reserve'. These will be returned to service over the next three years or so when all 16 will be in operation.

Within the next year, the fleet will commence modification with ESM and FLIR sensors so at least the aircraft will be able to hear electronic transmissions and 'see' in the dark.

The modification will include the installation of some missile counter measures. 816 Squadron is presently able to embark 5 FFG Flights and is working toward, in about 2003, a capability to field 6 FFG Flights and 2 detachments (detachment = part time Flight) for the ANZAC Class FFH.

**Sea King:** 7 aircraft are operated by 817 Squadron. All of these have now had their ASW equipment removed (the radar remains) and the type embarked in *Success* and occasionally *Tobruk* in the Maritime Utility role.

The Squadron's next considerable challenge is to provide sufficient hours to complete the First of Class Flight Trials (FOCFT) during the early part of 2000 in the LPA as a precursor to forming the aviation element (with Army Blackhawk) of the LPA's amphibious element. That has to occur while providing sufficient hours for training and embarked capacity with only 7 airframes.

**Seasprite:** 11 of these aircraft are being procured to be operated by 805 Squadron (due to

recommission mid-2000) and embarked in 6 of the 8 ANZAC Class FFH.

The primary role of the Seasprite is Anti-surface and for an offensive capability in this role ASM ordinance is being reintroduced in the form of the Penguin missile. While this is supposed to be a foolproof, automatic, built in test etc. weapon we are watching developments very carefully because it has been some time since we handled this sort of ordinance and we have never deployed a comparable weapon with our small ship's flights.

First delivery of the Seasprite is due late 2000 with the first embarkation about a year later.

The Seasprite is a thirty or so year old airframe which has been refurbished Zero lified and fitted with current engines (same as Seahawk) and a tactical system which has yet to be developed and operated by a two-person crew (Pilot and Tacco).

Our Seasprite is different from the New Zealand aircraft in terms of its tactical system and the ship's aviation facilities it requires to operate embarked. Ours will use RAST [Recovery, Assist, Secure and Traverse – see *Slipstream* Vol 4 No 2. Ed], the 'Kiwis' will use a different securing and traversing system.

**HS 748:** Two of the stalwart aircraft are still operated by 723 Squadron primarily for the Electronic Warfare training role with the single Electronic Warfare Training System (EWTS) although a considerable amount of 'hash and trash' utility flying is still flown by both aircraft.

The 748 is scheduled to be withdrawn mid-2000 when a commercially provided EWTS is due to enter service under an appropriate contract.

**Squirrel:** Six of these aircraft are still operated by 723. Initially and since 1985, as the interim FFG helo until the Seahawk was introduced. But now as the Naval Lead in Helicopter Trainer (NLIHT).

Very briefly, Navy needs the NLIHT capability because neither of the primary embarked types (Seahawk or Seasprite) has the front left seat available for a copilot to accumulate experience, as was the case (for some types) in the past. So we need a means to build the essential minimum level of experience before a crew (Pilot and Tacco) is sent to sea after Operational Flying training. We use the Squirrel for this.

The Squirrel is a relatively simple aircraft with a single hydraulic control system. About two years ago, an analysis found that the hydraulics was insufficiently reliable and that in some more demanding areas of the flight envelope, reversion to manual control might render the aircraft difficult to fly.

A modification to fit an electrical back-up hydraulic pump is therefore being investigated.

Our 6 are the only examples of some almost 1500 Squirrels worldwide which may be fitted with this modification.

**Bell 206B:** We retain 5 of these aircraft to supplement the Squirrel in providing capacity for the NLIHT role in 723 Squadron service. We hope to procure 4 additional Squirrels from Army within the next 2 years or so as Army is planning to revert to the Bell 206B, the aircraft preferred for basic rotary wing training. When we have the additional Squirrels, we will transfer our 206 to Army.

**Historic Flight:** This unit is manned mainly by reservists and operates the C-47 Tracker, UH-1B and plans to operate the Firefly, Scout and Sea Fury.

The Flight has not flown for some time as the ADF policy covering the operation of historic 'warbirds' across the three services is yet to be developed.

It is likely that the policy, when it is promulgated, will require these aircraft to be operated at 'arms length' from the ADF and completely under CASA rules as the framework of ADF Airworthiness Regulations no longer provide for the types. The civil rules applying to these aircraft also reflect they are a very specialised and restricted category beyond that normally operated by the military or civilian organisations.

An important requirement for the Historic Flight is for the risk presented by operation to be quantified and understood by Chief of Navy and those personnel operating the aircraft. An important requirement is that we have 100% complete example of each type to be operated in the Australian Naval Aviation Museum (ANAM). This is not the case at present.

**NALMS** (Naval Aircraft Logistic Management Squadron) Previously SAMR.SALOG.NALO etc is relocating to NAS and this move should improve the organisation's ability and capacity to respond to the day to day contribution in support of Naval Aviation. We are hoping that the relocation, which is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2000, will result with all of NALMS being 'on base' – there is a substantial component already in place in Hunter Block.

Community influences may cause location to the other side of the airfield in the new 'Aviation Park', where the Seasprite Software Support centre, including simulator (amongst other facilities), will be located.

**NAS Facilities:** Apart from the NALMS facilities issue, there is a great deal of building activity on and around NAS. I have mentioned the

very large development that is the Aviation Park, which is across the road [Braidwood Road] from the Civil Terminal.

On base, the core structure of the new control tower is visible to the west of the North/South runway. The base of the new 8-5/816 building on the site of 'H' hangar is well advanced. The combined AMAFTU/Fire section building is very visible on the corner of the dispersal next to the 'old tower' site.

The other significant building activity is the Training Department facility being constructed on the Married Quarter oval. I have outlined merely the start of a very large building programme indeed. But which in its totality has yet to be approved.

**Summary:** I have given a quick run over the target. There are a number of challenges, prime amongst these are:

- the need to attract, train and retain the aircrew and maintainers we need to man the increasing number of embarked flights
- the effective management of the Seahawk ESM and FLIR fitment project, the Seasprite procurement while sustaining operations and continuing the build-up of embarked activity.

The abiding and very positive aspect of our Fleet Air Arm's present position is that we have probably never had a better immediate future in terms of the quality of the aircraft we now, and will shortly operate. Nor have we had the number of first-rate air capable ships in the fleet, and these two components is what Naval Aviation is all about – ships, their aircraft, and we of the Fleet Air Arm.

We celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year, but our first embarkation occurred in April 1917, eighty-two years ago when HMAS *Brisbane*, whilst in Colombo harbour, embarked a Blackburn Baby off HMS *Raven* II. It was an *ad hoc* flight arranged to help look for the German commerce raider, *Wolf*. *Brisbane* didn't find the raider, but the aircraft flew a couple of two-hour sorties a day for several weeks, before returning to *Raven*.

This deployment indicated to the RAN the potential offered by an embarked air capability. The next year, our cruisers were amongst the first to operate embarked aircraft including, 'Pups', 'One and a Half strutters' and 'Camels' – to many just peculiar sounding names, but they, along with their maintainers and aircrew showed us the way.

You might reasonably claim that things haven't changed all that much in the way we operate aircraft at sea! Our story continues.

**FLY NAVY!**

## THE AUSTRALIAN NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM

### *'Target for Tonight' - and a case of mistaken identity*

By Mark Clayton - Museum Director

In June of this year the Museum received an unsolicited envelope from Barbara Ashby in the UK containing about a dozen dog-eared black and white photographs relating to the British Pacific Fleet's (BPF) operations here in the Shoalhaven. Barbara's father, John Horton, had served with the Royal Navy's No.1 Maintenance Repair Unit at HMS *Nabbington* [*Albatross*] during 1945. The photographs were found amongst his personal effects following his recent demise.

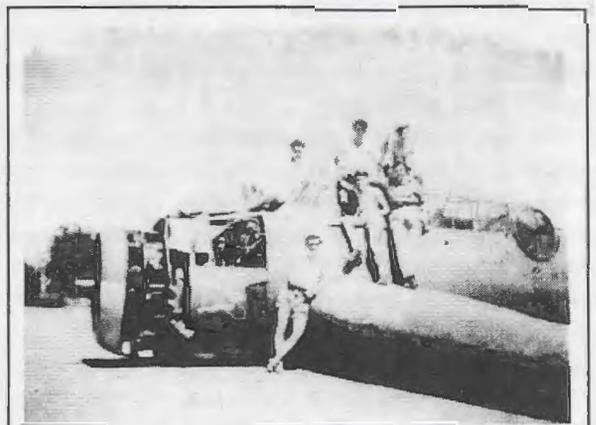
Included in this small collection was a picture of a BPF Avenger, one of many such aircraft known to have come to grief whilst operating in the Shoalhaven during WWII. Of marginal quality, and without captions to identify the people, the place or the circumstances, it's easy to see how this – and the rest of John Horton's wartime photographs – might easily have ended up on a rubbish dump in Hertfordshire. Thankfully they did find their way back here because, without it, we might never have discovered the true significance of the Museum's 'nose art' panel, which is one of the few BPF relics in our collection.

Military pilots have always decorated their aircraft with personal emblems and motifs, this 'nose art' (as it's now known) having been especially prolific during WWII. The American pin-up artist, Alberto Vargas, provided much of the inspiration for this wartime art form. The Museum's panel, titled *Target for Tonight*, being a copy of the centrefold calendar girl which Vargas had drawn for the September 1944 edition of *Esquire* magazine.

So, what has all this got to do with John Horton's photograph? Well, if you look closely at this image, you'll just be able to distinguish – left of the person standing – the very same panel which we have on display here at the Museum. We had wrongly identified this as a panel from a Corsair, but with further research we should now be able to identify both the particular Avenger and crew involved in this incident. With any luck, we may even be able to give our future visitors a first hand account of the incident that led us to acquiring the panel. Except for this seemingly insignificant photograph, we might never have learned the relevance of what is one of our more important BPF artefacts; worse still, our factual (identification) error would have been compounded with each passing year. In the overall scheme of things, it might seem to be a point of little consequence; its importance is more easily understood when you consider that the Museum houses tens of thousands of similar artefacts which are used collectively by historians, and the visiting public, to interpret the FAA's heritage. Personal photographs can sometimes have considerable research and display value as this episode well illustrates. So please, do keep us in mind if, like Mrs Ashby, you find yourself wondering what to do with that old shoe box or envelope full of snapshots.

Speaking of which, we would especially like to hear from any association members who might be able to help us determine the configuration, style, size and colouring of the markings that once adorned the 'dummy deck' here at HMAS *Albatross*. We are hoping to be able to repaint the whole of the hangar deck in the near future and see this as an opportunity to also reinstate the original 'dummy deck' replete with carrier deck markings. We are particularly interested in copying any contemporary photographs that you might be prepared to lend us.

Thanks are also extended to those many people who responded to my request in the last *Slipstream* for information pertaining to Winjeel A85-402. With your help we've been able to establish that Navy personnel in fact flew this aircraft from 1956 until at least 1974.



**British Pacific Fleet Avenger.**  
**'Up close and personal' with the asphalt at RANAS Nowra.**

*The John Horton photograph, very faded but still providing a valuable clue for the ANAM. If any of our UK readers can supply further information, please contact the Editor.*

*Photograph courtesy Barbara Ashby & ANAM*

**If helicopters are so safe, how come there are no vintage/classic helicopter fly-ins? Jim Taverner**

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**HMAS SYDNEY IN KOREA***'The Albatross Magazine' - May 1952*

HMAS *Sydney* - Captain D H Harries RAN - Australia's Light Fleet Carrier, arrived at Jervis Bay on 3rd of March to disembark officers and ratings of the Carrier Air Group; together with her aircraft, which bore the distinguishing marks for allied aircraft in the Korean War of black and white stripes around the fuselage and wings.

Her record in the Korean War was one of which the ship and her Air Group, led by Lieut. Cdr M F Fell, DSO, DSC, RN, could justly be proud. One outstanding achievement was the flying of 89 operational sorties in one day of her first patrol, which remains a record for a light carrier. Praise for this achievement must also be given to her maintenance crews who did excellent work throughout the time in Korea in keeping the aircraft fully serviceable for operations.

The ship operated mainly off the West Coast of Korea and her tasks were to attack with bombs, rockets and cannon such targets as bridges, troop concentrations, gun positions, ox-carts and to give air support to the troops in the front line. This latter role was mainly with the Commonwealth Division.

Targets of importance were very often given by the authorities ashore and a routine flight every day was the 'Milk Run', which consisted of a flight of aircraft flying low along the coast scouring the beaches, inlets and islands for signs of enemy junks, their main source of transport. This was often just a routine flight with a report of 'nothing sighted', but there were also the occasions on which it paid dividends.

To the outsider, the attacks on ox-carts must appear a rather brutal way of conducting a war, but it must be remembered that these were the enemy's main, and in many cases, only means of road transport. Many a simple looking ox-cart, driven by what appeared to be a peaceful farmer, blew up with a terrific explosion when hit.

The enemy, besides being extremely cunning, is a past master at the art of camouflage. Innocent 'rubbish' heaps would spit small arms fire at an investigating aircraft, the enemy would then dash across the field to disappear into a ditch. A further example occurred when a pilot saw a cave outside which enemy troops were sitting about cleaning their rifles. Thinking this would make a good target he went on for a bit to give the impression that he hadn't seen them, he then turned back to make an attack. However, on returning to the area there were no signs of either the men or the cave. Apparently they had some kind of cleverly camouflaged door blending perfectly with the surroundings which they lowered over the entry.

The weather in the operational area was generally very good until the end of November, when it started to get very cold and snowstorms were experienced. For many of the ship's company this was the first time in their lives they had seen snow. Warm clothing was issued to all officers and men, with special windproof suits for flight deck personnel. Even in the coldest weather the flight deck personnel worked together as a well trained team with each man knowing his job and fitting perfectly into the organisation.

October 14th will be a day long remembered by everyone in the ship when she put to sea from Sasebo to fight the Typhoon Ruth. Tremendous seas and winds buffeted the ship, and one aircraft on the flight deck was washed over the side. Others were damaged when another aircraft slipped its securing lines and ran amok. A small motor boat - the skimmer - was also washed overboard and was last seen floating astern and riding the seas quite well.

Several electrical fires were started due to short-circuiting by sea water, but these were soon extinguished. But it wasn't pleasant to hear the pipe 'Fire, Fire, Fire', broadcast throughout a ship loaded with high-octane petrol.

Great surprise was caused later by reports that a rumour had been circulated at home that the ship had been lost in this typhoon.

From the ship's point of view, Korea was an air war, with the ship operating 40 miles off the coast and little was to be seen of the land except on radar screens. Information on the aircraft's activities was broadcast throughout the ship from time to time, and in its usual inexplicable way the 'Bush Telegraph' worked overtime and news soon got around.

The ship's cinema was a welcome diversion. A film was shown in the after lift well almost every night, except in rough weather when steel chairs on the steel deck were too hazardous.

The close air support missions were very popular with the pilots and were welcomed by the frontline troops. The flight of aircraft carrying out the missions reported to the front line controller, who in turn would hand over to a 'Mosquito', which was a small Auster aircraft. This aircraft would then give the pilots the target to attack. If the pilots had any difficulty in picking up the target, which was very often a pocket of troops in a small cave, the Auster would go down in a dive and fire a smoke rocket into the target to indicate the right spot. The small and very low aircraft would spend hours over the front line and naturally, several of

them were shot down, nevertheless, they were always very calm and precise, with the pilots taking infinite pains to make sure they had the target before ordering the attack.

Early in the campaign, the pilots had been told by visiting Americans that in the event of anyone being shot down, the whole air war in Korea would virtually cease so that a full scale search could be carried out. This was soon proved to be correct. On two occasions of aircraft being downed, the crews were rescued by helicopters. These aircraft did magnificent work in this respect, and were used for a host of other purposes such as taking mail around the fleet at sea and acting as 'plane guard' behind the carrier in case an aircraft went into the sea when coming in to land.

The first helicopter rescue was quite an epic and displayed the magnificent courage of its crew. A Firefly crew had crash-landed well behind the enemy lines and the ship's helicopter with its American crew set out for the spot. It was getting late in the afternoon and it therefore became a race against time, with darkness closing in. However, the helicopter got there and with complete calmness was landed beside the downed crew. In

the meantime, a couple of enemy troops who had got close to the spot, chose this moment to make an attack. They overlooked the fact that the helicopter would be armed and one of the crew jumped out with a machine gun and shot the enemy troops - at the same time casting some aspersions concerning the ancestry of the victims.

On another occasion a pilot was picked up by a shore-based helicopter and taken back to its base for the night. During the night he was awakened by a returning South Korean raiding party, who, noticing his flying clothing lying around, decided to show their appreciation for the help given by aviators. However, the pilot must be forgiven for not showing complete enthusiasm for the gift, it was half-a-dozen enemy ears which the raiding party had brought back with them.

This period of active service conditions was invaluable to the ship's company as a whole, for no peacetime exercise can quite impart the reality of war. Many young men fresh from their training have therefore returned to Australia having seen the results of their training brought to fruition with a job well done.

\* \* \* \*

### VIETNAM VETERANS' MUSEUM

This unique museum is believed to be the only museum that deals solely with all aspects of Australia's longest war.

A new and exciting museum, established in San Remo (Vic) by the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia, so that people can see first-hand the way our servicemen lived 'in country'. It also shows how National Service affected the lives of young Australians, and gives the opportunity to learn about the aftermath of Vietnam.

As well as thousands of items and pictures, there will also be veterans available to answer any questions, from their perspective, that you may have.

The display includes, vehicles, uniforms, flags, maps, military items, Vietnamese national costumes, video displays, an Australian 'hoochy', Viet Cong equipment etc..

The museum, located at the corner of Genista Street and Keam Crescent, San Remo, is open from 10:00am - 4:00pm Friday to Monday inclusive and Public Holidays - or by arrangement. After hour enquiries (03) 5678 5728. Closed Christmas Day and Good Friday.

This is a non-judgemental educational display manned by volunteers. Donations are used solely for the upkeep and expansion of the museum.

### THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE

*By Edgar A Gue*

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,  
 But he with a chuckle replied  
 That maybe it couldn't, but he would be one  
 Who wouldn't say so 'till he tried'.  
 So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
 On his face. If he worried, he hid it.  
 He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
 That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that:  
 At least no one ever has done it".  
 But he took off his coat and took off his hat  
 And the first thing he knew he'd begun it.  
 With the lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,  
 Without any doubting or quit it,  
 He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
 That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,  
 There are thousands to prophesy failure:  
 There are thousands to point out to you,  
 one by one,  
 The dangers that will assail you.  
 But just buckle right in with a bit of a grin,  
 Then take off your coat and go to it,  
 Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing  
 That cannot be done, and you'll do it

**WANTED: Personal stories of RATOG trials from pilots and casual observers. Thank you. Ed.**  
**REMINDER - ABSOLUTE CLOSING DATE FOR INPUT TO NEXT EDITION - 10 DECEMBER 1999**

## LEND LEASE PROJECT AT RANAS NOWRA

*Article courtesy Lend Lease Projects*

The first stage of the redevelopment of the Naval Air Station at Nowra comprises a wide range of design and construction challenges.

It includes a start to finish, greenfield design and construction for a new Air Traffic Control Tower, hangarage, workshop and administrative facilities for 816 Squadron and the soon to be raised 805 Super Sea Sprite Squadron.

There will be new shelters on the apron for No.2 Squadron RNZAF A4 Skyhawk aircraft, a state of the art Aviation Training Centre and a new Explosives Ordnance Facility. Additionally, the first stage will see a redeveloped existing facility for the Photographic Section and a complete replacement of the ageing Airfield Lighting System.

Also included in the project is an upgrade of base service infrastructure and the inclusion of a new taxiway to replace Taxiway 'A', demolished as part of the construction of the new hangars.

Construction commenced on the Air Traffic Control Facility in April 1999 after many months of developing and finalising design. By the time you are reading this, the tower structure will be complete and the on ground cabin construction well under way. The Base Building structure will be complete, requiring detailed fit-out. The Tower will be ready for hand over to Defence in December 1999.

The 805/816 Hangar Facility is on the Stage One construction programme critical path and is due for completion in November 2000. The demolition of the existing pavements and services occurred in July 1999 and the construction programme is well under way. The bored piers have been completed and the on ground and suspended concrete slabs have commenced.

Construction of the Aviation Training Centre commenced in May, again after many months of detailed design and close liaison with the relevant staff. The Centre is programmed for completion in August 2000 and construction targets are being met.

The Airfield Lighting System is due for commencement prior to the end of 1999 with completion and commissioning by mid-2000. The Explosive Ordnance Facility, the Photo Centre, the A4 Shelters and the new Taxiway are well into the design phase and it is planned to commence construction of each element prior to the end of 1999.

Close liaison and a good working relationship between Lend Lease and the stakeholders on Base has resulted in the tenancy of Lend Lease on the Base being made as painless as possible. As with all major construction projects within an existing operational infrastructure, there will always be conflicts requiring resolution to ensure operations on both sides continue. The Base staff have accommodated the construction team and these efforts will realise excellent new facilities, on time, and on budget.

\* \* \* \*

A 'DIT' WITH A NAUTICAL FLAVOUR...

*By Tom Mahoney, Coast Guard Squadron*

## HOW TO REMOVE A DEAD WHALE

I am absolutely not making this incident up: in fact I have it all on videotape. The tape is from a local TV news show in Oregon, which sent a reporter out to cover the removal of a 45-foot, eight-ton dead whale that washed up on the beach.

The responsibility for getting rid of the carcass was placed on the Oregon State Highway Division, apparently on the theory that highways and whales are very similar in the sense of being large objects.

Anyway, the highway engineers hit upon the plan of blowing up the whale with dynamite. The thinking being, that the whale would be blown into small pieces, which in turn would be eaten by seagulls, and that would be that. So, they moved the spectators back up the beach, put a half-ton of dynamite next to the whale and set it off.

I am probably not guilty of understatement, when I say that what follows on the videotape is the most wonderful event in the history of the universe.

First you see the whole carcass disappear in a huge blast of smoke and flame. Then you hear the happy spectators shouting 'Wow' and 'Whee'. Then, suddenly, the crowd's tone changes. You hear a new sound like 'spludd'. You hear a woman's voice shouting, 'Here come pieces of-MY GOD!'

Something smears the camera lens.

Later, the reporter explains, 'The humour of the situation suddenly gave way to a run for survival as huge chunks of whale blubber fell everywhere'.

One piece caved in the roof of a car parked more than a quarter of a mile away. Remaining on the beach were several rotting whale sections the size of condominium units.

There was no sign of the seagulls who had no doubt permanently relocated to Brazil.

**Glider - Formerly an aeroplane, prior to running out of fuel.**

Dear Readers, This is the last edition of Slipstream for the year, on behalf of myself and the Editorial Team.....Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Ed.



Well, is Santa coming to your place? If he does, it's a bigger miracle than you imagined. Read on... see what you think when you're finished. Ed.

1. No known species of reindeer can fly: but there are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified, and while most of these are insects and germs, this does not COMPLETELY rule out flying reindeer, which only Santa has ever seen.

2. There are 2 billion children in the world (persons under 18): but since Santa doesn't (appear) to handle Muslim, Hindu, Jewish or Buddhist children, that reduces the workload by 85% of the total – leaving 378 million according to the Population Reference Bureau. At an average (census) rate of 3.5 children per household, that's 91.8 million homes. One presumes there is at least one good child per household.

3. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with, thanks to the different time zones and rotation of the earth, assuming he travels east to west (which seems logical). This works out to 822.6 visits per second. This is to say that for each Christian household with good children, Santa has 1/1000<sup>th</sup> of a second to park, hop out of the sleigh, jump down the chimney, fill the stocking, distribute the remaining presents under the tree, eat whatever snacks have been left, get back up the chimney, get back into the sleigh and move on to the next house.

Assuming that each of these 91.8 million stops are evenly distributed around the earth which, of course, we know to be false but for the purpose of our calculations we will accept, we are now talking about .78 miles per household, a total trip of 75.5 million miles, not counting stops to do what most of

us do at least once every 31 hours, plus feeding etc.

That means that Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second, 3,000 times the speed of sound. For purposes of comparison, the fastest man-made vehicle on earth – the Ulysses space probe, moved at a poky 2 miles per second – a conventional reindeer can run, at tops, 15 miles per hour.

4. The payload on the sleigh adds another interesting element. Assuming each child gets nothing more than a medium sized Lego set (2 pounds), the sleigh is carrying 321,300 tons, not counting Santa, who is invariably described as overweight. On land, conventional reindeer can pull no more than 300 pounds. Even granting the 'flying reindeer' can pull TEN TIMES that normal amount, we cannot do the job with eight, or even nine, we need 214,200 reindeer. This increases the payload – not even counting the weight of the sleigh to 353,430 tons. Again for comparison, this is four times the weight of the *Queen Elizabeth*.

5. 353,000 tons travelling at 650 miles per second creates enormous air resistance. This will heat the reindeer up in the same fashion as spacecrafts re-entering the earth's atmosphere. The lead pair will absorb 14.3 QUINTILLION joules of energy per second. *Each!* In short, they will burst into flames almost instantaneously, exposing the reindeer behind them and creating a deafening sonic boom in their wake. The entire reindeer team will be vaporised within 4.26 thousandths of a second. Santa, meanwhile, will be subject to centrifugal forces 17,500.6 times greater than gravity. A 250-pound Santa (which seems ludicrously thin) would be pinned back to the back of the sleigh by a 4,315,015-pound force.

In conclusion, if Santa ever DID deliver presents on Christmas Eve, he's now quite dead. If he's not, I hope he comes to our homes first.

## CHRISTMAS TRADITION

Santa was *very* upset. It was Christmas Eve and NOTHING was going right. Mrs Claus had burned all the biscuits. The elves were complaining about not getting paid for their overtime. The reindeer had been drinking all afternoon and were dead drunk. To make matters worse, they had taken the sleigh out for a spin earlier in the day and had crashed it into a tree.

Santa was furious. 'I can't believe it! I've got to deliver millions of presents all over the world in just a few hours – all of my reindeer are drunk, the elves are on strike and I don't even have a Christmas tree!

I sent that stupid Little Angel out HOURS ago to find a tree and he isn't even back yet! What am I going to do?'

Just then, the Little Angel opened the front door and stepped inside, dragging a Christmas tree behind him. He says, 'Hey, fat man! Where do you want me to stick the tree this year?'

And that, dear readers, is how the tradition of angels atop the Christmas trees came to pass...



### RAN RADIO MECHANICS ASSOCIATION

In the year 2000, Nowra is to be the preferred 'watering hole' for the RAN Radio Mechanics biannual reunion.

All serving, ex-RAN and RN Radio Mechanics (REM,ETC,ETS, ATC and WE) with partners especially, are invited to participate in four days of planned, enjoyable and relaxing group activities. If your occupation (right arm rate) was any of the foregoing, regardless of whether you were/are Fleet Air Arm, Submarines or General Service, you qualify to attend. This will be the fifth reunion since the Association formed eight years ago.

Typically, the event starts with registration, then an informal cocktail party where old acquaintances meet again and where oft-repeated 'dits' take on an additional dimension of exaggeration. There follows a series of tourist-type activities, which cater for all tastes and are of particular appeal to the accompanying partners. The programme ends with a semi-formal dinner at which the ladies have the opportunity of dressing in their finery. An eminent person is invited as dinner guest speaker.

Those who are not yet members of the Association and who are interested in attending the 2000 Reunion, or require further information, please contact George Stevens, Tel: 02 44 416 991, or write - 12 Minerva Avenue, Vincentia, NSW 2540.

### JUST A SIMPLE SAILOR

*Courtesy of 'The Anchor Light'*

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast and he sat 'round with his buddies - telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he had fought in: and the deeds that he had done

in his exploits with his buddies: they were heroes - every one.

And tho' sometimes to his neighbours, his tales became a joke,

all his buddies listened, for they knew where of he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer, for old Nick has passed away,

and the world's a little poorer, for a sailor died today.

No, he wont be mourned by many,

just his children and his wife, for he lived an ordinary, and a quiet sort of life.

He held a job and raised a family,

quietly going on his way, and the world wont note

his passing, tho' a sailor died today.

When politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state, while thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell of their life stories

from the time that they were young, but the passing of a sailor goes unnoticed - and unsung. Is the greatest contribution to the welfare of our land, some politician's broken promise that cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow, who in times of war and strife, goes off to serve his country, and offers up his life? The politician's stipend and the style in which he lives, are sometimes disproportionate to the service that he gives.

While the ordinary sailor, who offered up his all, is paid off with a medal, and perhaps a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them, for it was long ago, that our Nicks and Jims and Johns, went to battle for us all.

But we know it was not the 'pollies', with their compromise and ploys, who won for us the freedom, that our country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger with your enemies at hand, would you really want some statesman with his ever waffling stand?

Or would you want a serviceman, who has sworn to defend,

his home, his kin and country, and would fight until the end?

He was just a common sailor and his ranks are growing thin, but his presence should remind us, we may need his like again.

For when countries are in conflict, then we find the serviceman's part, is to clean up all the troubles that the politicians start. If we cannot give him honour while he's here to hear the praise,

then at least let's give him homage at the ending of his days.

Perhaps a simple headline in the paper that might say, 'Our Country is in Mourning, for a Sailor Died Today'.

### A LAST FAREWELL

*The Association records with regret the deaths of the following members and shipmates:*



Jack (John W) Goddard - 15 June 1999

Maxwell Clifford Ackerley - 25 July 1999

Thomas Frances Rowland Payne -13 August 1999

Keith Kettley - August 1999

Marian Lister - 08 September 1999

RADM Geoffrey Gladstone AO DSC and Bar RAN (Rtd) - 08 September 1999

Ernest Frederick 'Ernie' Maude - 22 September 1999

Don Pengilly - (No date supplied)

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