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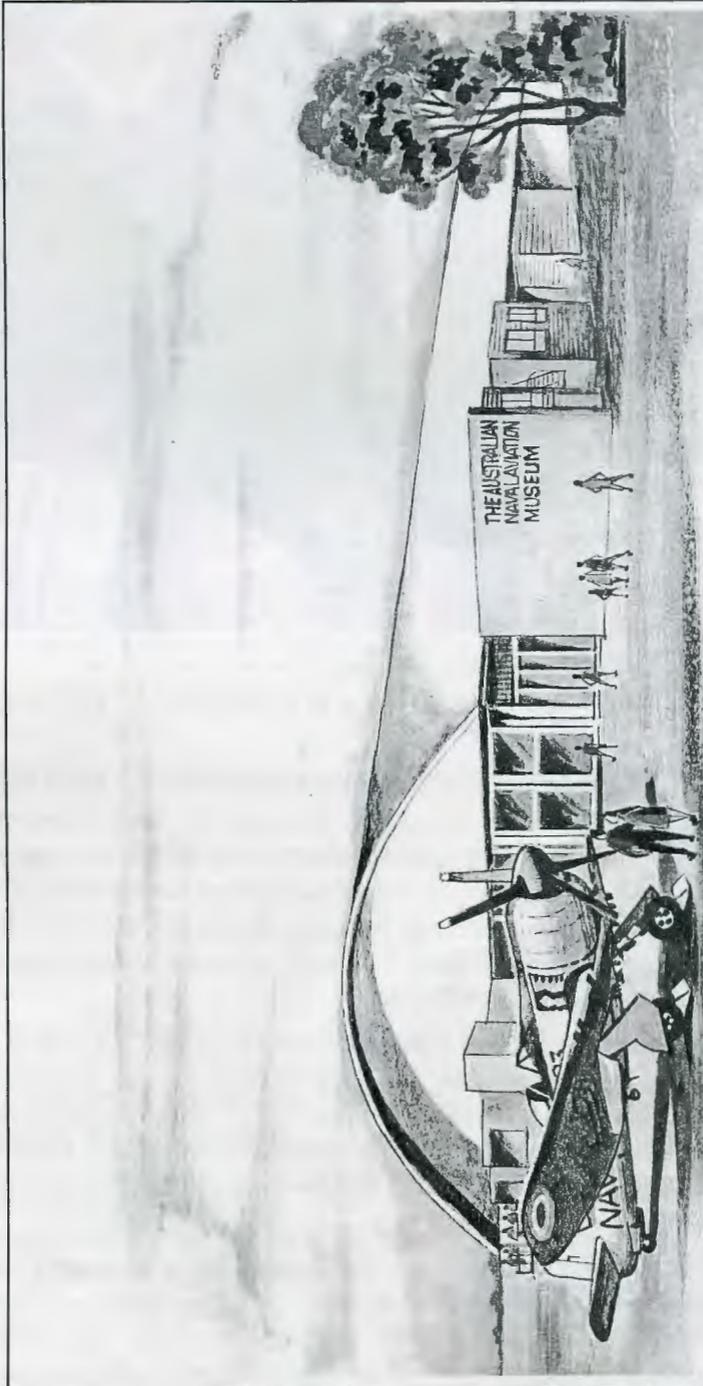
The Quarterly Journal
of the
Fleet Air Arm
Association of Australia Inc.

Volume 11 Number 1

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Slipstream

Established HMAS Albatross 1957



The Australian Naval Aviation Museum - Nowra NSW
An artist's impression of the changes to the facade during the next building programme.

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Editor: John Arnold - PO Box 662, NOWRA NSW 2541, Australia.
Office Hours Phone/Fax (02) 44 232 412 - E-mail: slipstream@shoal.net.au

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FOREWORD

by

**Vice Admiral
D. J. Shackleton, RAN**

Chief of Navy

I am delighted to have been asked to write the foreword for this edition of *Slipstream*. I was fortunate to serve in both HMA Ships *Sydney* and *Melbourne* (the carriers, not the FFG's!) and in doing so gained an early appreciation of the professionalism and esprit de corps of our Naval Aviators. Since then much has changed in the world of aviation, but my great affinity for the Fleet Air Arm remains.

Today's Navy relies heavily on our 'birdies', both at sea and ashore. We currently have aircraft involved with our ships in support of the INTERFET operations in East Timor, as well as in routine and mission critical activities throughout the Fleet. The Fleet Air Arm is a vital key to our ability to maintain the Navy Mission – to fight and win at sea.

In recent times there has been much acknowledgement of the very high standard of our Naval Aviators. The part our 'birdies' played in the rescue operations during the ill-fated 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race was outstanding. I watched in awe from safety as the RAN aircraft crews joined other rescuers in the treacherous conditions off the south coast of NSW at the end of last year. Anyone who was witness to the ferocity of that storm will not be surprised to hear that crews were rewarded for their bravery by the Governor General, His Excellency Sir William Deane AC KBE, this year.

I felt very proud when the Governor General announced the award of the group citation for bravery to the aircraft crews and the Bravery Medal to the winch-men, Petty Officer Shane Pashley BM and Petty Officer Brian Lee BM. Anyone who saw footage of the extremely dangerous rescues that these crews selflessly undertook would be as proud as I was. They brought great credit upon the RAN, the Fleet Air Arm and themselves.

The Fleet Air Arm continues to play a vital role in the Defence of Australia. *Slipstream* continues to provide the forum for our aviation personnel, both past and present, to maintain the close link that enables us to grow and learn from the vast warehouse of experience available in its readership. It is also a fine way of involving the Navy in the broader community and in continuing to encourage our strong links with Australian industry.

To all those involved in the publication of *Slipstream* congratulations on a job well done, and to all you who are reading it I wish you all the very best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year.



B



EDITOR'S CORNER

All the very best wishes for the New Year to the readers.

Thank you to all those who have supported this particular edition with their submissions. Space has not allowed all the input to be published, but rest assured, it is waiting in the wings for another time.

You will see mention in the National Secretary's Report concerning a Draft *Slipstream* Policy Report. In general, the National Executive believes that the content of each edition of the journal should aim to include, as a minimum, coverage of the following topics:

President's and Divisional Reports, Letters to the Editor, current Navy topics of likely interest to members, Museum news and events, *Albatross* happenings, Air Squadron articles, articles on FAA History, Personalities etc.

The concept is fine, but sometimes hard to comply with, especially when articles covering the various aspects mentioned above, are not received by the deadline date, or, not at all.

This is particularly true in respect to articles from RANAS and the Squadrons, who, at the time of asking for an update of activities, happily agree to do so. When articles do not eventuate, it is usually because of the limitations imposed by workload and the available manpower. The information will eventually be forthcoming, but they have to meet their own priorities first.

In the never ending effort to reduce production costs, there has been substantial changes with the printing of the magazine.

Camera ready Master Sheets and percentage reduced half tone photographs, normally supplied by myself for the printer to produce printing plates, is no longer acceptable. The whole magazine must now be supplied on computer disc for printing. It is a steep learning curve, so you will have to bear with me.

Another matter close to home is the Naval Aviation Museum. There are committed funds for 'Stage' expansion, but it has reached a point in its growth where income on a regular basis, or additional sponsorship, is urgently required.

A lot of forward planning is being put into place, and, provided income can be generated, bodes well for the future. The Museum is under new management and is very deserving of your support.

Cheers, *John Arnold*

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The major activity this quarter has been the Annual General Meeting of the Association, which was held at *Albatross* on 30 October 1999. Delegates were present from WA, VIC, SA, NSW and ACT, while Queensland was represented by proxy. This was a good turnout and we were able to resolve a number of issues. The meeting was opened by our Patron, John Goble.

Significant among the issues was the venue for AGM's and our triennial reunions. South Australia had been nominated for the next reunion, but the AGM determined that both AGM's and reunions should be held at Nowra in future. The National Executive to be the organising body.

Other matters addressed included measures to simplify Association administration, affiliation with the Naval Association, the need to increase membership, especially from today's FAA, and a *Slipstream* policy statement. Administration of the Association will have to take account of the GST and work out a way to minimise its cost implications.

In October last year, the Association was represented by Don and Laurel McLaren at the Canadian Naval Aviation Group's (CNAG) conference conducted at Victoria BC. A very enthusiastic group represented CNAG at our 50th Anniversary last year and it was very kind of Don and Laurel to enable us to reciprocate, and to provide us with a report of the proceedings.

An update and programme for the dedication of the Korean War Memorial in Canberra is published in this journal. FAA Korea veterans are advised to contact the co-ordinator if they are attending the ceremony. RAAF aircraft will participate and the RANs Historic Flight's Firefly and Sea Fury are planned to take part.

The extensive building and construction programme at NAS Nowra is proceeding at an impressive pace. The large training complex is taking shape on the AJASS oval, the new control tower is easier to identify as it takes shape and the new aircraft hangar to replace 'H' hangar is also recognisable. The houses on the Married Quarter's site are rapidly disappearing as the Defence Housing programme now favours leasing homes in town. The new Technology Park established for the Kaman Sea Sprite on the Braidwood Road seems to have been completed.

At this time last year, I sought inputs from members on any concerns about the direction of the Association and whether there were any ideas for the future, or current problems which they might like to express. None has come to the Executive, but I would be naïve to think that all members were satisfied. If you, as a member, have an idea or criticism which you would like to offer, please write in to: Box A115, Naval PO, NOWRA NSW 2540, and we will address the matter. Alternatively, write to your Division secretariat.

Keep on supporting *Slipstream* with your letters and articles.

All the best for the New Year and the New Millennium.

Neil Ralph

KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL UPDATE AND PROGRAMME

The ground breaking ceremony for the Korean War Memorial took place on Friday 17 September 1999, when the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, and the President of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Kim Dae-jung, jointly turned the earth at the memorial site on Anzac Parade, Canberra. They also laid a wreath and unveiled the foundation stone of the memorial.

With this symbolic act over, things are now moving apace towards the dedication programme, 16-17 and 18 April 2000, which is planned along the following lines:

Sunday 16 April – Arrival in Canberra of Australian veterans (although some will have assembled earlier for association meetings).

Evening: Unit 'meet and greet' receptions, including welcome to overseas visitors.

Monday 17 April – Free for sightseeing for visitors to Canberra. NOTE – the Australian War memorial's Korean War travelling exhibition will be on display at the War Memorial.

Late afternoon: An ecumenical religious service at the Australian War memorial parade ground.

Evening: Reception tentatively identified as a reception for veterans and one guest at the Great Hall of Parliament House. Cost \$30 - \$35 per head.

Tuesday 18 April – A short march-past of veterans (600 metres). The order of march will be other United Nations Command countries' contingents, preceded by their National flags; then the Australian Army, Navy and Air Force contingents led by Service and Unit colours, and commanding officers at the time of the Korean War. This will be followed by a ceremony at the Anzac Parade site to dedicate the memorial – on completion, dispersal to unit reunions.

As outlined in *Slipstream* some months ago, I have volunteered to act as co-ordinator for those of the Sydney CAG (805, 808 and 817 squadrons) who will be attending the ceremonies here in Canberra. So far, I have only three names. It is essential that the organisers know how many to expect so that accommodation and venues for get-togethers can be arranged – *so please let me know if you intend to attend.*

Please contact: Norman Lee

25 Rubbo Crescent, WESTON ACT 2611

Phone/Fax (02) 6288 2285.



There are several people in this batch of letters who need your assistance. Please try and help them. Ed.

Dear Ed

My name is Peter Redpath (ex-CPOATWL3).

Currently, I am in the process of making a claim on Veterans' Affairs. Before I can proceed any further, I need to contact some of my contemporaries who worked alongside me in the Avionics Workshop at HMAS *Albatross* during the period 1976 to 1978.

Your help is urgently required to ratify an Occupational Health issue.

Please contact me at: 31 Ijong Street, Kenmore, Qld. 4069 – Phone (07) 3878 9391.

Peter Redpath

Dear Ed

I am writing to you in the hope that you can assist my uncle, former RAN FAA Aircraft Handler, Neville 'Tod' Wanstall o/n R45896, in helping him to contact some of his old FAA mates with whom he served in the 1950s. He is currently suffering chronic illness and is living on his property at the town of Bororen, south of Gladstone Qld.

Joining the RAN as an Aircraft Handler in 1950/51? [No 27, AH3 Course, 14 Jan 1952. Ed]. He served at HMAS *Albatross*, the CAG second deployment to Korea, HMAS *Vengeance* and as part of the commissioning crew of HMAS *Melbourne*.

'Tod' was a very good boxer and footballer, I believe he was one of the original FAA Rugby team at HMAS *Albatross* – called 'The White Ensign Club' – as well as representing Navy in Rugby Union. The most significant match being the 'curtain raiser' match against Illawarra for the first tour of the 'All Blacks' in 1956? If anyone has any information regarding the above i.e. photo's, newspaper clippings etc. I would only be too happy to meet the cost of obtaining copies for the family.

I am also trying to find some contact information on some of his old shipmates: Barry Tyrell, Tony Jones, D'arcy Doyle, Les Michin, Ron Murphy and Don Pengelly.

I am hoping that I can assist my uncle in obtaining and compiling a record of his RAN career and would be eternally grateful for any assistance you can render to the family.

Wayne Wanstall – 67 Grevillea Cres., Lake Albert, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
Telephone 0269 224 424

Dear Ed

I am in the process of trying to locate the veterans of the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam, from 1967 to the end of their participation in June 1971.

The '135th Assault Helicopter Company' is holding a REUNION in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, from 20 to 24th June 2000. There is a lot of interest in the reunion from the US Army veterans, and almost all of the old CO's have been contacted about this event.

The four American CO's, Beasley, Fred Dunway, Woodmansee and Walter D. Alexander, have shown their willingness to support the revival of the old camaraderie of the 135th AHC EMU's and TAIPANS; this follows the successful 135th Reunion held in conjunction with the Vietnam Helicopter Crewmen's association in Dallas in 1998. Many of the 135th members are looking forward to the event in 2000; there has also been a great show of interest from the Australian contingent at this time.

The venue is the Marriot Executive at Charlotte, North Carolina, USA. Accommodation is reasonably priced at US \$75 per night (up to four people per room). As you know, the US hospitality is unbeatable.

Those with Internet access can indicate their attendance by contacting the 135th Web Page at: <http://www.finenet.net/135ahc/> - others needing information can contact me on 02 4963 4053.

On another matter; after participating in this years ANZAC Day march, it was thought to be a good time to discuss the RANHFV and its banner. I believe that it has now been established that this year, as many RANHFV vets as possible will try to muster and march under their own banner in Sydney. Please pass this message along to all and sundry so they can muster at the MLC building in Elizabeth Street at 8 bells on the morning of the 25th April 2000.

David Bengé

...and from the USA...

Dear Ed

My name is Bob Clark, I was a US Navy Advisor in Vietnam, 1970 thru April'71.

Late October or early November of 1970, we were in Dong Tam getting some of the boats fixed and I met the Australians of the 135th. Thanks to Lt Buchanan, I kind of became a member of the 135th. I flew as Lt Abraham's door gunner on weekends for the next six months.

My group got orders in April and I never got a chance to say thanks, or goodbye, and until about four months ago I thought I never would. I am in contact with Jim Buchanan, Brian Abraham and Winston James, but I would like to find the rest of

the enlisted men who were in the 135th at that time.

Most of them I only knew by nickname; the two men who I stayed with in Dong Tam were called 'Chook' and 'Fowler'. One of them ran the club, and I understand his real name was Robert Horton.

Any help you can give me will be greatly appreciated and I would like to know if anyone from that time will be coming to the reunion. Both Jim and Brian can't make it this year, Winston wasn't sure the last time I talked to him.

If anyone I know is coming, I could provide transportation to Charlotte from either Chicago or Detroit and back again. It would only cost them an ice cold VB. It's been a long time since I've had one of those! The 135th used to fly in an extra pallet a month so my Advisor Group could also have VB.

Thanks again for any help you can give me.

Bob Clark

Dear Ed

Don Pengelly passed away on 13 May 1999 after a long battle with Emphysema.

A funeral service was held at the Garden Island Chapel. His ashes were spread on the waters off Garden Island by a Naval Patrol Boat, which was organised by 'Sandy' Sadler.

Don's wife, Elsie, wishes to thank all those who helped her through his illness.

John Jeffery

Dear Ed

I am writing a book about HMAS Sydney 1948-75, and trying to piece together her trips, and ports of call.

Through *Slipstream*, I am hoping to contact those members of the FAA Association who can help me close the gaps that I have in the ship's colourful history.

So far, my book has 250 pages and a number of photographs and maps. If you have served on Sydney and can give me any assistance, it would be very much appreciated.

Unfortunately, correspondence can only be conducted by mail as I do not have Internet access or Fax, and the telephone is too expensive.

All information and material supplied will be acknowledged in the book with sincere appreciation.

Yours sincerely,

Gary L Hewitt -

7 Lake Maurice Place, GREENWITH SA 5125

Phone: (08) 8288 0049

**Some days you're the dog, other days
you're the hydrant!**

Dear Ed

The enclosed photograph is of some of the Australian pilots of 894 Squadron aboard HMS *Indefatigable* on return to Sydney from the Japanese surrender ceremonies in Tokyo Bay, September 1945. Included in this photograph are, Nat Gould, Justin 'Dusty' Miller, Curly Bryden, Spanky Brown, Jack Routley and others.

If any of these 894 Squadron pilots (and any others not included in the photograph) are [still around], they would be most welcome to attend a reunion with Jack Routley, who hopes to be visiting Sydney and Nowra in February 2000.

I expect to be leaving Tucson on 14th February, arriving in Sydney on 16th and heading for Nowra on the 19th.

Any assistance in contacting these old friends would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Routley

[Jack can be contacted at: 9239 E. Lakeside Court, Tucson, Arizona, 85749-9787 – Telephone: (520) 749-0103 – or E-mail: mincarlo@worldnet.att.net – If you wish, I can forward any messages to him by E-mail. Ed]



L-R: Justin Miller – George Pagan – Jack Routley RN
Bill Stevenson – Jack O'Connor – Frank Payne
Keith Clarkson – 'Bunny' Hare – 'Nat' Gould

Photo courtesy J.Routley

Dear Ed

A lot of 'birdies' would remember John Richmond. I recently had the pleasure of visiting John and his wife, Anna, in Cairns.

Unfortunately, John suffers from Alzheimer's disease and, as is to be expected, has good and bad days

John's Service Certificate and enclosures have gone missing and Anna has been trying to obtain copies but to no avail as yet.

Maybe someone in *Slipstream*-land who has access to Navy records may be able to help. Anna has his Certificate of Service but needs to know when, where and what ships/squadrons etc. Any of this information would be thankfully received.

His details are: John William RICHMOND O/N R.38536 – Entered 26 May 50 – Discharged 25 May 56.

Information can be forwarded to myself: Owen Holston, 18 Frances Avenue, Booral, Hervey Bay – Phone (07) 4125 7051 - or can be sent direct to: Mrs A. Richmond, 421 Mayers Street, Edge Hill, Queensland 4870 – Phone (07) 4053 3752.

Regards to all.

Owen 'Baldy' Holston

[I have written to Owen and told him how to get copies of John's SCs from the Department of Defence. I feel sure that a few letters or cards of encouragement from John's former shipmates to Mrs Richmond would be very much appreciated. Come on readers...*'there but for the grace of God go you or I'*. Ed]

Dear Ed

In the October 1998 edition of *Slipstream*, an article on the 'Halton Brats', spoke of Ian Botham's father, Les, an instructor at Arbroath in the early nineteen-fifties.

I visited Les in May last year, and he said that he would like to hear from anyone who was at the Arbroath station when he was there (especially a red-head by the name of 'Blue' Smythe).

Les Botham's address is – 38 Combe Street, Yeovil, England – Phone 01935421192.

George Beasley



John Richmond
Early days at RANAS
Photo Courtesy O.Holston

**In every organisation there will always be
one person who knows what is going on.
This person must be fired!**

Dear Ed

A rather late comment concerning an article by Maurie Weston in your publication dated October 1998.

The information regarding 1851 Squadron (F4U Corsairs) is not correct, it never was part of Task Force 57.

As shown in the attached history [not published. Ed] we sailed from Greenock 8th March 1945 and arrived at Hal Far aerodrome on the 20th for additional training in the Mediterranean. Left Malta on *Venerable* as a fully operational squadron, arriving at Alexandria on 29th May for operations in the Pacific.

I attend a reunion with 1851 and 814 Squadrons every two years at the Army and Navy Club in Pall Mall, London.

We have recently lost four of our pilots, but many are still very active although we are all in our seventies. Some are still undertaking private flying.

Yours sincerely,
Nigel Gowling

[Let me share a 1948 newspaper cutting with you relating to the author of the above letter. Ed]

'11,000 mile hitch hike for £20...An ex-British Fleet Air Arm pilot has hitch-hiked by air from England to Brisbane in seven days at a cost of £20 – the airfare from Sydney to London is £325.

He is Mr Nigel Gowling, who arrived in Brisbane on the Hythe flying boat, *Hunter*. The flying boat, unable to land at Bowen because of bad weather, flew non-stop from Darwin to Brisbane. It will fly to Sydney today.

Mr Gowling said that the 11,500 air miles from England had cost him nothing. He spent the £20 on hotel expenses and in buying presents for his wife. "I was a member of the BOAC staff in England and that helped me start my hitch-hike," he said.

"I worked on a training flight to Karachi and talked my way into an empty seat on a Constellation from there to Singapore."

"Then," he continued, "I managed to work a seat on the Hythe to Australia. However, I won't know until I get to Sydney whether I'll have to pay for the last hop."

Mr Gowling was a Fleet Air Arm pilot on HMS *Venerable* during the war. He married a Sydney girl and took her to England with him.

"My wife returned to Australia three months ago," he said. "Fares for both of us would have been too solid."

Mr Gowling said that he hoped to join Australia's new Fleet Air Arm.'

end.....

Dear Ed

Could you please ask the readers of *Slipstream* if they are on the Internet so that we can keep in touch with each other. There are a few that I know of, but there must be lots more.

Max Inwood - woodeny@esprov.com.au

[Max, several people have made the same request. If the cyber dwellers out there would care to send me their name and E-mail address, I will make up a directory for publication. Ed.]

Dear Ed

I am compiling information for a publication titled, *'The Fairey Gannet AS Mk1 In Service with the RAN'*, and seeking information from ex-FAA personnel for help with personal stories, photographs, and technical information. Stories from aircrew, mechanics and other technicians who may be able to contribute to the creation of an historical publication recording the service life of the Gannet and the personnel engaged in its service life with the RAN.

All material will be acknowledged and returned to the owners.

If you can help in any way, please contact:

Ben Patynowski, 16 Cowper Street, Fairy Meadow, NSW 2519 – Phone (02) 4284 1801 after hours – or e-mail patynow@learth.net

Dear Ed

I am continuing with my research into RAN aircraft crashes /incidents and would like to contact the following gentlemen.

Messrs M. H. Simpson – Oakley – G. Gledhill – Arthur Smith RN – E.I. Webster – Col Wheatley – Streeter – Brettingham-Moore – Gratwick.

Nigel Apperley

375 Princes H'way, Bomaderry NSW, 2541

Dear Ed

CAN YOU HELP?

Mr R E Middleton, known as 'Stix', is writing a book about *'Typhoon Ruth and how HMAS Sydney nearly became the worst naval disaster in history'*.

'Stix' served on HMAS *Sydney* in 1951/52, and wishes to find crew who served on her through the typhoon, and are willing to tell what they were doing at the time.

He can be contacted at: PO Box 152, Caloundra, Qld, 4551 – Phone/Fax (07) 5492 7433.

Dear Ed

Re-RANHFV: I have received verbal permission from the NSW RSL for us to march on Anzac Day.

David Bengé

Dear Ed

Pleased at being in touch once again. Thanks for the note with the tip on a HMAS *Albatross* contact; I am now in receipt of photo and documents relating to 1931-3.

With reference to the article in the last edition of *Slipstream*, 'Does the Navy have its own mass grave?' I cannot believe it credible that a mass grave for the fatalities from *Dasher* could exist in Androssan cemetery and be unknown to the populace of the town. Navies have numerous mass graves - on the seabeds.

The loss of HMS *Dasher*, 27 March 1943, was a fateful day in the saga of 816 Naval Air Squadron (NAS); the explosion claimed the lives of all but seven of the squadron air and ground crew.

In 1993, on the 50th Anniversary of the HMS *Dasher* tragedy, together with a small party of FAA Association (Manchester Branch) members and its flag, I went to Androssan, a port and ferry terminal on the Clyde. It was from here that the incident was observed. We attended the Dedication Service of a memorial to those shipmates who had perished. The memorial is in a garden setting on the seaward promenade. On this occasion I laid a wreath on behalf of 816 Squadron veterans, and have done so on subsequent anniversaries.



LTCDR Bennett RNVR DSC (Rtd), an 816 Naval Air Squadron survivor, provides the wreaths on these occasions. His own account of the tragedy is as follows:

We rejoined Dasher about mid-March, and exercised in the Firth of Clyde and the Irish Sea preparatory to escorting an outward bound convoy to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Late afternoon on 27 March 1943, Dasher was off Arran. The aircraft had just landed and had been struck down for maintenance and refuelling. Some aircrews were ashore at Machrihanish, due to land on the following day, but eight of us were in the wardroom having a 'cuppa' when there was a thump-like sound, the lights went out and all was eerily quiet - no engines or other shipboard noises.

We immediately went to Action Stations in the Aircrew Ready Room, just above the wardroom, and donned our Mae Wests. Then my observer and I went up the ladder to the flight deck. There was smoke and signs of fire in the after lift.

At that moment Dasher began to go down by the stern at an angle which quickly increased quite alarmingly. We crabbed our way across the deck to the catwalk. Two Hurricanes parked forward broke loose and trundled over us, sixty feet or so in the air. Those of the ship's crew who were able to get out were jumping into the water. There was no point in following suit, either they would jump on, us or we on them. So we sat there.

Dasher now began to sink rapidly. At some point my observer jumped and was not seen again. I went down with the ship and floated away; the last I saw of her was the bow passing by over my left shoulder. All this had taken 3 - 4 minutes.

Puffs of black smoke began appearing around in the water and shortly after the sea was ablaze, presumably aviation fuel from the ruptured tanks as she hit the bottom. I managed to swim around the fire and was picked up by a sea-boat's crew from some naval vessel, after about half an hour in the very cold water.

The squadron was devastated. Only seven of the 'troops' survived for they were at the heart of the explosion.' end...

My own times in the Royal Navy included a short service on HMS *Dasher* with a detached flight of Albacores from 827 Naval Air Squadron, disembarking seven weeks before the sinking.

I also saw service on two commissions of 816 NAS - June 1946 to July 1948 with the Royal Navy; April 1953 to August 1954 with the Royal Australian Navy.

All the best for the year 2000, to yourself and family, and the committees and members of our FAA Association of Australia.

Kind regards,
George Chadwick



Dear Ed

No doubt you can recall the advance publicity in relation to the release of 'Flying Stations', the story of Australian Naval Aviation. Well, when I received my notice of the book's availability, I thought that it would make a good addition to the local library, so I made a request to the library to obtain a copy for loan purposes. However, in the meantime, my son and daughter-in-law bought me a copy for Father's Day. Having read my copy from cover to cover, I am sure that it would make a valuable addition to the Military section of any library.

From time to time I kept my eye on the library's list of new releases, waiting for the title to appear, but to no avail. Then, surprise, surprise, I received a letter from the library saying that attempts to supply the book had been unsuccessful as it was no longer in print. Perhaps you could make some enquiries and assist the library to obtain a copy if it is still available, I'm sure this would be appreciated by one and all.

[Your letter from the Noosa Council Library Service was forwarded to the ANA Museum for follow up action on 05 November 99. There are plenty of copies available from the museum for those who are interested. If you don't wish to buy one, ask for it at your local library and tell them where it can be purchased. (\$45.00 plus p&p) Ed.]

The letter continues...

After all, the Sunshine Coast did feature fairly prominently in the Fleet Air Arm's history of development. In fact I still remember the days of the Air Group's work-up on the *Sydney*. On completion of flying for the day, the debate was where we were going to spend the night – was it to be off Lady Musgrave Island, or Lady Elliot, or the northern tip of Great Sandy Island (Frazer Island). If it was at either of the reef islands, the Captain would announce over the PA, 'A bottle of beer to the first person to deliver a Red Emperor to the bridge'. When that happened, it was out with the hand lines and 'stand clear of the sinkers', especially if you had to venture along the hangar deck through the waists to get to the canteen that was run by Victor Zammit and his boys.

At times it could be quite hazardous, as well as frustrating. On one occasion I hooked one of the biggest 'fish' I'd ever had on the line, I fought it for about an hour, or so it seemed. I would gain some line and then lose some. This went on until a voice came loud and clear from a gangway door, 'Has anyone got a big fish on?' You guessed it! As the ship moved with the current it had also moved the lines, I'd snagged someone fishing on the other side of the ship! No fish, but something to talk about fifty years down the track. There were beautiful 'reefies' off the side of the ship and big King George

Whiting off the sandy beaches of Frazer Island. Provided you cleaned them, the ship's cooks would cook them for you. Nowadays, that area is still as 'fishable' as it was then.

The Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay has a treasure chest full of memories for most of the original members of the FAA. Apart from the 'flying stations' in almost perfect weather, the early morning launches and the 'secure from flying stations' in the early afternoon. '*Hands to make and mend*' – '*There will be a beer issue on the flight deck at 1500*'.

The beer ration! Now that was something. In provisioning the ship for the winter work-up, there was always a supply of keg beer taken aboard. The beer issues would be made on the flight deck, the kegs having been suitably chilled in the cool room. The work weary sailors (first take-off at 0600) would queue up with their containers and have them filled with ice cold beer. From memory, the cost was either threepence or sixpence, it depended on the size of the container, I can't recall anyone abusing the system. *Sydney* was a very happy ship all round.

Best wishes and happy memories.

John Bray – ex-CAF 805 Squadron.

[Alan Zammit, Victor 'Jesus' Zammit's son, once told me the story about when his father installed a milk shake machine in the canteen on *Sydney*. It was a 'fair dinkum' (Greek café style) machine with the 'fair dinkum' tapered fluted glasses that went with it.

There was a problem the first day it was put into operation; after consuming their milkshakes, the sailors would 'park' their glasses on any projecting piece of structure – never back on the counter where they could be easily collected.

'Jesus' soon fixed that little problem. Sitting on the counter the very next day was a deep tray with a metal top on it, in the metal top, a series of round holes had been cut.

'You'll never get the sailors to put their glasses in them holes,' said several knowledgeable customers. 'And apart from that, the bloody holes are too small for the base of the glasses!'

They were wrong! In a magnificent display of lateral thinking, 'Jesus' had cut the bases off all the glasses and they wouldn't sit ANYWHERE - except in the holes – in the tray – on the counter.

The Flight Deck beer issue...I seem to remember 'Snow' Hall telling me that *his* 'large beer container' was a glass cover unscrewed from a light fitting in one of the ship's bathrooms. Ed]

**Be nice to your kids.
They'll choose your nursing home.**

Dear Ed

As a member of the Fleet Air Arm Association, I read with interest the many stories supplied to *Slipstream* by your readers and find them to be informative; they give good insight into what the FAA was like in the post war days. Often, you discover where old navy colleagues are, and find that life in general has been good to them.

The following story is my contribution to *Slipstream*. It is about a bloke whom I held in high regard, and had a lot of time for. The story is not meant to highlight his misfortunes and eventual demise, but more to remember the man himself and what he had achieved during his naval career.

Thank you.

P. A. 'Jaffa' Robinson

A BLOODY GOOD HAND

In 1969, as a 'rawbone jack', me and two other Ordinary Seaman (OD) mates, Dennis Skewes and 'Blue' Reidy, were posted to *Albatross* after ODs training on the *Melbourne*.

We started our Safety Equipment (SE) course with Hughie Wells as our instructor. It was around this time that I was introduced to Graeme (Zac) Palmer, a 'kellick' SE who was in the process of changing over to the Coxswain Branch. It would be many years before we were to meet again.

By the mid-1970s, Zac, or 'Ambrose' as he was affectionately known as, had gained a reputation as a very good seaman and coxswain throughout the fleet. He was a Petty Officer by this time and was to be posted to Cairns Base as a patrol boat coxswain. It was generally considered at the time, that he would become one of the youngest Chief Coxswains of his era.

However, not all things were to turn out as planned. An incident at HMAS *Watson*, of which I do not know the full story, resulted in his being court martialled. He was demoted to Leading Hand and sent back to the SE Branch at *Albatross*. Like most sailors, he 'took it on the chin' and got on with the job ahead. He told me that it would be a challenge to start all over again.

As an accomplished sportsman, he was to represent *Albatross* in Rugby League and Water Polo.

In addition to his many talents, 'Ambrose' was also a ship's diver, he soon adapted to the role of Sea Air Rescue (SAR) diver on 723 Squadron. He flew in the Iroquois and Wessex helicopters, later in Sea Kings on 817 Squadron, where I was at the time. Recognised as a good operator and devoted to duty, he was soon returned to the rank of Petty Officer and became an instructor in Aviation and Shipborne lifesaving equipment.

At this time in his life, I can recall that he was studying for his Master's Ticket in shiphandling; he often said that his ambition on leaving the service was to 'drive' tugs on Sydney Harbour.



Graeme 'Zac' Palmer

In the late 1970s, he decided to pay off. My next

sighting of him was years later at the 'Rockers pub', where he had taken up lodgings. With his experience he had obtained a job on Garden Island, driving boats and fuel and ammunition lighters for the Navy – it suited him down to the ground.

The only faithful companion 'Ambrose' had, was a small Silky Terrier. One day it was run over and killed – 'Ambrose's' world was about fall apart. The death of his pet dog affected him immensely, right to the point where he gave up his job and became a derelict, living in the streets in and around Kings Cross.

The many attempts to locate and rehabilitate him failed – he simply disappeared into oblivion. Like many others, I am fortunate that I didn't see him in this state, it would have been too distressing.

Just over a year ago, I was saddened to hear that he had died at the age of 52 and had been buried in a pauper's grave somewhere in Sydney. There is hope that the site can be located, and at the very least, give him a decent headstone. There have been many attempts to contact his relatives, but these have been unsuccessful to date. Perhaps someone reading this can shed some light.

To many, 'Zac, or 'Ambrose, whichever you prefer, was a good style of bloke; friendly in nature and happy-go-lucky – I will always remember him as such.

Goodbye, 'brose. May you rest in peace.



**A MESSAGE FROM THE
CANADIAN AIR GROUP MEMBERS
WHO ATTENDED THE
1998 REUNION AT NOWRA**

G'day, mates.

**All the best for the season and the New Year 2000.
It was a pleasure meeting up with you all.**

NEXT DEADLINE-17 MARCH 2000

The Right Spirit!

His name is Paul Pelczar. A Petty Officer who is currently involved in the Naval Intelligence Training at Canungra, Queensland. This is his story...

'Earlier this year (1999), I received a 'phone call from CPO Ballantyne at NAS, during the course of the conversation he mentioned that he had 'fond' memories of 'bloody Canungra' in the sixties. Being curious as to why Naval personnel were up here at that time, I decided to research the matter.

With the aid of a brochure sent to me by the aforementioned Chief, and after reading Steve Eather's book, 'Get the Bloody Job Done', I was surprised that I knew so little about the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam. This lead me to find out all about their pre-embarkation training done here at the then, 'Jungle Training Centre'.

I have been in the Navy for thirteen years and I believe that our history should be made known to those currently in the service, so I requested that a memorial be dedicated to the Flight, here at Canungra. This would signify the unique link they had with the barracks, give the Flight some much needed appreciation for its efforts, and show that the Navy had had a presence here before the Defence Intelligence Training Centre was established. It would also show that despite our differences, the Army and Navy can assist each other and do it successfully.

The attached photograph is not very clear, but you can see the boulder, which took us two hours to put in place with a heavy-duty tractor, and its place in the Memorial Garden. The plaque it carries was originally going to include the Flight's Crest, but this proved too difficult at the time. I planted some date palms around the boulder to set it off.

Steve Eather was of great assistance to me in notifying the vets about the dedication service, several replied with appreciative notes, some were invited to be guests of honour.

The service took place on the 3rd of November, the anniversary of the US 135th Assault Helicopter Company, which included the RAN HFV, becoming operational and flying their first mission.

Guests of honour were LCDR Leak and WO Hawkins and Mrs Hawkins. The audience consisted of most of the naval staff members and their trainees.

LCDR Vidler, as the senior naval officer present, opened the service with a brief history of the Flight. LCDR Leak then replied and called out the Honour Roll. The Commanding Officer of Kokoda Barracks then made the closing. All the speeches were great!



I was especially touched by LCDR Leak's personification of the Killed In Action and the Commandant's remarks.

The bonus has been that the Commandant has given the 'green light' for a short narrative to be placed on the boulder informing of why the Flight has a unique link, and also an Honour Roll.

PS: All in all, a very successful day. A lot of paper work, running around and a couple of cartons of beer was all it took. I was glad to do some good for the guys who did some good.

Yours aye, Paul Pelczar

The plaque reads: *In honour of the men of the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam, who served with the US 135th Assault Helicopter Company, and commemorating their unique link with Canungra. Dedicated on the 32nd Anniversary of their becoming operational and flying their first mission, 3rd November 1999.*

[Well done, Paul! It's nice to meet up with a member of an endangered species – those who give a damn. Ed.]

THE GOLFING COMMODORE

The Commodore was having an affair with his secretary. One day their passions overcame them and they took off for her house where they made passionate love all afternoon. Exhausted they fell asleep, awakening at around 8pm.

As he threw on his clothes, he told the woman to take his shoes outside and rub them through the grass and dirt. Mystified, she none the less complied. He slipped into his shoes and drove home.

'Where have you been?' Demanded his wife when he entered the house. 'Darling, I can't lie to you, I've been having an affair with my secretary, made love all afternoon and fell asleep'.

The wife looked down at his shoes and said, 'You're a lying sod! You've been playing golf!'

MOMENTS IN TIME



West Australian 'natives' boarding a plane at NAS Nowra to fly them home for leave prior to embarkation on *Sydney* for Korea.



25 December 1974 -The aftermath of Cyclone Tracy at Darwin.

Photo courtesy ANAM



April 1978, Bomaderry RSL Anzac Dinner, former members of the RAN. L-R: Jim Napier, the late 'Moosh' Maurice Turner, Lex Drake, the late Len Luther, the late 'Jumper' Bob Cross.

Photo courtesy Jim Napier



1963 HMAS *Melbourne* , on the catwalk, L-R: John Richards, John Isherwood and Bob Dalton having a beer after another 'hard days work' on the flight deck. One can – per man – per day. Some managed 5 or 6, maybe the insulated garbage can in 2F Handlers' Mess had something to do with it.

Photo courtesy John Isherwood



17 July 1963 – RANAS Nowra – What's the story?

Photo courtesy ANAM



17 May 1960 – 816 Squadron presented a crest to the CO of HMS *Cavalier* (centre) for retrieving Lt (O) Findlay (left) and LT (O) Tony Horton (not shown), from their dinghy after their Gannet, piloted by LTCDR 'Shorty' Roland, ditched due to an engine failure after being catapulted from *Melbourne* . [I know all the faces in the background but not the names – J. Van Gelder is left rear. Ed.] Photo courtesy ANAM



1973 – 2 Delta Centreline CPO's Mess - HMAS Melbourne – the ship's quiz team in action. Please note 'Rusty's' stepping ashore rig - top left. *Photo courtesy 'Rusty' Marquis*



195? - HMAS Sydney
Ron Blewett and Edgar Kennedy
Photo courtesy Archives



1948/9 -'Blue' Stivey & Jimmy French
Look at the curls! *Photo courtesy D.Stone*

1962 – 'D' Area at
RANAS Nowra
Don Parkinson and
Ian 'Jock' Adams



28 November 1999
ANAM Air Day
The friends meet up
again.
NB: Don still has a
'gun' in his pocket!



1969 – Church Service – HMAS Melbourne
A sad time following the collision with the USS Frank E Evans
L-R:
RADM Crabbe – Chaplain Batt – Father Breslan
and Captain Stephenson
Photo courtesy RAN



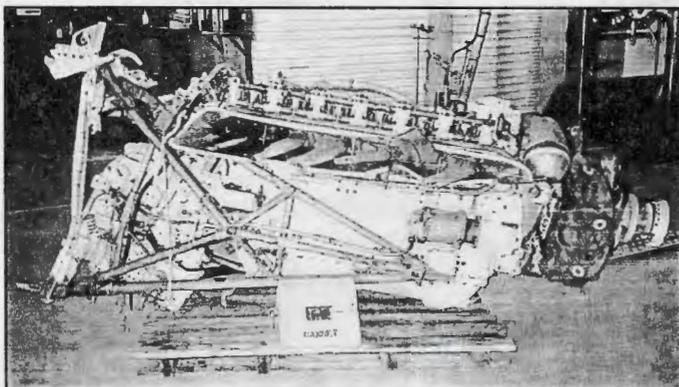
1985 – HC 723 – HMAS Moresby Flight
ABATA W. Prior – LSA M. Roberts – LSATWL D. Rae
POATC A.Grogan – LT (P) J.Clark – CPOATA P. Birkenhead
Photo courtesy ANAM

Photographs: I have received several complaints about photographs being published without names. Wherever possible, it would be appreciated if you could include the names and dates on your submissions. Many thanks for your help. Ed.

Barnacle Bill Griffon

by Roy Allman

Some short time ago, a barnacle covered Rolls Royce Griffon engine was recovered from Port Phillip Bay, Victoria. It has now found a home at the Australian Naval Aviation Museum and has sparked a lot of interest. As I was a witness to the aircraft's untimely plunge into the bay in July 1947, I am responding to the editor's request to write about the incident. After checking through the archives to refresh my memory, the following is my recollection of the events leading up to the incident.



ROLLS ROYCE GRIFFON XII

This engine was originally fitted to either Firefly PP-589 or TW-677 of 812 Squadron flying from HMS *Theseus*.

Twelve cylinder vee – liquid cooled.

Performance: Maximum rating of 1,765 hp at sea level and 1,665 hp at 11,000 feet.

Reduction gear ratio of 451:1

Photo courtesy Peregrine

In October 1946, at RNAS Maydown (HMS *Gannet II*) in Northern Ireland, the 14th Carrier Air Group (CAG) commissioned. 812 Squadron, under the command of LCDR M. Fell RN, DSO, DSC, (who later commanded the RAN's first CAG –20th) and 804 Squadron, under the command of LCDR D. M. Wynn-Roberts RN. The squadrons were equipped with Firefly Mk.2s, and Seafire Mk.3 aircraft.

Embarked in HMS *Theseus*, under the command of Captain R.K Dickson RN, we were to join the British Pacific Fleet and relieve HMS *Glory*.

In February 1947, we sailed from Tail o' the Bank, and after deck landing training around the North and West Coast of Scotland, we sailed for Plymouth. After one last 'detailed inspection' of the dockyard area pubs (which definitely had its repercussions two days later in the Bay of Biscay), the course was set for Gibraltar, Malta, Suez, and Aden, eventually arriving at Trincomalee on the 5th of March.

The CAG disembarked to China Bay, and for the next nine weeks, tropical acclimatisation flying, violent war games, deck landings and fleet exercises were carried out. The CAG worked hard, endeavouring to reduce the number of heavy landings, barrier arrests and 'over the edge' mishaps, all of which happened more often than they should have done.

However, there was still time enough to train for, and hold, the Fleet Regatta. Those taking part were the two light fleet carriers, *Theseus* and *Glory*, and HM Ships *Glasgow*, *Jamaica*, *Contest*, *Constance*, and *Cockade*. The two bases ashore, Bambara and Highflyer, also entered teams.

Heats were held in the late morning and early forenoon watches, the finals during the 'dogs'. The CAG entered cutter teams, but it was HMS *Glasgow* who finished 'Cock o' the Fleet'.

HMS *Glory* left for Singapore on the 12th of March, and the 14th CAG continued work-up flying until we too embarked, and with our escort, HMS *Contest*, sailed for the Far East Station. There were short stops along the way, the Andaman Islands, the Nicobar Islands, and then on to Penang and Port Swettenham, finally arriving in Singapore on the 8th of June. The CAG disembarked at Sembawang, and the *Theseus* visited the dockyard for alteration and repairs.

We rejoined *Theseus*, now the flagship, carrying the flag of Flag Officer (Air) East, Rear Admiral G.E Creasy RN. Along with our escort, HMS *Cockade*, and *Glory* with her escort, HMS *Contest*, we headed south to Australia, crossing the line on the 24th.

Glory's first port of call was Adelaide, whilst we sailed on to Hobart, arriving there on the 6th of July. We were given a very elaborate and generous welcome, which was to be echoed in other Australian ports of call. Dances, parties, scenic trips, theatre and cinema tickets and public transport were all given freely – we 'lapped it up' during the week we were there.

Leaving Hobart, we carried out various 'sobering-up' exercises. One of the more interesting was the launch of the 1934 Tiger Moth owned by the Captain. On this occasion it was piloted by CMDR R. Everett RN, who, after a short take-off run of some twenty yards, was passing the island at an altitude of 30-40 feet.

One of the important reasons for our visit was to demonstrate for the Australian Naval Board and Defence Staff, the capabilities of light fleet carrier operations. The main emphasis being the launching and recovery of squadron aircraft from the *Theseus* (812 and 804) and *Glory* (837 and 806). The 'action' was to take place in the relative confines of Port Phillip Bay. *Glory* was to launch her aircraft and attack Point Cook RAAF base, while squadrons

from *Theseus* would take the role of a defence force. For some reason, 'the show' took place on Sunday the 20th of July, the evening before, an official 'At Home' reception had been hosted, and we had also enjoyed the lavish hospitality of Melbourne and its people for a week.

To begin with, the landings weren't too bad. A broken oleo leg, then a burst tyre slewing the landing Seafire around into the sponson. The firing at the splash target was not very accurate, but it was spectacular. There was a change in the wind, the Fireflies were launched and almost immediately, on attempting to manoeuvre into flight formation, two of them collided and locked together in an 'unholy embrace' and plunged into the murky waters of Port Phillip Bay. The two pilots, LCDR(P) N. Hearle RN, and LT R.T.Walker DSC, RN, both experienced pilots with many hours and deck landings to their credit, were killed, along with their 'backseaters', LT K. Sellars RN, and CPO Bill Lovatt.

Later that same morning, a Seafire made an erratic landing, narrowly missing the Deck Landing Officer but hitting Able Seaman Timmins, an Aircraft Handler who was in the walkways. AB Timmins died from his injuries, but the pilot was unhurt.

We were later to learn that aboard *Glory*, a Seafire made a very fast approach, missed the wires, bounced the barriers and landed on the forward deck park. A Petty Officer Primrose and Air Mechanic (E) Sadler, were both injured, the latter fatally. Three Seafires and a Firefly were total write-offs.

Back on board the flagship, another similar mishap occurred when a Firefly hit the deck park, this time three Fireflies and one Seafire were very badly damaged. The Flag Officer, along with many other witnesses, was not impressed at all and ordered a cessation of all flying. Those aircraft still flying were directed to Point Cook, the CAG was disembarked for maintenance, further work-up, and some pretty intensive retraining. Town limits were 'out of bounds' and partying was banned.

The fleet sailed on to Sydney where HM Ships *Theseus* and *Glory*, with their escorts, *Cockade* and *Contest*, joined up with HMA Ships *Australia*, *Bataan*, *Arunta*, *Warramunga*, *Shoalhaven* and *Murchison*. They entered Sydney Heads in line ahead on Thursday 24th July, the carriers securing alongside the wharves at Woolloomooloo.

Some time later, when the CAG flew back on board, the maintenance 'bods' took passage on *Cockade*, sent down to Williamstown to pick us up.

Several months ago, the engine was snared by a fishing trawler and subsequently raised. The RAAF was contacted and asked to examine it; it was badly corroded and at first it was thought to be a Merlin

engine. The brass identity plates were cleaned up and the details forwarded to Rolls Royce. Their records showed that it was a Griffon engine from a Firefly Mk. 2 that had ditched into Port Phillip Bay in July 1947.

That is how the recovered Rolls Royce Griffon came to be at the bottom of Port Phillip Bay. I would have thought that there would have been two of them, as stated previously, the aircraft certainly appeared to be locked together.

[Endnote: In the book '*Wings and the Navy 1947-1953*', the author, Colin Jones, had this to say regarding the incident: 'It was calm and clear on Port Phillip, and the pilots blamed the absence of wind and the position of the ships steaming into the sun for their subsequent mishaps. It is of interest to note that an Argentine vessel of the same class, the *25 of May*, was prevented from launching heavily armed aircraft for a long-range attack against British warships in the Falklands in 1982 precisely because of unusually light wind conditions. The Indian carrier, *Vikrant*, suffered similar difficulties in the war against Pakistan in 1971. Ed.]

LAST TESTAMENT

Old Fred had been a faithful Christian and was in hospital. The family called their pastor to stand with them.

As the pastor stood next to the bed, Fred's condition suddenly appeared to deteriorate and he motioned frantically for something to write on.

The pastor lovingly handed him a pen and a piece of paper and Fred used up his last bit of energy to scribble a note, then he died.

The pastor thought it inappropriate to look at the note at that time, so he placed it in his pocket.

At the funeral, as he was finishing the service he suddenly remembered the note in his pocket. He said. 'You know, Fred handed me a note just before he died. I haven't looked at it, but knowing Fred, I'm sure there's a word of inspiration there for us all'.

He opened the note and read, 'Bloody idiot! You're standing on my oxygen tube!'

Sex is like air, it's not important unless you aren't getting any.

THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL GALLERY REDEVELOPMENT

Focus on Bradbury Aircraft Hall

The Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, opened the Memorial's new gallery and facilities in March 1999.

To judge by the comments of recent visitors to the memorial, the first major stage in our redevelopment has been an outstanding success.

Visitors are impressed by the powerful way in which the stories of Australians at war are now presented, particularly through the innovative use of multimedia.

The Gallery Redevelopment teams are now focussing on bringing to completion the refurbishment of Bradbury Aircraft Hall (BAH) and installation of the exciting new exhibition, 'Air Power in the Pacific 1941-1953'.

Spectacular Displays: Refurbishment of BAH, which involved removal of the elevated wooden floor to create additional display space, is now at a point where fitout and installation of the new displays can commence.

The new exhibition requires the construction of several special structures, including a mezzanine floor for the display of the Mosquito aircraft, a plinth to support a Mustang fighter, and a stylised carrier deck featuring a Sea Fury aircraft from HMAS Sydney.

The BAH team has been working on the new exhibition since the Gallery Redevelopment project commenced. In addition to background research to

support the development of displays, work has also involved major restoration and conservation projects.

The Mosquito, Wirraway, Mustang, MiG-15, Kittyhawk, Japanese Type 88 anti-aircraft gun and sections of a wrecked Japanese Oscar aircraft found in the New Guinea jungle have already been treated and conserved by specialist teams.

Work on the Sea Fury aircraft and Light Weight Air Warning radar is also near completion. Both are due to be installed by the end of 1999, and will form an integral part of the spectacular mezzanine feature.

The Mosquito will be raised to a height of approximately 3.5 metres and the floor level of the mezzanine constructed around it.

The aerial array of the LW/AW radar will then be suspended dramatically above it and lit theatrically to create the impression of a radar facility in operation.

Help needed to source materials: The BAH team is currently sourcing support materials for the display of the Sea Fury and the Kittyhawk. The latter will be set in a scene depicting maintenance of the aircraft at Milne Bay.

The team needs to locate:

- Working dress uniforms worn by the Fleet Air Arm servicemen during the Korean War,
- Period maintenance toolboxes, marsden matting, fire extinguishers (gas, water and CO₂), and a wooden ladder.

If you can help locate these, please ring Gary Oakley, Collection Research, on (02) 6243 4532.

Get to know your Australian Naval Aviation Museum

Pratt and Whitney Double Wasp R-2800-8

This engine came from the wreckage of a Chance - Vought Corsair Mk IV which crashed near Bodalla, NSW in 1946.

The pilot,

SBLT (A) J. Boak RNVR

of 1831 Squadron

from the Light Fleet Carrier HMS *Glory*, was killed.

The engine developed 2,250 hp at sea level.

The aircraft had a maximum speed of
415 mph at 19,500 feet.

It cruised at 261 mph at 20,000 feet and had a
service ceiling of 34,000 feet.

Photo courtesy Peregrine



WELFARE REPORT

Compiled with the co-operation of the
Regular Defence Force Welfare Association (RDFWA)

The Welfare Report in the last issue was well received and the compliments are appreciated.

Seeing that the Goods and Services' Tax is on the horizon, it is appropriate to mention some of the effects GST will have on the Veteran and Service Community.

Those still serving will have already been warned of the new tax arrangements and what are now referred to as Fringe benefits.

Fringe Benefits Tax and the ADF

A lot of fanfare has accompanied the announcement that ADF housing assistance will be excluded from the fringe benefit reporting on Group Certificates. It should never have been considered in the first place. According to service newspapers this has been the result of submissions from, and lobbying by, Defence – but there were other oars in the water.

What seems to have been forgotten in the euphoria of this success, is the fact that there are many other items which, currently, will be reported on the group certificates of ADF personnel, and which we believe should not be reported, simply because they are conditions of service and not fringe benefits.

In the RDFWAs submission on the *A New Tax System (Fringe Benefits Reporting) Bill 1998*, we referred to the disadvantage accruing to many serving members by their grossed-up income being artificially increased by reporting what are in fact conditions of service as 'fringe benefits'.

Time will tell of the effects of this further erosion of the uniqueness of service life.

A Story from the Files

Another case of, *'there's nothing wrong with me, I don't need any disability pension'* - unfortunately it happens far too often.

He retired at the age of 55. One year later, he started to feel tired most of the time, so he gave up smoking and cut back on his alcohol consumption.

Whilst painting his house, he suffered 'pain in his left shoulder' and 'an earache'. That night, the pain was worse and his wife telephoned for an ambulance.

That's right! He had suffered a Myocardial Infarction, in other words, a heart attack.

On the advice of others, he sought advice from the RDFWA and obtained his Medical History and Service Record. For years he had been treated for mild hypertension (high blood pressure) and had complained of 'pins and needles' in the shoulder that resolved with bed rest.

Electrocardiogram (ECG) studies had showed nothing abnormal for his age, but that had been decades ago. A modern Angiogram, Cat scans and nuclear imaging told a different story.

Tobacco smoking, consuming alcohol, long hours, stress and diet were considered Service caused, as the veteran had War Service (Vietnam), Defence Service (post 07 December 1972) and Peace Keeping Service, he was granted a pension at the Special Rate (TPI). Quite a happy ending if you consider the way it could have turned out.

So, the obvious question must be – have YOU seen your own Medical History and Service Records? They are available from the Department of Defence.

WARFARE BY REMOTE CONTROL

by *Tod Maffin*

It looks something like a beluga whale, but it may turn out to be the look of war in the future. There's no crew, just programmers uploading the mission software.

It's called the Global Hawk. It's an unmanned aircraft quietly being tested at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

It can take off by itself and – with no pilot to get tired – fly for 38 hours nonstop. Right now the US Military claims Global Hawk can only take pictures, they admit that it wouldn't take much to retrofit it to drop bombs by remote control.

Quite literally point-and-click warfare fought from a control room, perhaps on the other side of the planet.

'STUD MUFFIN' OF THE MONTH



'Butch'
Ron Jenkins

Says...
'Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer belly and still think they are beautiful.'



THE TEST FLIGHT

By John Buchanan (Snodgrass)
ex-Air Mechanician AE

Designed as a carrier borne anti-submarine aircraft, the Fairey Gannet had everything except a conference room built into it.

Power was derived from a Double Mamba engine, which consisted of two jet engines mounted side by side within the fuselage. Each of the engines drove one of the two, in-line contra-rotating propellers through concentric drive shafts.

Each of the crew of three had his own cockpit. The rear observer's cockpit faced aft. Using the thrust of both engines, the Gannet could lift off the deck carrying in its bulky body heavy loads of fuel and ordnance. It could then proceed swiftly to a patrol area, close down one engine and stooage around at low speed searching for the underwater enemy.

The passing of forty years or so does play tricks with the memory, but I still clearly recall the day that John Raynor and I signed the A700 to make one particular Gannet serviceable.

It had taken us months to 'bring it forward' out of long-term storage. A veritable backlog of 'mods' and 'SIs', plus the fact that it had been used as a 'Christmas tree' to supply the squadron with spare parts, had contributed to the mammoth task. But happily, the task had been completed... 'Cobwebs' would be pleased.

Cobwebs - I can't recall his real name, was a Navy test pilot. His nickname stemmed from his habit of flicking his right hand back and forth past his eyes each time he was strapped into an aircraft cockpit ready for take-off. I guess most test pilots develop some nervous mannerism. For the past two weeks he had approached us almost daily with the same query, 'Will she be ready soon?'

A noisy Sea Venom was taxiing past the hangar when Cobwebs shouted something from his position in the AMCO doorway. I couldn't hear what he said, but presumed it was his standard question. I answered, 'Too right, Sir. Today's the day!'

Half an hour later, when John and I were at the Safety Equipment Section being fitted for our flying gear and parachutes, I pondered the essential nature of good communication. The AMCO Chief had told us that Cobwebs' question had been, 'Would you two like to come today?'

As a lover of aeroplanes since childhood, I'd become attached to these friendly, lumbering, committee-designed aircraft called Gannets. Test flights were another thing altogether and not quite my 'cup of tea'. Nevertheless, I'd said that we would and John had no objection - SO - test flyers we would be!

I suppose it must have been comforting for Cobwebs to know that the maintenance crew was so anxious to put their lives where their A700 signatures were - on the line.

John had chosen to ride in the centre, navigator's cockpit, which boasted a duplicate display of some of the pilot's instrumentation. During the flight, he and Cobwebs would cross check the instrument readings. In the disorienting environment of my rear facing observer's cockpit, I had no function to perform whatsoever; I was therefore at liberty to concentrate *exclusively* on anxiety. I recalled my mother saying that it was always safer travelling with one's back to the engine. *That* was a comforting thought!

As we lumbered along the runway during take-off, I also recalled a flying safety course in which it was demonstrated that the take-off is the most dangerous aspect of flight. Such thoughts soon faded with the thrill of being airborne.

It was one of those balmy days that only Nowra can produce, deep blue sky, sparkling ocean, gleaming white beaches and those greener than green meadows and hills, the air crisp and clean. The aircraft flew sweetly as we circled slowly and I began to feel at home looking where we'd been.

'Now, hang on.' It was 'Cobwebs' voice coming through my earphones. Before I had time to wonder, my world changed. Both engines roared and I was hanging in my harness, looking past the shuddering tail end assembly at the rapidly receding earth. Our rate of climb seemed to be more suited to that of a Sea Fury and I began to wonder if Cobwebs had test flown a Gannet before. The aircraft levelled out at about 20,000', flying sedately, straight and level. I guessed that we had just passed the 'power test'...n-n-never doubted we would.

My attention was soon drawn to a sort of grinding noise. Looking backwards and downwards, I saw the flaps go all the way down - then the bomb bay doors opened - the undercarriage lowered and the radome extended. *Cripes!* It appeared that Cobwebs was negating every scientific condition that permits a heavier than air machine to defy gravity.

We shuddered along for a while, there were more grinding noises and then - WHAM! We were falling out of the sky! It seemed that my cockpit was now facing forrard, I was the pilot heading straight for *terra firma* by the shortest possible route, *without* the aid of a control column or rudder pedals.

Suddenly - total change! Sea, sky, clouds, earth, all were swirling around outside my cockpit in a most undignified procession whilst my body was being subjected to a variety of unfamiliar pressures. As quickly as it all began, the mayhem ceased, and how welcome was normality. We had just passed the 'drag' and 'stall' tests.

Conscious that I was aboard a proven aircraft in the hands of an obviously competent pilot, I commenced to wallow in the atmosphere of freedom, peace and detachment from the mundane world - a feeling that is known only to angels and those who fly. This, I thought, must be near to Paradise, and I slipped into a state of semi-euphoria.

HELL!...What the...we were in an almost vertical dive on one engine and going down *fast*. The last bit of land I had seen was Wreck Bay, by my reckoning we should have pulled out before then. I hastily recalled the bail-out drill as my flesh started to turn to lead. I tried to lift my hands from my knees but they were glued together with the force of... Lord knows how many 'Gs'.

Cobwebs must have brought in engine No.2, and with both throttles opened to the 'red mark', pulled the control column hard back to his chest. Within seconds my view of sky had become a seascape over which we were skimming at some 10 feet, it quickly became a landscape that turned 90° and was departing rapidly. For a moment, I saw an aboriginal woman with a small child standing on the beach, they were both looking straight at me with open mouths and eyes like Ping-Pong balls. I thought to myself, 'Lady, you and your nipper are about to witness a catastrophe of GREAT magnitude!'

Oh, doubting Thomas! By then I should have had more confidence in Cobwebs' abilities. But - just WHAT had THAT manoeuvre tested? Perhaps, thought I, it was to test the stomachs of two Air Mechanics.

All too soon we came back to earth. On the tarmac outside the Maintenance Repair Workshop (MRS), Cobwebs told us that the test indicated that we had done a good job. As he turned to walk to AMCO, he raised an eyebrow and said to me, 'How did you find the ride Petty Officer?' To hide my colourless face, I examined my fingernails and replied in what I thought to be a nonchalant manner, 'About standard, Sir. About standard'.

PS: Unfortunately, there is a sad postscript to this story. Before being handed over to a squadron, our Gannet [XA 332] had to be flown to Bankstown aircraft factory for some special checks to be carried out. On completion, it was being flown back to Nowra when it crashed near Sylvania. The ferry pilot was killed. It was reported that he could have bailed out, but instead chose to stay with the

doomed aircraft in order to veer it away from a large caravan park. I wasn't privy to the subsequent findings of the enquiry, but was told that the cause of the disaster was metal fatigue. The empennage had broken away during straight and level flight.

[The accident occurred on 30 January 1959, the pilot was Lt Peter John Arnold, aged 26. My initials are JP and the pilot and I shared the same surname, some kind soul at *Albatross* accidentally transposed the initials of the pilot, subsequently, my wife was informed that I had been killed in the accident. Ed]

NEIL ARMSTRONG'S SECRET

An urban myth from cyberspace...?

When Apollo Mission Astronaut, Neil Armstrong, first walked on the moon, he not only gave his famous 'one step for man, one giant leap for mankind' statement, but followed it by several remarks and the usual communication traffic between him, the other astronauts and Mission Control.

Just before he re-entered the 'lander', however, he made the enigmatic remark, 'Good luck, Mr Gorsky.'

Many people at NASA thought it was a casual remark concerning some rival Soviet Cosmonaut, however, upon checking, there was no Gorsky in either the Russian or American space programmes. Over the years, many people questioned Armstrong as to what the 'Good luck, Mr Gorsky' statement meant, but Armstrong always just smiled.

Finally, (on July 5, 1995 in Tampa Bay FL) while answering questions following a speech, a reporter brought up the 26 year old question to Armstrong.

This time he finally responded. Mr Gorsky had finally died and so Armstrong felt he could answer the question. When he was a kid, he was playing baseball with a friend in the backyard. His friend hit a fly ball that landed outside his neighbour's bedroom window. His neighbours were Mr and Mrs Gorsky.

As he leaned down to pick up the ball, young Armstrong heard Mrs Gorsky shouting at Mr Gorsky, 'Oral Sex?! You'll get oral sex when the kid next door walks on the moon!'

**If you can keep your head when all those
around you are losing theirs, maybe you
just don't understand the situation.**

THE AUSTRALIAN NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM

Article and photographs courtesy of Mark Clayton – Museum Director

As foreshadowed in the July edition of *Slipstream*, Foundation Directors have now given the Museum the green light to proceed with an ambitious exhibition redevelopment programme, preparations for which are already underway. Stage Four of the Foundation's long-term building strategy scheduled is for completion in mid 2000 at which point, we intend focussing all our attention on the building's interior or, more precisely, the exhibitions.

The Sydney based partnership Freeman Ryan Design (FRD) was recently commissioned by the Foundation's Directors to proceed with an ambitious redesign of the Museum's displays with a view towards having the whole task completed by 2001. FRD have a wealth of relevant experience in this specialised field having been responsible for the redesign of the Australian War Memorial's new - soon to open - Aeroplane Hall (a.k.a. the Bradbury Hall), together with the London Science Museum's new Flight Gallery. Funding and sponsorship for this 'Stage Five' project - totaling almost \$1 million - have already been secured from both the private and public sectors. FRD's design brief provides for the installation of a viewing mezzanine which will run almost two-thirds the length of the main display hangar. Much of the hangar will be blacked out (à la RNZAF Museum, Wigram) with exhibits subjectively lit so as to create an almost theatrical atmosphere. Provision has also been made for the inclusion of audio and visual interactive displays.

Preparations for this exhibition redevelopment have already commenced with the main hangar floor having been completely painted (grey, of course) in November-December.



After the hangar had been emptied, the deck cleaned and etched, the joints sealed and reground, almost 8,000m² of paint (two coats) was applied to the hangar floor. L-R are shown Jim Thacker, Daniel Morrissey and Don Parkinson – some of the stalwarts who helped complete this mammoth task.

This huge undertaking was completed on time and, at a greatly reduced cost, thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of our staff and volunteers. Although we are grateful to all those who assisted, I would especially like to commend our Technical Manager Don Parkinson and our volunteers Jim Thacker and Neil Johnson. If recent comments are any indication then those of you who haven't visited recently will also be taken aback – and favorably impressed – by the dramatic effect that this change has had.

Much of our effort next year will be spent on preparatory behind-the-scenes tasks such as restoration, refurbishment, exhibition research and acquisitions. It's very likely then that we will be making repeated calls next year – via *Slipstream* – for your assistance in obtaining specific artefacts, images, or information, so please do stay tuned.

I'm pleased to be able to report that the Museum has, after much searching, finally acquired a Westland Dragonfly helicopter.



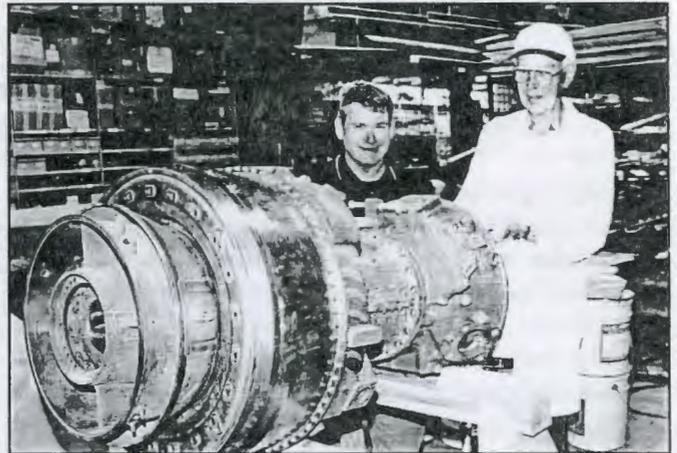
The Dragonfly is the British-built version of the Sikorsky S-51, both of which were operated from Australian carriers. The latter was in fact the first helicopter ever embarked by an Australian warship (HMAS *Sydney*), being responsible also for the dramatic rescue of 817 Squadron's CPO Hancox and Sub-Leut Macmillan in October 1951. The example recently acquired by the Museum served both with the RAF (WG725) and, with an American civil operator (N9987Q) before being sold back to the U.K. in 1986. P&O Nedlloyd have generously offered to ship the airframe to Australia for us at no cost and we're hoping the delivery can be completed during the first half of next year.

Other significant recent acquisitions include a Rolls Royce Griffon aero engine and, three photographic albums relating to the late George Barron's Fleet Air Arm service both with the RAN and the Royal Navy (HMS *Warrior*).

We are particularly grateful to the FAA Association's ACT Branch which provided some of the funds for the former acquisition and, which has also purchased a digital camera for our collection database project.

We held our final Air Day for the year in November and thankfully the weather was much kinder on that occasion. Attendances were markedly up, with a corresponding increase in the day's receipts. Thanks again to all those FAAA volunteers who helped to make this such a successful and enjoyable event, and also a reminder that we only have the two Air Days scheduled for next year (April 23rd and September 9th).

On behalf of the Foundation's Directors and the Museum staff, I'd like to wish you all the best for the New Year and we look forward to your support in what promises to be another exciting year.



Activity in the Museum Workshop, Bob Ladd, formerly of Hawker de Havilland, and a keen volunteer at the Museum, completes a stage of assembly of a Lycoming T53 engine under the watchful eye of a visitor, Ian Adams, formerly FAA and now with Esso Australia Aviation Division



Stanley Hiller Jnr, the founder and long-time President of the American based Hiller Helicopter Company, paid a surprise visit to the Museum in November. He is pictured here (Right) accompanied by the Museum's Honorary Curator, Bob 'Windy' Geale.



Making a return visit to the Museum in November were former RN Firefly crew members, Chris Maclaren and Walter Pritchard; seen here holding the framed photograph of their damaged aircraft which they presented to the Museum in 1955 and which is still on display in the Function Centre. Both men had a narrow escape in August 1945, when their 1772 Squadron aircraft was extensively damaged by Japanese ground fire.

The Museum's A4D-2 Skyhawk has acquired an added mantle of significance thanks to some diligent research which has recently brought to light an hitherto unknown Australian connection. With little chance of ever acquiring an original RAN Skyhawk, the Museum was grateful enough just to get its hands on a mothballed American airframe which could be painted and cosmetically reconfigured to represent one of ours.

Remarkable as it may seem, it turns out that the machine that was eventually acquired (pictured) was in fact assigned in the mid-1960s to VA-125 at NAS Lemoore, the very same unit that trained the RAN and RNZAF's pilots and maintainers. There is even a chance, albeit a remote one, that our pilots might have flown this particular machine, although John Da Costa (ex-CO 805 Sqdn) doesn't have it recorded in his log-book.

Little wonder, perhaps, when you consider that VA-125 had over one hundred A4s on the line each morning in those days.

Photo courtesy Scott Vanaken



NEWS FROM THE RAN HISTORIC FLIGHT

Hoops, Hurdles and Hard Yards

By 'Yogi' Neasbey

Despite various rumours, the RAN Historic Flight is alive and prospering. A vast amount of changes have been made over the last two years that have produced new challenges for all Historic Flight Members.

The major change is the proposal to maintain and operate the Historic Flight aircraft under the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) Act, Regulations and Orders. As a consequence, the maintenance and restoration team members have had to acquire CASA qualifications pertaining to their sphere of operation.

If you thought that the RAN Aircraft Maintenance Manuals and other associated books was a minefield, try wading through, and sitting examinations on a totally different system in a short time. Some people sitting these examinations are in their late seventies!

All previous maintenance records have been archived and only current maintenance records and requirements have been transposed to CASA documentation. As can be appreciated, this alone was a laborious task with the limited resources of the Historic Flight.

There is a three-pronged approach to get the aircraft flying again. This has entailed getting the aircraft, personnel and administrative structure organised under the CASA Act, Regulations and Orders.

The time spent 'grounded' has not been wasted as aircraft progressive maintenance has been carried out.

The C47 (ex-N2-90) has undergone extensive maintenance and repairs under the management of Erik Saltor and his apprentice – me.

The old bus has nearly completed a Depot Level



N2-90 on return to NAS Nowra after its new paint job carried out at RAAF Richmond in 1996.

Photo courtesy Terry Hetherington

Maintenance Schedule. This has included the replacement of all instruments with 'zero time' items, Starboard engine replacement, along with new engine and airframe mounts and hardware. All hydraulic system control and control valves replaced, all flying control surfaces recovered, all flying control rod end bearings and control hinge bearings replaced, overhauled feathering pumps fitted, all flexible fuel lines replaced, wing fillets repaired, corrosion repairs to fuselage and exhaust trail area. Repairs were carried out on the Port undercarriage that was damaged when the aircraft wanted to be a pilotless version during the high winds in September). There is still more work to be done, but it is hoped to commence engine runs before the end of 1999.

The S2 (844) has also undergone extensive maintenance and repair to meet the requirements of the old PAR schedule. Bill Crowley manages the aircraft with Garth Evans as his technical adviser, any other help comes from the Duty Watch. The major problem at the moment is the completion of the main undercarriage overhaul and refitment. It is hoped that a submission to CASA will negate this requirement as the aircraft is no longer doing carrier borne operations (and the pilots might be a bit easier on the wear and tear of the undercarriage).

Oscar Harper leads the Sea Fury restoration team, a band of very experienced personnel whose combined ages equal something like the population of China! Their innovation and improvisation show the depth of experience of this group of volunteers, they are also willing to assist others with their projects. The Sea Fury is progressing well, the fuselage is undergoing a ground up restoration and the rudder pedals and control column were being fitted at the time of writing. The engine bottom-end overhaul is complete, the connecting rods and pistons are now being measured, crack detected and classed, awaiting the outcome of the arrival of serviceable cylinder liners. Team member, Ken Lee, is convinced that the plumbing fitment will eventually work, provided it all flows downhill.

The Sea Fury has been adopted as the symbol of the RAN Historic Flight. Tickets will be available for the engine running programme when it commences (to cover the cost of the neck oil).

The Firefly is currently at 'The Old Aeroplane Company' at Tyabb, following rebuild. It is

currently carrying out taxi trials. The engine was overhauled in America at 'Vintage Vee Twelves', it came back looking like brand new – apparently it also runs like brand new. The aircraft will be registered with CASA in the 'experimental category' until completion of the test flight schedule, it will then be transferred into the new 'limited category' along with all ex-military heritage and historic 'warbirds'.

Greg Morris, who is currently in the USA attending to his Kaman responsibilities, manages Iroquois 898. Leigh Costain religiously 'runs her up' every week and hopes to put daylight under the skids after a few head seals have been replaced.



Iroquois 898 – Photo courtesy ANAM

Nigel Apperley is quietly progressing with the Wasp. It is very close to the ground running stage and looks a very neat little helicopter.

By the time this article is published, it is hoped that the latest acquisition to the Historic Flight will have arrived. As a result of meetings with the



The ex-RAAF C47 parked at the Museum complex

Photo courtesy ANAM

RAAF and Marketing and Disposal, the Flight will receive another C47, along with a very comprehensive spares package. The meetings were attended at various times by CDRE Rob Partington, CMDR Peter Coulson and myself.

The aircraft is A65 086 and has 200 hours until the major service. The spares include two 'zero time' engines, propellers, ground equipment, special tools, test equipment and several other sundry 'good bits'. It is hoped that with the acquisition of this aircraft will assist in keeping aircrew currency requirements, and be useful as a back up for any detachments.

CMDR Keith Engelsman, OIC RAN Historic Flight, has assured me that at this point in time, all aircraft registration processing is under way, and CASA representatives will soon be calling to vet all maintenance records and carry out the necessary aircraft and personnel checks, with the view to be airborne some time in the new year.

TOUCHED BY FIRE

RESOURCE BOOK – The Australian experience in Vietnam

This is a unique Resource Book of 36 pages in full colour with photographs of each of the twelve panels of the mini-mural 'Touched by Fire'.

It features a list of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice with their loss of life and a brief chronology of Australia's involvement in the war. It was launched by the National Patron, Lieutenant General Sir Donald Dunstan, at the Torrens Parade Ground on Vietnam Veterans' Day, Sunday, August 15, 1999.

The 'Touched by Fire' Resource Book retails at \$9.50 per copy. When ordering your copy, you may nominate the Ex-Service organisation that you wish to support and they will receive \$1.50 from us towards their funds. The remaining amount is credited to the Veterans' Burial Trust Fund, a fund dedicated to providing a dignified burial for veterans of any war whose family lack the means of achieving this.

Postage is \$2.00 per single copy, \$3.20 for two copies, \$7.00 for three to ten copies. Place orders at: 'Touched by Fire' Trust Fund,

c/-Unit 3, 16 Hendrie St, Morphettville, South Australia 5043.

Telephone: 08 8376 7506.

SECURING A BUILDING

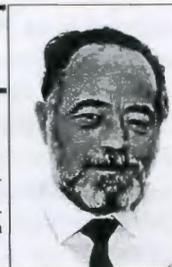
If you tell the Navy to secure a building, they will turn out the lights and lock the door.

If you tell the Army to secure a building, they will occupy it and forbid entry without a pass.

If you tell the Marines to secure a building, they will assault it with heavy fire, capture the building, fortify it and call for an air strike.

If you tell the Air Force to secure a building, they will take out a three-year lease with an option

NATIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT



The Federal Conference has been and gone. From the reaction of most people I have spoken to, the meeting was quite successful, even if the general attendance was a little disappointing. Divisional secretaries have copies of the minutes from that meeting, the following is a summary for those members unable to access them.

Our Patron, John Goble, opened the meeting. In his address, he said that we run the risk of becoming 'yesterday's men' if the Association didn't improve its promotion in order to attract new members, especially from the serving Fleet Air Arm.

In praising the work of the volunteers in the creation of the Museum, from its very humble beginnings to what it is now a nationally recognised facility, he stressed the need for its continued support, both physically and financially.

With reference to the FESR Review, whose formal hearings have now finished, he said that the final report and recommendations have been forwarded to the Minister.

Membership: As mentioned above, there was a general concern that our membership is falling and that we are failing to attract either existing or recent members of the Fleet Air Arm. Of the forty-eight new members registered during the year, all were from our 'Carrier days'. We must all be active in promoting the Association and we are going to investigate the possibility of setting up an 'Active Service' Division.

Fees and Charges: A subject always close to our hearts – or at least our hip pockets. It was agreed that all existing charges remain unchanged, however, they may have to be reviewed in light of recent postal charges and the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

It was agreed that when a member transfers between Divisions, only standard fees and charges for that Division apply, i.e. No additional joining fee. The original Division still remains responsible for the member's *Slipstream* payments for the

remainder of their financial year.

Life Membership's awarded by a Division (not the Association) and Perpetual Membership are **NOT** transferable.

Slipstream: The conference endorsed the formation of the *Slipstream* Editorial Team and thanked the team for what is a most time consuming job. The meeting in particular thanked Bob Perkins who put his hand up and shouldered the task on his own and kept the magazine rolling.

The draft *Slipstream* policy statement was welcomed, however, a number of amendments were proposed and it is now being rewritten.

Future Meetings and Reunions: Following much discussion, it was agreed that as *Albatross* is the common bond of all our members, all future Federal Conferences and Tri-annual Reunions will be held there. To assist Divisions being represented at the Annual Conference, it was agreed to subsidise each Division attending with half the cost of one Economy Class airfare from that Division's capital city. How each Division distributes the subsidy is left to that Division.

Administration: Following consultation with the previous National Secretaries, they have confirmed the difficulties in our administrative procedures that I raised in my last report. I have now been asked to prepare a discussion paper on the subject.

Once again, I must stress that I have no 'hidden agenda' for the National Executive to take over the Divisions. I simply hope to make our administration and accounting procedures more efficient and make life much easier for all concerned.

Have a happy and safe YEAR 2000.

Gordon Edgecombe – National Secretary

PO Box A115, Naval Post Office, NOWRA NSW 2541
Phone: (02) 4422 1759 – Fax: (02) 4422 3979
E-mail: faassn@shoal.net.au

A.C.T. DIVISION

Once again the Division appears to be operating under a blanket of secrecy, the contagion has obviously spread from Parliament House.

I don't believe for one minute that the members over there have been out of the Navy for so long they have run out of 'pussers' biros.

The members in other States want to know that you are all still alive and well, if you can't muster an article for the next edition, please send a doctor's note. Ed.

Author's
Photo
Required

Secretary: RADM B T Treloar AO RAN (Rtd)
PO Box 3652, WESTON CREEK ACT 2611
Phone: (02) 6288 2730

VICTORIA DIVISION



Greetings to one and all wherever you may be, and may good health and good fortune be with you.

Following on from our Anniversary Dinner aboard MV *Xanadu* and the RAN FAA Memorial Service at HMAS *Cerberus* (as reported in the last edition of *Slipstream*, courtesy of Clem Conlan – thanks, Clem), things have been quite hectic for some of us down south.

On Sunday 3rd of October, as part of Navy Week 1999, a number of members from the Division represented the FAA of A at the Naval Commemoration Service at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. The lack of numbers, not only from our Association but all ex-Naval Associations in general, was a little disappointing; nevertheless, it was very well conducted and memorable event.

On completion of the service, an invitation was extended to attend the Melbourne Naval Centre for afternoon tea, it was here that I met up with the new Commanding Officer of HMAS *Cerberus*, Captain John Walton RAN, and Mrs Walton. During my conversation with them, the question of membership arose and the problem of enticing serving members of the RAN into the various Associations, I pointed out that this was easier said than done, but that we were currently working on it.

I also took the opportunity to speak to him about our annual RAN FAA Service at *Cerberus*, and explained why we try to hold it on the nearest Sunday to the 28th of August. He was most considerate, and advised me to go through the normal channels, he would then give the request due consideration. His advice was followed and the request made; Captain Walton has now given it his approval and our Annual Memorial Service will be conducted on 27th of August 2000.

As reported in the last edition of *Slipstream*, the next pleasing event on the calendar was the marriage of Les Jordan to Loris Siegle on the 31st of October 1999.

With a few family members and friends in attendance, it was a very enjoyable day and we wish them both all the happiness and health for the future.

The next event was when a party of twelve joined the bride and groom on their honeymoon to Tasmania.

We all travelled down and back again on the *Spirit of Tasmania*, travelling around the 'Apple Isle' in convoy. Each night before retiring, it was customary to attend the delegated 'duty' motel room for a glass of Port, to 'spin a few' dits' and tell a joke or two. Geoff Litchfield was 'promoted' as the joke master of the tour. Good one, Geoff! It was a lot of laughs and some very heavy nights, in fact I'm sure that many of us came home for some well earned R and R. Nevertheless, it was a very enjoyable eleven days, good friends, good company, good food, what else do you need?

However, all good things have a down side. During our tour of Tasmania, fourteen members of the Victoria Division attended the functions of the 'All Ships' Reunion' held at Ulverstone. We all attended a 'Welcoming' night at the local RSL, to our dismay and great disappointment, members of another RAN ex-Naval Association approached me enquiring, 'What is the significance of your Association and what did we represent?' When I explained mentioning Aircraft carriers, aircraft etc., he responded, 'What are you, all Poms?' The next comment was, 'Australia didn't have any aircraft carriers.' It was unbelievable! A RAN ex Naval Association was ignorant of the facts.

On the night of the Reunion Dinner, further derogatory remarks were passed, Did anyone ever fly in the Fleet Air Arm? Did they ever go to sea? To add insult to injury, an information sheet in the form of placemats was set around the dinner tables, they listed all the Ships' Memorials in the memorial gardens at Shropshire Park. As you may have guessed, no mention of the Fleet Air Arm memorial.

A bit of a blow when you consider that quite a contingent of us attended the unveiling and dedication of the memorial in Shropshire Park in 1995. It was all very upsetting and I for one will not be attending this function again, despite the excellent organisation that goes into it.

Congratulations go to the FAAA Golf Team who represented our Division in the RAN 33rd Annual Navy Week Golf Day in early November. Not being a golfer, I believe they won one and were runners up. The team members were Jenny and Bryan Roberts,

(Continued on page 26)



Loris and Les Jordan on their wedding day, with Marriage Celebrant, Roy Allen.

Photo courtesy Ron Christie

Bernie Butler and Robert Earle [is this 'Bob' Earle who lost his front tooth whilst 'hypnotised' on HMAS Swan? Ed.]



Victoria Division Members aboard *Spirit of Tasmania* returning home for R & R.

Starting from the Left: Clem Conlan, Ralph Mayer, Margaret Mayer, Sylvia Ikin, John Ikin, Les Jordan, Ron Christie, Dennis Fleming, Gloria Fleming, Betty Conlan, Sue Litchfield and Geoff Litchfield in the corner.

Photo courtesy Ron Christie

On behalf of the Division, I extend a 'Welcome Aboard' to new members, Wendy Edwards (Associate), Sue Litchfield (Associate), Marie Pryor (Associate), Phillip 'Robbie' Robinson (Full), and two divisional transfers, Wayne Bell (Full) from NSW, and Greg Henderson Smith (Full) from Tasmania. We wish you well and hope that your membership with us is long and enjoyable.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION

I will start the South Australian edition with a Happy New Year to each and every one of you. Those of you struggling to salvage your virus infected, millennium ravaged computer system can still have a happy new year – just switch the bloody thing OFF!

The executive committee has dramatically changed with the sudden resignation of the secretary, Mary Raynor, who found that certain conditions she had asked for were not being met. The 'whipping boy' has taken on the responsibility until the AGM in March, where someone more tolerant will accept the position. Mary's 'dummy-spit' hasn't affected the operation of this Division, we are still 'up and in the hover' – slowly moving forward. For all the SA readers, the AGM is to be held at Naval House, 13 Hutt Street, on the 17th of March at 1930 sharp. The President, Peter Coulson asks that we all make the effort to attend this important meeting.

Our delegate to the Federal Conference, John Saywell, has survived the last meeting held at

Whilst I have your ATTENTION – pencil in the following dates:

Annual General Meeting 13th February 2000

General Meeting 2nd April

Korean Veterans' Memorial Dedication, Canberra, 16th, 17th, 18th April

Anzac Day March and Reunion 25th April

General Meeting 4th June

General Meeting 6th August

52nd Anniversary Dinner 26th August

RAN FAA Memorial Service 27th August

Bundaberg Mini-Reunion 1st, 2nd, 3rd September

General Meeting 1st October

General Meeting and Christmas break-up BBQ 10th December

In response to the success of last year's arrangements for the Anniversary Dinner, it is anticipated that this year's event will once again be convened aboard MV *Xanadu*. We are now in the process of trying to obtain a similar package as last year, namely, dinner, accommodation and breakfast. There will be further updates as information comes to hand.

John Champion and Jim Ferguson attended the Federal Conference at Nowra as delegates for the Division. By all accounts the meeting was quite successful and our thanks are extended to them both.

Well, that's about all for now,
Ron Christie

Secretary: Ron Christie, 15 Bianca Court, ROWVILLE VIC 3178
Phone: (03) 9764 5542 – Fax: (03) 9755 5417



Nowra, in fact he has commented on several occasions just how pleasant the whole meeting was. Definitely a far cry from those heady days of drawing out of Naval stores one lightweight flak jacket, for the use of.

Since the last edition of *Slipstream*, the Division has had a winery tour down south, from all reports it was and very enjoyable and well attended.

December the 4th had the members down at the Links Hotel for our end of year Christmas Dinner. Once again, it was well attended – you'll see just what we get up to - if we ever get hold of Peter Coulson's photographs. The lucky ticket for the Christmas Hamper was drawn by the President and someone other than a member, won. First and second prizewinners appear in the local Fly Navy newsletter. The evening was enjoyable, not just for the variety of tasty food, but for the fact that we could actually talk to each other instead of shouting over the music. And yes! I did manage to sell

another couple of tickets for the NSW FAAA raffle that they have going. Not having the full details of just what has been painted for first prize, I've told them that it is either a painting of something naval, or a naked lady with a navel. Most seemed interested in the naked lady.

January 2000 meeting has traditionally been held at the Cooper's home, this time we have moved to Henry/Madge's home in Glenunga. They have been very kind and offered to host the casual first meeting, which means you must still contact Dinsley Copper and let him know – plus bring a folding chair, drinks and a salad plate to share. Dinsley can be contacted on Tel: 8344 8812.

The Laidlers are back from England, and, God Bless the boy, he brought me back a FAA wings lapel badge from the FAA Museum at Yeovilton. He

enjoyed the visit to the museum, and says he can see where we are heading in Australia.

The Saywells are off to Tamworth for the Music Festival and something to do with a 'Reunion of Odd Fellows'.

Dinsley and Junice Cooper now have their first computer – just in time for it to crash as the clock strikes 2359 on December 31st.

Some of our well-loved members have illnesses within their family, some of a serious nature, some not so serious. On behalf of our Division, I extend to you all, hope and the belief that we do care and want to see you back amongst us soon.

We welcome aboard two new members, Mr Barry Lord, an ex Firefly pilot, and Associate member, Mr Ted Fleet, the RSL President at Goolwa. I have already received an interesting news clip from Barry Lord covering a Swordfish attack on shipping in the appropriately named, Bomba Bay. I will cover this in our local newsletter. I have also received a news clipping from Les Matterson covering the major building development in and around *Albatross*. Many thanks to you both. Please keep the items flowing, it makes a difference.

Writer's block is fast approaching and so I shall close off, as I usually do, with one of those quips that someone always will hear...

'Here is Michael Johnson, the world champion, whose world record is not held by him but by Butch Reynolds.' David Coleman BBC

Have a great year 2000.

Roger Harrison – Hon. 'Whipping Boy'



Some of the members and their partners enjoying a look over one of the Southern Vales wineries.

Front row L-R:
Henry Young, Dinsley Cooper, Des Reardon
and Junice Cooper

Photo courtesy SA Div.

Secretary: Roger Harrison
2 Gwendoline Court, CORMANDEL VALLEY SA 5051
Phone: (08) 8278 8307

NEW SOUTH WALES DIVISION

Greetings to all members of our Association. I hope that the year 2000 brings good health, good fortune, and all that you wish for yourself and your family.

The 1999 AGM of the Federal Council of the FAAA has been and gone and it was great to meet up with everyone again. Some members travelled long distances to attend, this clearly shows the strength of our Association when thousands of kilometres are covered to represent the various Divisions.

One of the decisions made at the meeting was for all future AGMs and Reunions to be held in Nowra – and – the arrangements for those events to be in the hands of the National Executive. From a

personal viewpoint I am disappointed with that decision. Visiting other Division members on their 'home turf' has always been an enjoyable experience; it also gave the host Division an opportunity to put together a few very enjoyable days for members and friends. However, the Federal Council has made its decision and we should now get on with ensuring that our Association continues to prosper.

For NSW members, a gentle reminder that this is the final issue of *Slipstream* for those members who are unfinancial for the year 2000. If in doubt, your financial status is indicated on the journal

(Continued on page 28)



envelope. The dues for this year are still \$22, if you have already paid, thank you, if you haven't, an early remittance would be greatly appreciated. Our Management Committee will soon be looking into the effect of the GST on our operating costs and subscription fees.

In the meantime, the Committee is attempting to subsidise our annual income with the 'raffle' that is currently underway. I have not had any feedback as to whether this is, or is not acceptable; what I can say, is that the response from the members has been fabulous and I thank everyone for responding in the way that they have. Very few books of tickets have been returned unsold; if receiving them has caused any embarrassment to the recipient, I apologise.

Some interstate members took tickets home with them to try and sell on our behalf, I thank them for their help and co-operation. We have three ticket selling kiosks booked for December in the local shopping centre, at the time of writing, the first booking has been held and was well supported, we intend to continue with the sales until the very last minute. Once again, thank you to everyone who has responded and please continue to help the committee to help you.

As previously advised, the 'raffle will be drawn 1st March 2000 - it is VERY IMPORTANT that all ticket butts, money and unsold tickets be returned to PO Box 28, Nowra 2541 - by 22nd February 2000.

NSW members, please note that the NSW Division AGM will be held on 19th March 2000, in the First Lieutenant's Cinema (AJASS) commencing at 1100. The election of Office Bearers will take place, anyone who feels inclined to serve [and WORK] on the Committee should submit their names to the Hon. Secretary.

Several people in the Sydney area have asked our patron, John Goble, whether a 'get-together' could be arranged for Sydney based members, and for those who may wish to travel from further afield. As a first step it is necessary to get an idea of the number of members, including their wives or partners, who would be interested in attending an informal function whether a BYO food and drinks in a park, or a fully catered function in a club.

It is expected that the function would be held about the middle of the year. JD has offered to take calls from interested members, to discuss any ideas and preferences people may wish to offer, and to co-ordinate arrangements. His phone number is (02) 9450 1537.

Perhaps a coach could be organised to take a group from Nowra.

It is sad to report that Neville 'Nifty' Russell passed away recently. The Committee and all members of the Division express our deepest sympathy to his family for their great loss. Nev had been in poor health for some time now and I am quite sure he is now at peace on the big flight deck in the sky.

That's all for now, good health and happiness from us to you.

Yours aye,

Max Altham - President

Secretary: Mike Heneghan. PO Box 28, NOWRA NSW 2541
Phone/Fax: (02) 4441 2901
E-mail: faassn@shoal.net.au

Birthday Cakes at twenty paces...



November, and NSW Associate Member, Joanne Blewett, celebrates her 21st birthday at the Naval Aviation Museum - a few days later - Mike Heneghan, NSW Division Secretary, celebrated his 22nd birthday. No, he wasn't born in a Leap Year. [The late Nick Mudge can be seen in the background. Ed]

Photo courtesy Peregrine

QUEENSLAND DIVISION

A great New 'Millennium' Year to all

I've just returned home after being away for 40 days (in the wilderness?) and boy, it's great to be back here in the sun - swimming pool etc and, of course, good beer!

I was in the UK for 18 days or so, and had a couple of reunions with aviation friends. They took

me to Liverpool Airport where they had a Boeing Stearman biplane ready for me to fly. However, as the breeze was at 18-20 knots at right angles to the runway, and very cold, I flew a Piper Warrior over old territory instead. It was all very enjoyable.



My friend has a Polish gunship there which is a fearsome looking beast. The propeller was away for service so I couldn't get my hands on that one. Another friend has a 2-seater Spitfire, but had just based it at Duxford Museum for the winter, which was a pity. There are possibilities of a pair of Dragon Rapides for a forthcoming Air Race - London to Australia - but more on that later.

I arranged a funeral service in North Wales, near Llangollen, for Marian. It was a lovely service held at an ancient church, about 30 close friends attended.

I spent a chilly day fishing on the beach at Hastings. My brother in law and his mate both caught fish (Plaice), the only thing I caught was a cold, 'Had a day on a friend's farm at a pheasant shoot - 'bagged' six pheasants and one duck, but missed a lot more. Thoroughly enjoyed watching Australia beat France for the World Cup.

I attended two Rotary Dinners whilst in Kent, UK, and met an ex-RN Surgeon Commodore, now an eminent surgeon, who supports the 'drive' to protect Numbats in Western Australia. He asked me to mention it in this letter, maybe we could give some support. Can anyone from the WA crew do some checking for me? We had a lot of fun discussions, RAN vs RN, the painting of Roundels (graffiti) etc of aircraft on the flight deck.

Then it was off to America.

I enjoyed the USA, I won \$600 at Las Vegas and stayed at Luxor- it was fabulous. I became adept in sorting out the 'working' girls who approached me. Couldn't get them to take an hour or so off work - so no business was transacted!

Spent Thanksgiving Day with Warren Walter's fiancée and family at Salinas, California, all good fun. Then I met a group of about 10 people from the Nappa Valley wine area who wanted me to go with them to Mexico for a week. Next year maybe. I'll be over there for Warren's wedding in November 2000

On the home front, Mick Blair has had a win with Veterans' Affairs - at long last - and is on 50% with more to come. Trevor 'Snow' Tite has been crook and had his gall bladder removed, he's now up and running on all 'six'. Well done, mate!

Mick tells me the girls had another good turn-up for lunch at the Brisbane Treasury Casino. It seems

that there are a few husbands who regularly trot along as well to enjoy the day.

D'arcy Doyle is not in good shape. I spoke to him briefly when Marian passed away and he wasn't feeling too good then. We hope you'll come good, D'arcy.

I've just spoken to Ian and Florence Henderson who are currently in Melbourne. Ian is very croaky. I asked Florence if her Prince Charming has turned into a frog! They enjoyed the hospitality of the Victoria Division at the Christmas party, and later had fun at John Ikin's place. They're heading back to Cunnamulla soon to spend Christmas with their daughter. Ian has got his Veterans' Affairs pension for Tinnitus/hearing loss. Veterans' Affairs are acting very quickly now in handling the cases, which is very good news.

We held our Christmas BBQ and meeting at the Currumbin RSL in December, though our BBQ was taken over by the Fishing Club. Quite a few had lunch in the RSL while others brought a picnic. The weather was good and we had plenty of shade. We held our raffle, and as usual, Flossie Nugent won the wine. I will just give it to her next time! Her luck is really amazing.

We discussed our QLD reunion for next year at Bundaberg. Once again, the base will be the Bundaberg RSL. The dates are the weekend of 1st, 2nd and 3rd of September. There will be golf, bowls, a bus tour, and hopefully, a tour of the Bundaberg Rum distillery and a dinner on the Saturday night. All attendees will have to arrange their own accommodation; we recommend that you give this your early attention as there are other events in Bundaberg around that time which may affect availability of Motels, etc. We will have a programme organised early in the New Year. Please note that this is NOT a National Reunion, but there is an open invitation for all or any to attend. If you are coming, let the secretary know. We're sad to hear of Billy Paul and Nev Russell passing on, our condolences are extended to their families.

Best regards to all.

Barry Lister - President

Secretary: Trevor Tite, 37 Miles St, CABOOLTURE QLD 4510
Phone: (07) 5499 3809

Best wishes for the New Year to all our members

from:

Bill Crozer UK

Norman Thomas UK

HMS Ocean Association UK

Telegraphist Air Gunners Association UK

Fleet Air Arm Association UK

Armourer's Association UK



The next edition of *Slipstream* 'should' be ready for distribution by the second week of April.

The absolute deadline for this edition is 17 March - NO reminders will be sent. Ed.

TASMANIAN DIVISION

The Navy Week ended on October 17 with Les Kube representing the Association at the wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in Hobart. Our President, Geoff Singline, 'Andy' Andrews and Alan Cordell represented the 'birdies' to the north of us at Launceston.

On completion of the march at Launceston, lunch was held at the Naval Reserve Cadets Depot, TS *Tamar*. It should be noted, that during the service and subsequent march, the cadets looked smart and well turned out in dress and drill.

In the first week of November, the 'All Ships' reunion was once again held at Ulverstone. The existence of the FAA Association was evident, thanks to a good number of the Victorian Division members and their ladies turning up. A BIG thank you is extended to them for making the effort to come down to 'Tassy' for this important event.



Invaders from the north overwhelming the local natives

We are not too sure who organised these visitors to make the effort, but a seagull said it was someone around Clem Conlan's size – correct me if I'm wrong.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DIVISION

To all the Eastern States of Australia, particularly to all members of the FAA Association, we here in WA greet you one and all.

Since our last report to *Slipstream*, time has just gone mad! But not to worry, a great issue it was, certainly different. Whilst reading through the pages one can indulge ones' mind to satisfy a good old whim while reading same.

Our social scene – red-hot! I have just got home from our Christmas function that was held at Mulberry Farm in the Swan Valley. A super day, nearly fifty members, wives and friends were present. Joe Jost, our 'money man', took care of all

The 'All Ships' reunion programmed for this year is 10-11-12th of November. The event is open to all ex-RAN and allied countries naval personnel. The venue is excellent and Shropshire Park is a sight to see.

The hard work has been carried out by a group of dedicated people, supported by a sympathetic local Council and community backing, their efforts have produced tremendous results. You are all welcome.

Our last meeting of the year was held in Launceston at the 'Over Fifties Club', Ravenswood (superb!) The usual raffle was run and it was voted that the proceeds be donated to the 'Empty Stockings Fund'. Sincere thanks are extended to those kind people who donated the prizes, to the ladies, and to the 'Over Fifties Club' for the excellent meal provided at such a reasonable price.

Each year we say it. Where the hell has the year gone? Well, don't ask me because I can't tell you; I suppose for that matter, neither can any one else. We've all had our ups and downs, but we live on, and while we have people in the FAA Association of this calibre we will continue to do so. Those who didn't serve in the FAA wouldn't understand, but those who did would understand. Bless 'em all!

The Tasmanian Division would like to wish you all a happy New Year, who ever you are.

Yours,

Matt 'Jake' Jacobs

PS: Ed, sorry I can't find a photo for the header of this article, but I'll keep trying.

Secretary: Les Kube,
61 Lindhill Avenue, LINDISFARNE TAS 7051
Phone: (03) 6243 6540

the arrangements – it was a good one and everyone sends a big 'thank you'.

Bevan Dawes, our roving ambassador has returned from his visit to Nowra where he attended the Senior Sailor's Reunion 1999; he said it was good to see some of the old faces, George XYZ [Szymoniczek], 'Digger' Schmidt, 'Tassie' Anning, 'Rats' Rafferty, Jim Lee, etc. He was also pleased to have had a few ales with Billy Paul before he passed on. Thanks are extended to those who were involved in organising the reunion, I believe it was



a great night. There is a rumour that the SS Mess will be taken over by civilian contractors before the next reunion is staged. [It's no rumour, Messes, Canteen, Fire fighting, Refuelling etc. Ed]

Since the last two or three issues of *Slipstream*, I have had some beautiful surprises in that I have received phone calls from all over the place. 'Jock' Todd, ex-SE, from Brisbane – I've got my bag packed, 'Jock', just say the word.

Alex Stevens, ex-AVN, I even managed to get two words in – 'hello' and 'goodbye'!

David Terry, ex-AVN, from Melbourne with heaps of news from the Victoria members.

Leon Wall, ex-AVN, from NSW.

Jim Fletcher, ex-AVN, from Ballarat (would you please call me, I have some news for you).

Don Eldridge, ex-O, from Huskisson – thanks for the news items, Don.

'Baldy' Dobson and Ray Larsen from Nowra, who

still owes Wanda and I a lottery ticket – it's been owing since the 50th Reunion – that's cheap!

A small reminder about obtaining pharmacy items on the \$3.20 prescription list. Just ask your local chemist for a booklet on the available items, you'll be surprised.

Members of the WA Division join in with other Divisions to express our heartfelt sorrow to the families of 'Nifty' Nev Russell and Bill Paul.

To members all over who are not well, we hope your health soon improves, we need you.

That's about all from the West to the East, all best wishes for the New Year. Don't forget to keep those phone calls coming in: (08) 93307386.

John Green

Secretary: Colin Bushe-Jones
2/10 Athol Court, LEEMING WA 6149
Phone/Fax: (08) 9527 9186

OBITUARY

Warrant Officer Neville Russell – 15/3/26 – 5/12/99



After a long illness, Warrant Officer Neville Russell (Air) O/N S8933, died on Sunday the 5th of December 1999. Nursed by his devoted wife, Shirley, Neville left behind him a legacy of achievements, acknowledged by all those who were fortunate to have served with him.

In 1948, 'Nifty', as he was commonly known as, was one of sixty Aircraft Handlers who volunteered for Fleet Air Arm training in the United Kingdom; like many others in this group, he had already served his country in World War Two.

He joined the Royal Australian Navy as a boy seaman on 23 July 1943, his first sea draft was HMAS *Yandra*, an Adelaide Steamship Company vessel taken over by the Navy. Drafted to HMAS *Ladava*, he helped in the construction of a slipway for small ships at Milne Bay.

Later, he was drafted to the corvette *Kapunda* on anti-submarine patrols off New Guinea, Borneo and Morotai; it was on this ship that the Japanese signed the terms of surrender at Kuching, in Sarawak.

Like so many men after the war, Nev was considering his future. Whilst doing a Gunnery course at HMAS *Cerberus* in 1947/48, he responded to the call for volunteers for the fledgling Australian Fleet Air Arm. This was to be the beginning of a long and dedicated service to this branch of the Navy.

Selecting Aircraft Handling as his branch choice, he joined *Kanimbla* for passage to the UK for training. After completion of training at HMS *Siskin*, he was posted to RNAS Eglington (HMS *Gannet*) in Northern Ireland and joined 805 Sea Fury Squadron. From this start, he was later to serve on the flight decks of HMA Ships *Vengeance*, *Sydney* and *Melbourne*.

To the next generation of Naval Airman he instructed, he was regarded as the 'Gentle Giant'; his passive discipline worked wonders, he would spend time with the wayward and steer them back on course – he never had a failure.

With great success, he was later to tour Australia with the Naval recruiting vans, but at that time he didn't realise that his life was about to turn full circle.

He was drafted to HMAS *Anzac* as the CPO in charge of the midshipmen, returning to his old General Service skills as he instructed the 'middies' in seamanship. From there he served in HMA Ships *Vendetta*, *Stalwart* and *Sydney*, before returning to the Fleet Air Arm in charge of the Fire Fighting at HMAS *Albatross*. On promotion to Warrant Officer in 1971, he was to serve another four years before retirement from the Navy.

The highlight of Neville Russell's life was his marriage to Shirley; it was a happy and devoted love. It was this love and devotion on the part of his wife that kept Nev going through his long illness.

On behalf of the Aircraft Handlers and all who served, with Neville, we wish her well and offer her our heartfelt condolences. – *Ambrose Boulter*

FLEET AIR ARM BEGINNINGS

By Kevin 'Ambrose' Boulter

This story of the formation of the Australian Fleet Air Arm is but one part of a total beginning of an event which changed the whole face of the RAN.

It is difficult for many to imagine how, and why, the various divisions of the FAA were so successful.

Where did the men come from? Who were they? How was it possible to mould them together in a seemingly short space of time?

The transfer from one ship to another in pre-FAA days, was a routine familiar to all branches of the RAN with 'gunnery', the principal factor around which the mainstay of the service functioned. Heavy and Light cruisers were the platforms for the main armament of the Royal Australian Squadron, as it was then known. They were backed up by destroyers, the heavily armed workhorses of the service, with frigates and corvettes contributing a fair share of support.

All crews had one thing in common – 'Gunnery School discipline' – and it was from these ships that the FAA originated. They were all volunteers; some were languishing in naval depots waiting to relieve others at sea or standing-by to do advanced courses, some were 'licking their wounds' from some well fought battles, others had been prisoners of war. There were stokers, engine-room artificers, seaman gunners, radar operators, signalmen and yeomen. These men were to become the first Aircraft Handlers, Flight Deck Engineers, Aircraft Maintenance crews, Ordnance, Safety Equipment, Meteorological and Photographic personnel.

1947 – the call for volunteers

From the cessation of hostilities, the RAN was busy demobilising those who had done their duty and recruiting others to take their place.

New ships were to be built, with 'ANZAC' and 'TOBRUK' Battle class destroyers soon to represent the beginning of the modernisation of the RAN. The older ships were still performing with occupation patrols, they would continue to serve for many years until the replacement programme was complete. The minesweeping flotilla, headed by the sloop *Swan*, was engaged in clearing mines along the Queensland coast, an operation that resulted in the loss of the corvette *Warrnambool* and four of the crew.

The heavy cruiser *Australia* had been repaired, recommissioned, and replaced *Shropshire* and *Hobart* for occupation duties in Japan. The Tribal class destroyer *Bataan*, in company with *Australia*, were in Shanghai on 12 November 1947, when the signal was posted calling for volunteers to apply for the Fleet Air Arm. All ships and establishments

received the signal and the experience of years of service and training was about to be forged into one complete and unique force. They were the cream of the Navy.

The Aircraft Handler's story

There are many stories to be told about the formation of the FAA and each division of Naval Aviation. The formative years of the branch has a history of events that its members can look back on with pride. Nothing is exclusive to any particular division, because one couldn't perform without the total support of the other, and certainly not without the aircraft and crews. Each has a background of performance that cannot be forgotten; the 'Handler's story' is one of them.

'After passage to the UK in late July, 1948, the various divisions were assigned to various a number of Royal Navy establishments for training in the various 'arts' of Naval Airmanship. Some had arrived in advance of the main group of trainees and had already completed the initial stages of instruction. On 03 August 1948, those who had volunteered for the Aircraft Handler's Course arrived at HMS *Siskin* for training. The instructors were Petty Officers George Blondell and Sadler; we could not have had better men to 'teach us the ropes'. They put to rest any fears we may have held regarding the flight deck and we were to become good friends.

Australians were still regarded and labelled as 'colonials', and were expected to perform irreverently and without much regard for discipline – there were a number of amusing incidents.

During one Sunday morning church service, the very young daughter of the Commander asked, 'Daddy, where are all the Australians, and what do they look like?' A good question!

The Commander was soon to find out that their pursuits into Sunday bliss was to be found in the Air Raid shelter. Here they gathered under one roof for the sole purpose of playing 'Swy' [Two-up] and sipping the odd 'Tot'.

The only way the Commander could get the 'Aussies' to attend the Sunday service, was to assign them for 'organ pumping' duty; the idea was to keep the organ bellows full of air to produce the sound for a successful sing-a-long, so to speak. But after a night of supping on 'Britten's Brown Ale', air was expelled at the wrong end of the tunnel, the bellows lost continuity, the organist failed to meet his ecclesiastical obligations – and – much to the chagrin of everyone – there was an unnatural odour in the atmosphere. From then on, it was back to the Air Raid shelters and more familiar pursuits.

On completion of instruction in all aspects of Aircraft Handling, a request was made to the

Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth (Sir Algernon Willis), from the captain of HMS *Illustrious* (Captain J. Hughes Hallett) for a flight deck crew to prepare the carrier for Home Fleet Exercises and for the Autumn cruise with the Fleet off Spain.

This opportunity created tremendous excitement amongst the Handlers; there was no better ship for us to gain experience. We joined *Illustrious* on 03 October 1948.

In company with *Illustrious* were the battleships *Duke of York*, *Vanguard* and *Howe*, the cruisers *Diadem*, *Cleopatra* and *Sirius*, destroyers, submarines and support ships. All operations were to be conducted from *Illustrious*.

The Aircrew Trials Team came from Lee on Solent – what a team they were! We received Sea Hornets, Firebrands, Avengers, Fireflies, Barracudas, Seafires and Furies. Who could forget 'hookmen' like Eddy 'Doggy' Thomson, Jack 'Tulip' Steptoe and 'Bluey' Ferguson, and the rivalry between the Handling Teams and their leaders. The experience, adventure and calculated risks gave us all the confidence we needed to prepare for the commissioning of *Sydney* - but alas - our sojourn in *Illustrious* wasn't to be without tragedy.

At the end of each day's trials, the ship anchored in Portland Harbour, Weymouth. On Sunday, 17 October, Portland was hit by a south-westerly gale; a pinnacle, carrying 50 young RN trainees returning from shore leave capsized whilst rounding the stern of *Illustrious*, 29 were drowned. Some of the Australians took part in the rescue operations, some diving over the side to help the strugglers; others assisted with the resuscitation. In the Sick Bay, Reg 'Tiny' Davis assisted the medical staff.

On completion of the work-up, the Commander congratulated the Handlers on behalf of the Fleet; they left with confidence and quiet pride. Some were then drafted to the 21st Carrier Air Group (CAG), but the main component prepared *Sydney* for commissioning.

The Flight Deck Trials and work-up for 805 and 816 Squadrons was long and arduous – it was winter and the North Sea was anything but kind. The flight deck was more often than not covered in sleet that made the handling of aircraft difficult. After the trials period, the ship headed for Invergorden and Scapa Flow where the conditions tested the aircrews to the limit.

Recalling that all Handlers had experience in all branches of the Navy, it wasn't uncommon for those with communications skills to semaphore to each other, or have a 'chat' to the Flag Deck, much to the amusement of the Captain.

The Handlers never lost their pre-FAA skills and often relied on them to perform and back-up their new profession. In years to come, their lives would turn full circle.

What was life like in Sydney?

Victor Zammit's Canteen was the hub for all to meet and gossip, and many a signal was 'leaked' to the rumour prone. Victor, together with sons David and Allen, could always be relied on to lighten the day's tensions with their particular brand of *bonhomie*.

Deck Hockey and Volleyball were popular sports, whilst below decks, barbers, bootmakers, novelty jewel box makers and children's toys were all the go. In the Safety Equipment Section you could always place a bet on the races at Randwick or have a game of 'Swy'.

There was something for everyone, but by far the most popular was the Ship's Concert Party. The 'cast' was volunteers from all sections, with talents of all kinds surfacing from those not remarkable for pushing themselves into the limelight.

The ship's band provided wonderful musical interludes, Norm Gullick comes to mind with his solos on the oboe, and George Armstrong on the saxophone.

For those in need of spiritual guidance, the ships' chaplains provided counselling and boosted the optimism of the downhearted. We were always grateful for their presence.

Some of the men who lost their ships.

Who could forget the irrepressible 'Joey' Hurst! A short wiry little fellow with rugged features, a raspy voice and a fighter against the odds. Joe was one of the first Aircraft Handlers on the flight deck, a Leading Airman in charge of Flight Deck transport and an aircraft director.

Able Seaman Joe Hurst, was serving in the light cruiser HMAS *Perth* on 01 March 1942, at the battle of Sunda Strait. His ship was attacked by a large force of Japanese destroyers, four torpedoes found their mark and the *Perth* soon slipped beneath the sea, taking her Captain (Heck Waller) with her.

Joe was one of the last to abandon ship, he stayed behind as long as he could to comfort his mortally wounded mate, Petty Officer Salmon.

Joe eventually floated off on a Carley raft. The survivors became separated and the struggle to exist began, some found their way to Java and others to Sumatra. All were captured; some were to die on the Burma railway and in Japan. Joe was captured in Sumatra, and from all accounts, caused his captors a great degree of trouble.

CPO Graham 'Trader' Horn, was serving in HMAS *Vampire* in December 1941, his ship was part of a destroyer force in company with HM Ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, when the battleships

(Continued on page 34)

were attacked and sunk.

On 08 April 1942, *Vampire* was escorting HMS *Hermes* when the carrier was attacked and sunk by Japanese bombers. *Vampire* battled on against all odds but was also sunk. Graham was to serve 27 years in the service.

There were others who fought and lost their ships (Ike Saunders and Henry Hall in the cruiser *Canberra*), but sailed on to serve in the Fleet Air Arm with dedication and distinction.

If this story helps to provoke others to say a few words about their experiences in the FAA, well and

good, but time is running out for all of us and memories are failing. I, for one, am proud of our history and the men I served with and regret nothing.

They were halcyon days, gentlemen.

[Unfortunately, the envelope containing this article and its supporting photographs was opened by a person other than the addressee. The photographs were removed and I only found the article by accident when I saw a COPY of it sculling on someone's desk. Ed]

THE EARLY DAYS OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

By 'Cyclops'

Courtesy of the Australian War Diary

In the early part of 1913, HMAS *Melbourne* left her cradle at Camel Laird's yard, Birkenhead, and commenced her long voyage to Australia, where she was urgently required to show that the RAN was a reality and not a politician's dream.

To many of us Australia was a sealed book. We did not know what to expect, and my personal anticipation ran to tall lanky men in red shirts and cabbage-tree hats, carrying stock whips and rounding up cattle.

We were soon, however, to know after a quick voyage we reached Melbourne, where we received a warm welcome. We always looked upon this city as our home; a voyage to Sydney being regarded in much the same way as an Eskimo would regard a visit to Sierra Leone.

In those days the Naval Base was at Williamstown, Victoria, whilst that august body, the Naval Board, resided in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. The Board at that time consisted of four members, two of whom were not on speaking terms with the other two. The staff was entirely naval and consisted of forty at the most. There was no civil service, no finance branch, and no income tax. Gin was a penny a glass, beer twopence, and stores were procured by the simple process of ordering them from a shop and sending in the bill to Navy Office.

One of the chief features of Navy Office was a large Chief Petty Officer called Mooney (or Moody) who, with a bunch of coloured ribbons fluttering from his buttonhole, paraded the streets of Melbourne persuading likely looking youths to join the RAN.

The great 'file-game' had started, and all documents were transferred from one floor to another my means of a rope and bucket, a procedure that threatened the 'lids', if not the lives, of Navy Office visitors.

Many of the identities of those days have passed away, but possibly a few reminiscences may be of interest. One memory is of a captain at Williamstown Depot, whose opening of morning prayers started with the words, "Off hats. I am the Lord thy God," etc., always created a flutter of anticipation and interest. Another is of a medical officer who was irreverently known as 'Iodine and Onions', for this was his favourite, and in fact only, prescription for all bodily ills. Possibly there are worse, for iodine and onions, at any rate, do no harm except to a person's social standing.

The medical officer of the HMS *Encounter* was the first doctor to join the RAN. He was a small man with a diffident manner. A capable surgeon, he was absent-minded to a degree. He performed the first operation in the RAN on board ship, with tools borrowed from the carpenter and plumber.

Years later, I gave many an anaesthetic for him as he removed appendixes, whilst in the North Sea during the war. His absent-mindedness was unique. I have known him to come into the wardroom, whilst off the coast of Norway, in plain clothes and seeking a partner for a walk to Edinburgh. I have also seen him ushering over the side a bewildered and lunchless guest whom he had asked to lunch but farewelled after a couple of pink gins in the anteroom.

Another character was the captain of one of the destroyers, who was the hero of the following story. In those days, after a theatre or a visit to the Savoy, it was the custom to have a hot pie at the barrow outside Hosie's and then catch the last train to Williamstown. The officer, having missed the last train and being penniless, decided to walk. On the way he came upon a donkey, so removing his braces and using them as a bridle and bit, he started to ride to his destination. Unfortunately the donkey took fright and bolted, taking with him the braces.

So the sentry at Williamstown, in the early hours of the morning, was surprised to see an officer arriving whilst holding up his trousers with both hands.

This officer later had the misfortune to ram Williamstown pier with his destroyer and on being called upon to give his reasons in writing, gave the somewhat original reply of: 'Incompetence on the part of the Commanding Officer'.

To those days also belongs the story, probably apocryphal, of the staff paymaster who ran a mile inside a horse-drawn vehicle after the bottom of the vehicle had fallen out unnoticed by the driver. Also that of the chaplain, who was prevailed upon by certain irreverent and leg-pulling members of his congregation, to purchase a white frock coat and white cover to his mortar board, and duly appeared at Sunday service in this rig.

Yet another is of the medical officer, still with us, who whilst washing behind the curtain in the sick bay, and thus being partially concealed, was surprised and indignant, when a young Ordinary Seaman approached the Sick Bay CPO with the words, "Hey, Doc, have you seen the bloody quack?"

To resume the chronicle, after a few pleasant weeks, the *Melbourne* proceeded to Sydney, and after our enthusiastic welcome at Melbourne we somewhat naturally expected an encore there. Instead, however, our reception was frigid to a degree, and we made our first contact with that

interstate feeling which prompts a native of Sydney to inquire whether the Elwood drain is the Yarra, or the native of Melbourne to sneer at Our 'arbour.

Actually, my first acquaintance with New South Wales was peculiar. Feeling like a walk, another officer and I landed, and after climbing a high fence found us in green and pleasant parkland. Encountering a man, we politely inquired the way and were answered by a scowl and some gibberish, which we could not understand. When we had an exactly similar experience with the next man we met, we came to the conclusion that New South Welshmen were somewhat peculiar. It was not until we found out that we had unwittingly trespassed into the grounds of Gladesville Asylum that we revised our views.

Leaving Sydney, we proceeded north to Thursday Island, engaged in the process known as 'showing the flag'. This appeared to consist of a series of hops from one mayoral reception to another, and we were glad to reach the serenity of Palm Island, where the mayors existed not and the bathing was glorious.

Those early days of the RAN were of interest. We had our teething troubles, but the material was there, as was shortly to be shown by the outbreak of the 1914-18 war, which welded the RAN into a firm weapon and established in Australia a sea tradition which it is hoped will endure for ever.

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A modern day Christmas story for those whose stockings weren't filled...

Military Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the skies,
Air defenses were up, with electronic eyes.
Combat pilots were nestled in ready-room beds,
As enemy silhouettes danced in their heads.

Every jet on the apron, each SAM in its tube,
Was triply-redundant, linked to the Blue Cube,
And ELINT and AWACS gave coverage so dense
That nothing that flew could slip through our defense.

When out of the klaxon arose such a clatter
I dashed to the screen to see what was the matter;
I increased the gain and then, quick as a flash,
Fine-adjusted the filters to damp out the hash.

And there found the source of the warning we'd heeded:
An incoming blip, by eight escorts preceded.
"Alert status red!" went the word down the wire,
As we gave every system the codes that meant "FIRE!"

On Aegis! Up Patriot, Phalanx and Hawk,
And scramble our fighters--let's send the whole flock.
Launch decoys and missiles, use chaff by the yard!
Get the kitchen sink up! Call the National Guard!

They turned toward the target, moved toward it, converged.
Till the tracks on the radar all finally merged,
And the sky was lit up with a demonic light,
As the foe met his fate in the high arctic night.

So we sent out some recon to look for debris,
Yet all that they found, both on land and on sea
Were some toys, a red hat, a charred left leather boot,
Broken sleigh bells, white hair, and a deer's parachute.

Now it isn't quite Christmas, with Saint Nick shot down.
There are unhappy kids in each village and town.
For the Spirit of Christmas can't hope to evade
All the web of defenses we've carefully made.

But a crash program's on: Working hard, night and day,
All the elves are constructing a radar-proof sleigh.
So let's wait for next Christmas, in cheer and in health,
For the future has hope: Santa's coming by stealth!

VALE

ALEXANDER NICHOLAS (NICK) MUDGE

Nick Mudge died suddenly and unexpectedly on December 12th 1999 at Huskisson NSW. At the time of his death, Nick was hosting a group of Kaman Aerospace company executives, in Australia for high level meetings with the RAN.

Nick was born on 17th June 1949 in the Murwillumbah district of the NSW North Coast. On the 13th of January, 1966, at the age of 16½, Nick became a Naval Artificer Apprentice and trained at HMAS *Nirimba*, Quakers Hill.

While Nick was studying aircraft engineering, he met his future wife, Jan Everett of Gynea Bay who was attending Teachers College. They married in October 1971 and Jan later taught for many years at Nowra Primary School.

Nick's first posting was to VC851 Squadron, the Tracker Squadron at Nowra, where he immediately impressed his supervisors with his good nature and can-do attitude. He was encouraged to gain his academic qualifications to apply for a commission as an Air Engineering Officer.

Meanwhile, Nick instructed aircrew and maintainers on the Tracker aircraft, before serving for two years in VS816 Squadron, the front line Tracker squadron, deployed in HMAS *Melbourne*. By the mid 1970's he was a Chief Petty Officer and senior inspector in the Quality Control Section.

In August 1978 Nick was promoted Sub-Lieutenant, SD Engineering, and travelled with his family to the UK for courses. On their return to Australia, Nick was posted to Darwin for twelve months with the Trackers, carrying out surveillance for boat-people and illegal foreign fishing vessels.

In late 1982 he was appointed engineer of HC723 Squadron. After a 16 year career on fixed wing aircraft, Nick was now with the Wessex helicopters, whose prime task was surveillance and protection of the Bass Strait oil rigs.

Nick completed an 18 month advanced aircraft engineering course at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1984-85.

The second half of the 1980's saw Nick promoted to Lieutenant Commander, become the base Quality Control Officer, and then be posted to the U.S. for training on the navy's new Seahawk helicopter. This was followed by establishment of the Seahawk Introduction and Transition Unit at Nowra, the precursor to HS816 Squadron, and then attendance at the RAN Staff College in Sydney.

In 1991, Nick's final posting to the UK was as the RAN's Air Technical Representative based in London. Posted back to Sydney in 1995, he then became the Deputy Fleet Air Engineer Officer overseeing the operation of Seahawks and other helicopters from warships and naval support vessels.

Nick retired two days before his 45th birthday, and then took up a civilian position with the Naval Aircraft Logistics Office in Sydney.

Two years ago, Nick was chosen to be the Australian representative for Kaman Aerospace after they won the contract to supply the RAN with the Super Sea Sprite helicopter.

Coordinating the establishment of the Helicopter Support and Service Centre in the new Aviation Technology Park, Nick worked closely with the Shoalhaven City Council in setting up the facility on land west of the Naval Air Station.

Nick's funeral was conducted at Woronora Cemetery, Sutherland on Friday 17th December 1999. Testament to the high regard in which he was held, over two hundred relatives, friends and past and present work colleagues attended.

He is survived by his loving wife Jan, daughters Melissa, Courtney and Tennille; and by his mother, sister and brother.

Abraham Lincoln once said; "I never met a man I didn't like."

It could be said of Nick Mudge; "He never met a man who didn't like him."

Terry Hetherington

A LAST FAREWELL

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

Ken Thomson (ex-POAF) - September 1999

Alan C Videan - September 1999

William J 'Billy' Paul - 24 November 1999

(The World's Greatest Armourer and Best Barman)

Alexander Nicholas 'Nick' Mudge - 12 December 1999

CMDR Colin J Patterson MBE RAN (Rtd) - March 1932 - Dec. 1999

CMDR Gerald Mellor Haynes DSO RAN (Rtd) - 1911 - 1999

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