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of the
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Association of Australia Inc.

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Slipstream
Established HMAS Albatross 1957



Seasons Greetings



RAN Sea Fury VX 730 now on display at the Australian War Memorial - Canberra

Photograph courtesy AWM

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FOREWORD

by

Rear Admiral G F Smith, AM RAN
 Maritime Commander Australia

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your fine magazine. In the July edition of *Slipstream*, you heard from Commodore Eames, who spoke about a number of the challenges associated with maintaining today's sophisticated Naval Aviation Force. Within the Navy's new Force Element Group structure, Commodore Eames is responsible to me for providing the necessary aviation capability for the Navy to fight and win at sea. Specifically, this support refers to the provision of organic Naval Aviation. As the Maritime Commander, I am responsible for employing these assets as the Naval Component Commander under Commander Australian Theatre.

Many of the readers of *Slipstream* would remember the golden days of Naval Aviation operating fixed wing aircraft from the deck of HMAS *Melbourne*. Despite reverting to a solely rotary wing force, the importance of projecting organic Naval Air Power at sea remains crucial to the success of today's modern Naval Task Group. I believe that operating aircraft at sea is a challenging, skilful and, at times, risky business; nevertheless, it is a mariner skill, which we in the RAN have always done well. I say mariner skill because the launching and recovery of helicopters at sea by day and night in rough weather is a synergy of effort impacting upon every department in RAN air capable units. As it has always been, the quality of our people remains the key to these operations and I am proud to say that the Fleet in general and Naval Aviation specifically, is manned by well-trained and highly motivated sailors and officers. I continue to be impressed not only by the warfare skills of our aviators, but by some of the rescues carried out in appalling conditions.

I would also like to use this foreword as an opportunity to provide the readers with a glimpse of the many activities that Naval Aviation and serving Fleet Air Arm members have contributed in the very busy year to date. While most Australians were celebrating the coming of the new Millennium, HMAS *Newcastle* was on station in East Timor with her Seahawk helicopter. This was followed by the major bi-annual deployment to RIMPAC 2000 in the Hawaiian Areas by HMA Ships *Newcastle*, *Adelaide* and *Success* with their embarked Seahawk and Sea King helicopters. RIMPAC is a large multi-lateral exercise that involves USA, Canada, Japan, Korea and Chile. In July HMAS *Sydney* participated in FLYING FISH 2000 with Malaysia and Singapore. HMA Ships *Canberra* and *Darwin* with their respective aircraft are currently involved in a major North Asian deployment that includes visits to Shanghai and Japan. Navy has also played a part in the support of the Sydney Olympics with two Sea Kings from 817 Squadron stationed at RAAF Richmond for the period of the Games. The Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Trials Unit have been very busy throughout the year conducting First of Class Flight Trials in HMA Ships *Manoora* and *Melville*. Things will only get busier next year with the Centenary of Federation celebrations.

The Naval Aviation Force's capabilities will continue to grow with the introduction of the Kaman Super Sea Sprite, Penguin air to surface missiles and major enhancements to the Seahawk, notably Forward Looking Infra Red and Electronic Support Measures. With HMA Ships *Manoora* and *Kanimbla* in service, the role of the Sea King is amphibious operations will expand rapidly. As you can see, Naval Aviation truly is alive and well in the Fleet.

The Fleet Air Arm is a highly visible part of Defence that takes Navy to the people. They have 'flown the flag' in such far reaching places as Kalgoorlie and Tennant Creek, always leaving a positive and lasting impression. In the present climate of manpower shortages and recruiting shortfalls, it is essential to make such vital contributions to raising Navy's profile.

Finally, let me congratulate the Fleet Air Arm Association for the production of this fine publication. From us at the 'coalface', we greatly appreciate your support and time.



RF



EDITOR'S CORNER

Well...this is the last edition for the year. I would like to thank the many people who have submitted material to make my job easier. A special thank you to the ones who have adhered to the deadlines.

For the very first time, I will observe what many people have accused me of lacking – 'political correctness' - being a 'bit of a dinosaur' I'm not *au fait* with that particular 'gobbledegook', but the following should suffice.

'Best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral, holiday, practiced within the most joyous traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, but with respect for the religious persuasion of others who choose to practice their own religion as well as those who choose not to practice a religion at all; also, a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the generally accepted calendar year 2001, but not without due respect for the calendars of other cultures whose contributions have helped make our society great, without regard to the race, creed, colour, religious, or sexual orientation of the wishers and wishees.'

(Disclaimer: This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for himself or others and no responsibility for any unintended emotional stress these greetings may bring to those not caught up in the holiday spirit.)

Whatever it means, readers, HAVE A GOOD ONE!
Be kind to each other.

FOR YOUR ENLIGHTENMENT

Editor's feedback from the last edition

* From David Gardner

Director RAAF Museum, Point Cook.

I was reading the April edition of *Slipstream* and noticed photographs of the AVRO 707.

The RAAF Museum has that particular aircraft in its collection. Should you wish an article, the Museum would be pleased to oblige. The *Slipstream* is quite a good read. How can I receive regular copies?

[At this time I haven't received the article from the RAAF Museum. The article about the AVRO in this edition is taken from the RAAF Museum web site. Ed]

* Below are a couple of extracts from the comments I have received about the two small books that were mentioned:-
'Stix' Middleton's book, 'Goodbye Tomorrow', was a good read, but how does he remember such detail?
'Tas' Browning's, 'Operational Deployments, made me remember a lot of things I had hidden in the grey mind area.



FREE! ...information about the next deadline
for *Slipstream* - it is 15 December
THIS YEAR!

BIOGRAPHY

RADM G F SMITH, AM RAN
Maritime Commander Australia

Rear Admiral Geoff Smith was appointed as Maritime Commander Australia on 12 July 2000. He is delegated full command by the Chief of Navy of all Royal Australian Navy operational and support units assigned to Maritime Command and is responsible for the maintenance of Fleet Standards within the Royal Australian Navy. He is responsible to the Commander Australian Theatre for the conduct of the Combined, Joint and Maritime Operations.

Geoff Smith joined Royal Australian Naval College in 1968. On completion of officer training he undertook sea training in HMA Ships *Derwent*, *Supply*, *Sydney* and *Queenborough* before proceeding to the United Kingdom for further junior officer training. On return to Australia he gained his bridge watchkeeping certificate in HMAS *Vampire* then joined the Papua New Guinea based patrol boat, HMAS *Ladava*, as Executive Officer then as Commanding Officer. Several postings followed including Navigating Officer, HMAS *Yarra*.

In 1977 he undertook Principal Warfare Officers Training at HMS *Dryad* in the United Kingdom. On completion of this training, he remained on two years exchange duty with the Royal Navy as the Gunnery and Operations Officer of HMS *Aurora*. Prior to returning to Australia in late 1980, he completed Advanced Warfare Officers Training, specialising in Above Water Warfare.

Promoted to Lieutenant Commander in 1980, he became the Range Officer at West Head Gunnery Range, before returning to sea as the Gunnery Officer of HMAS *Perth*. Following this he joined the RAN Tactical School as the Staff Gunnery Officer. He was promoted to Commander in 1984 and joined HMAS *Brisbane* as Executive Officer in early 1985. He then became the OIC Gunnery School, where he remained until joining HMAS *Parramatta* as Commanding Officer.

RADM Smith was promoted to Captain in 1989, serving as the Director Naval Education and Training for a short period, then as Naval Staff member on the Force Structure Review team. On completion of the review, he became Director Combat Force Development (Sea).

In 1993 he proceeded to Newport, Rhode Island in the USA as the Australian student at the US Naval Command College. During this time at Newport he undertook studies at the Naval War College and also completed a Master of Science Degree (Management). He returned to Australia in January 1995, at which time he assumed the command of HMAS *Perth*. He was promoted to Commodore in 1996 and in the same year was invested as a Member in the Order of Australia (AM).

Rear Admiral Smith served as the Director General Naval Policy and Warfare before taking up his posting as Commandant, Australian Defence Force Warfare Centre in January 1997. He was appointed Commander Northern Command in 1999 and was promoted to Rear Admiral in July 1999 on taking up his appointment as Deputy Chief of Navy.

Rear Admiral Geoff Smith is married to Pamalyn, and they have two sons, Mathew (20) and Cameron (12).

R

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am making this report immediately after the Annual General Meeting of the Association so that you may be informed of the events and resolutions made in that forum.

It was most pleasing that delegates came from every Division. The far States making considerable effort to be represented and we are all mindful of the costs, and often the inconvenience, of such representation.

In my annual report to the AGM, I drew attention to several issues such as membership, Slipstream, the accumulation of funds, museum changes and the recent Defence Green Paper. On membership I offered the view that perhaps our immediate aim might be to broaden the base of membership to include those elusive, recently paid off FAA personnel and those still in today's FAA. They seem hard to catch but we need to intercept them somehow.

On Slipstream, I thought we should continue to canvass strongly for more and varied articles to engage the readership, given the importance of the journal to our Association. I hope readers will take up the challenge to contribute something from their experiences that would interest others. The Council thanked John Arnold, Jim Lee and Bob Perkins for their continued strong efforts to produce our quarterly issues.

On the issue of accumulated funds, I thought we should consider some way in which they may be applied to the best advantage of the Association. Accumulating funds for a rainy day is wise to a degree, but at the moment we are not too badly off financially. Reducing fees is an option, but this would only benefit members by a few cents. Obviously more thought needs to be given to this question.

We discussed the name change of the Museum and most delegates were comfortable with it after hearing an explanation for it by the Museum Director. The idea of loaning naval aviation aircraft to other museums through an inter-museum loan system was supported since it would lead to a wider presentation of Australia's naval aviation history. [Only when the AMoF hold more than one of a type. Ed] As a safeguard for the future, the AGM felt that it would be appropriate to have two Association representatives permanently on the Board of Directors of the Foundation, who could influence the direction of the museum development to preserve and ensure proper presentation of the naval aviation theme. This will be put to the Board. NSW also thought the Association should consider funding a particular and relevant theme in the Museum and this would be raised at the next Annual General Meeting.

A few months ago, the nation was invited to comment on a Defence Green Paper through either individual submissions or by input into the Peacock Committee, that toured the country the

country holding meetings in the larger country centres. Given the difficulty of obtaining a consensus document representing the views of the Association, the National Executive resolved to support the views expressed by the National President of the Naval Association in his submission to the Committee, views which were well balanced and would attract consideration. Whilst accepting this, the Federal Council thought that this should be reinforced by forwarding a petition to both Houses of Parliament seeking consideration to all options for offensive actions at sea. The Council resolved to forward the petitions that had been initiated at the 1998 Reunion.



NSW raised a motion that the decision of the last AGM 'to hold all AGMs and national reunions at Nowra' should be revoked in favour of the earlier practice of each Division hosting national triennial reunions in rotation. Variations on this theme were discussed with the outcome being a unanimous decision to hold all AGMs at Nowra and normally all triennial reunions there to be conducted by the National Executive. But should a particular Division wish to conduct a triennial national reunion for some special purpose, say to coincide with some special event in that State, then the Division could apply to the Federal Council to do so, two years in advance. National reunions would be financially underwritten by the Federal Council.

Whilst on the subject of reunions, the Federal Council unanimously agreed that the next triennial reunion timed for 2001, should be deferred until 2003 to coincide with the Museum's Centenary of Flight airshow in March of that year.

WA moved that the membership of the National Executive be augmented to include a representative from each Division, by proxy if necessary. The idea was to gain a broader base for Executive decision making. There was no seconder to this motion and it lapsed.

These were the main issues addressed by the Federal Council, which also heard reports from the Treasurer, Museum Director and Terry Hetherington, who spoke on behalf of the Historic Flight.

We would all urge you and the membership generally to be involved in your Association, letting your Division know of any concerns or how we might do things better. Next year is not very far off now, we will need to start planning for the 2003 reunion, so let us know what your thoughts are on what sort of a programme you might like.

May I take this opportunity to wish all our members and their loved ones, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Neil Ralph

Sweet mysteries of life (A true story) - Upon returning to RANAS Nowra, a Gannet pilot placed his aircraft radio unserviceable, stating that - every now and then I can hear music coming through the headphones.

After considerable testing, the Radio mechanic can't replicate the problem or find any source of interference - so - he signs off the fault and the aircraft is once again serviceable.

Two flights later - the pilot returns and complains that he can still hear the music. The Radio 'bods' are stumped.

While they were once again discussing the problem with the pilot, the observer in the back seat overheard the conversation and sheepishly owned up that he was the culprit - *he was practicing on his flute!*

Dear Ed

In the last edition, 'Dooley' Lord's reference to 'Vat' Smith's reaction to the loss of the Captain's launch, and mention of Lyle 'Bluey' Kerrison and 'Chips' Gray, reminded me of a similar event.

This occurred when 'Blue' and I were coxswains of the Sydney's Skimmer. The Sydney was at anchor in Jervis Bay, when the skimmer, attached to the boom, started to sink.

We were piped by name to man our boat at the rush; when we arrived she was half full and deepening by the minute. We were out on the boom and descending the ladder when several 'Noah's Arks' [sharks] appeared under us. Undeterred (we were young and stupid) we paddled the skimmer around the stern to the crane and managed to get the sling attached as she was on her last half-inch of clearance.

Later, we both had to front 'Vat' and we were really crapping ourselves. Instead of the 'bollocking', he said, 'I truly don't know what to make of you two. When you come before me in other circumstances you're damn nuisances, but when you apply yourselves you are worth ten. Although I consider your actions just now to be foolhardy in the extreme, I commend you for saving the skimmer.'

The 'damn nuisance' reference came from an incident on the gallery deck one morning whilst at sea. 'Blue' and I had this routine. He took the Port side and I took the Starboard. We each carried a bucket and a broom over the shoulder. If we were stopped going forward, we would be going to clean the forrard heads, if we were going aft, then it was the aft heads.

On this particular morning I encountered 'Vat', who stopped me and asked what I was doing. He was satisfied with my response and asked whether I was behaving myself (I had not long come out of the 'pokie', compliments of the 'burgoo-man'). I said that I was behaving myself and he told me to carry-on.

I didn't get far – the broom caught on a dog-clip and I pulled hard. There was a thump and I turned to find 'Vat' flat on his back and livid! It seems that I had hooked him under the neck with the broom and pulled him 'arse over tit' backwards. He let me off, accepting it as an accident.

That man had an incredible memory! Many years later he had become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. One day he came out of the Defence Complex in Canberra as I was walking up the steps. He took one look at me and said, 'Spence! What are you doing here?' I explained that I worked for the National Capital Development Commission and part of my responsibility was the Defence Complex. He asked me if I was responsible for the scaffolding that had been obstructing his office window for months. I told him that it was a Housing and Construction job, but if he wanted it removed I would see what I could do.

I made sure that it was gone the following morning. He rang me in the afternoon to thank me. Such was the measure of the man.

Col Spence – Phone: 041 111 3732

**Dear Ed**

I am writing to thank John Ahern for submitting a photo of me that was published in the July edition of *Slipstream*. I would also like to thank my old mate, Dave Blundell, who sent me a copy of the article which brought back fond memories (and some not so fond) of my carefree, enjoyable, and at times, irresponsible navy days.

In the interests of archival correctness, and just in case some of you readers do remember me, the photo was actually taken in 1952 when we were doing our Naval Airman Mechanic (Engines) course at the RAAF Air Station at Schofields (later commissioned as HMAS *Nirimba*). I note here that John was writing from the tropics so maybe the minor error is a result of too much sun. Sorry, John!

For my part, I did return to *Nirimba* for three months in 1954 before being drafted to the *Vengeance*. By that time the bike, a 1950 - 500cc twin BSA, had been replaced with a 1949 red MG TC. Some of *Slipstream's* readers may recall that car, it ran mostly on alcohol (or am I thinking of the driver?) but that's another story.

Gil Nixon - Phone: (02) 9449 8692

Dear Ed

Whilst serving at *Albatross*, some time during the mid-sixties, an incident occurred that would be remembered by everyone on board that day. The circumstances are as follows.

On the day Admiral's inspection of the depot was to be carried out by FOICEA, *Albatross* was resplendent in polish and freshly painted curbing.

At 0800, a huge sign painted on the roadway confronted squadron personnel heading to work past the Ditching Pool. Brilliant, white painted letters, three metres high proclaimed – 'FOICEA IS A JUNKIE'.

Within an hour, 'Works and Jerks' had the offending sign tarred over. The inspection was carried out with no further incidents.

The perpetrator/s of that crime was never found (lucky for him, no doubt). Will that person/s now identify himself please.

K. Allen

[Around the same era, a similar incident occurred at the Main Gate. The message was the same as for FOICEA, but the recipient was a Leading Patrolman who went under the pseudonym of 'Rhinegold'. Ed]

Dear Ed

I am interested in finding out more about the filming, and the Navy's involvement with the motion picture 'On the Beach' starring Gregory Peck.

HMAS *Melbourne* (carrier) and HM Submarine *Andrew* were involved in the latter part of January 1959 at Gellibrand Pier, Williamstown. Some 25 of *Melbourne's* crew volunteered as extras in the movie. Any details/photo's etc. would be appreciated.

I can be contacted at PO Box 358, Carina, Queensland 4152. Also by: Telephone: (04) 0735 5064-Fax: (07) 3216 8327 or by E-mail coralsea@csi.com

Tony Rees

[I contacted the writer to find out his interest in the topic, his reply follows. Ed]

The reason I am interested in the filming is that I am writing a

(Continued on page 6)

SEEN ON A BUMPER STICKER

'I want to die in my sleep like my grandfather, not terrified and screaming like his passengers.'

history of my father's service in the RAN. From July 1958 to August 1960, LTCDR Peter M Rees, was HMAS *Melbourne's* Senior Communications Officer. He took some slides of the filming and I'm trying to find out more information to 'complete' the story.



Capt. Peter Mervyn Rees, HMAS BRISBANE 1973

My father died in 1976 at Kure, Japan, whilst Defence and Naval Attaché to the Australian Embassy in Tokyo.

Perhaps you may be able to help me with another part of the family history I am compiling. My mother was previously married to LTCDR Douglas Reeves Hare RAN, who was Commanding Officer of 805 Squadron when he was killed in an air accident at Nowra on 16 July 1952. My mother and I would be most interested in hearing from anyone who knew him, and/or have details of the accident.

Thank you for your help.

Tony Rees

Dear Edward, (everyone else calls you Ed, but I don't know you that well).

In the July edition of *Slipstream* you printed a photo and short dit of myself receiving a copy of 'The Cruel Sea', that one, Maurie Tiffen, borrowed from me many years ago. No mention was made of the other things he'd borrowed, soap and toothbrush, which I bought, we shared, and he took with him when he went on draft. Not to mention the 'subs' he owed me, and other articles, including underpants, that had been loaned in good faith. But time goes by and maybe he forgot.

Back to the photograph. A local newspaper heard about the photo and sent a cub reporter to interview me at - at nine o'clock - at NIGHT! I'm not very bright at this hour after having a few drinks, and the reporter wasn't too bright either.

The article he wrote accused me of owning, or training, a cruel SEAL. Since this was published I have had numerous phone calls and letters from the following:

1. The Royal Society Preventing Cruelty to 'Critters'
2. Numerous fishermen who claimed that it was my seal that stole the fish from their nets.
3. Various animal welfare groups.
4. Perth Zoo.
5. Fisheries and Wildlife Department.

The above I could handle, but one that really upset me, was some uncouth person who asked for a great deal of money or the report and photograph would be sent to 'Australia's Most Wanted'.

This is my first letter to you and *Slipstream* (which I look

forward to reading), you are doing a great job.

Back again to the subject...

As you know, Maurie finished up as a Lieutenant Commander with the MBE.

I finished up as a three-badge 'kellick' with dandruff.

Lou Burns - ex-financial member of the *Melbourne's* '5 Charlie Surf Club'.

Please note, all the above is written with tongue in cheek. LB ['Luigi', I can still remember how you used to carry your toothbrush and toilet bag on your early morning stroll to 'D Area' showers at RANAS. The ladies who worked in 'Happy' Hawkins' laundry in those days are still getting free beers to recount the episodes. Edward]

Dear Ed

After my comments regarding the lack of post-Korean material featured in this fantastic journal, I thought I had better make the effort to redress in a small way the imbalance.

I came across this memory in an old shoebox, this being the repository of my life's images. The photograph (816 Squadron 'A' Flight) was taken on board *Melbourne* in 1966. Featured is Gannet 841, proudly displaying the 'crown' acknowledging her as the Hangar Queen.

Old 841 appeared to suffer a fear of heights, which meant any altitude above the hangar deck during this cruise.



Shown in the line-up of loyal subjects who faithfully served the Queen are:

L-R Back Row: Mick Meades - Allan Bird - Peter Want and Mick Roberts

L-R Front Row: Bernie 'Maverick' Williams - Bob Klose - Don Cundy and 'Rummy' Searle.

The remainder of the loyal subjects, myself included, were smart enough not to be photographed with this crew of reprobates.

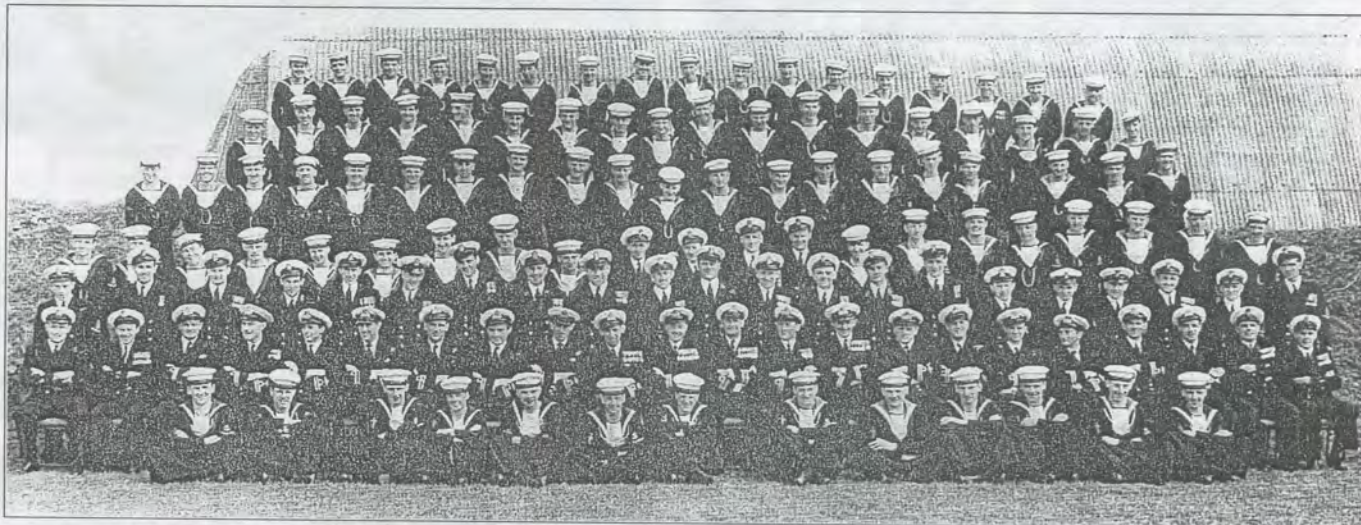
Kind regards.

John 'Jock' Hetherington

Dear Ed

With 817 Squadron's Anniversary being held this year [Now cancelled until 2001. Ed], I found a couple of photographs that may be of interest to the original officers and sailors who formed 817 Squadron at St. Merryn (HMS *Vulture*), Cornwall, in April 1950.

The squadron photograph was taken at that time, age has dimmed the eyesight but I can still recognise quite a few faces with a magnifying glass.



I am eighth in the back row from the right, others include Doug Stone, Ted Hunley, Jim French, Danny O'Keefe, 'Lofty' Kingaby (RN), 'Lofty' Kenderdine, Bill Bailey, Lt Hanna, Lt Williams, Lt John Wade-Brown, Lt Gledhill, LtCdr Lunberg, LtCdr Harrington (21st CAG CO) and Lt Wotherspoon, who I remember doing a spectacular 'landing' on Sydney during the Korean War. Many other faces are familiar, but the names escape me.

The photograph of the athletes is the victorious 21st CAG team who won a sports day at St. Merryn, also in 1950.

L-R Back Row: Bill Bailey RN - ? - LtCdr Harrington - Lt "Spanky" Brown - 'Lofty' Kingaby (RN) - ?

L-R Centre Row: ? - Danny O'Keefe - 'Rocky' Norris - Geoff Beardsley - Len Murray - ?

Front Far Left: 'Juke' Matterson - Front Far Right: Keith Kempnich

The Olympic Torchbearer is ex-Safety Equipment sailor, Beimop 'Bob' Tapim. Bob lives on Mer Island, in the Murray Island group, northeast of Thursday Island (a fair way), he was selected to tun a 'leg' of the Olympic torch relay on Thursday Island.



Bob has been a member of the Mer Island Council, and at present is a member of the School Board. He served twenty years in the RAN, serving on HMA Ships *Melbourne*, *Supply*, *Hobart*, he retired from the Cairns Naval Depot. Many officers will remember his wife, Pam, who served as a Steward from 1970 - 1983.

I recently spent a very pleasant few days with them on Mer Island - boy - the fishing is something else, even a mug fisherman like me could catch them.

I am sure these photos will be of interest to those who served on 817 Squadron in the early years, not forgetting the ex-Birdie who ran a leg of the Olympic relay. Hope to see you at the 817 Squadron Anniversary Bash.

Geoff Beardsley

[Please note, laser copies do not scan as well as the originals. Ed]



Dear Ed

I am George Mills, R 55545. I served at HMAS *Albatross* and aboard HMAS *Melbourne* between 1959 and 1968. I would like to hear from anyone who remembers me, I am retired and living in Western Australia. I would particularly like to contact, Bobo Olsen, Roger Hitchins, Les Petrie, Stan Simpson (has wife Kay, and daughters Gail and Naomi), Terry Fenwick, 'Tiger' Martin and Martin Ward (helo pilot). Kind regards and thanks.

George Mills - [George can be contacted at PO Box 3042, JANDAKOT, WA 6164 or by e-mail at george.mills@bigpond.com]

Dear Ed

Congratulations on another great issue of *Slipstream*. In particular, I believe the juxtaposition of the foreword by CDRE Eames and the article, 'Upgrade for HMAS *Albatross*', to be worthy of comment and praise.

Whilst I think it is highly likely that the irony of following CDRE Eames' statement on, '...passing of the last fixed wing aircraft in Naval Aviation', with the Government's decision, '...to upgrade existing arrestor gear for fixed wing aircraft...', will have been a bit too subtle for those not attuned to such artistry, be assured it did not go totally unnoticed.

As long as I am here, could I comment on the continuation of the latter-day line of 'codswallop' from *Albatross* about counting on the continued support of the Fleet Air Arm Association and looking forward to furthering traditions. Give us a break!

Let me give you a couple of examples of co-operation, and otherwise, to mull over.

On Pg6 of the July edition, Leo 'Taff' Evans writes of how he was welcomed and entertained during a day at sea aboard HMAS *Brisbane*. During the 50th Anniversary Celebrations, HMAS *Albatross* couldn't see its way clear to provide a band to accompany the several hundred FAA veterans who marched through Nowra, or provide buses for them to tour the base during the reunion.

On two of the last three ANZAC Days in Sydney, HMAS *Melbourne* has invited members from the HMAS *Melbourne* Association onboard for breakfast prior to the march, and its Captain, XO and Liaison Officer attended the Association's AGM this year. The ship has also provided sea trips for a number of the Association members on several occasions.

Several years ago, when Fleet Air Arm Association members volunteered to sort and catalogue a hangar full of aircraft stores for the benefit of the Historic Flight and the Museum (rather than see them simply sold for scrap), *Albatross* couldn't see its way to provide them with 'sangers' and a cold drink during the lunch break.

If co-operation is to be truly effective, it needs to be a two-way street. It requires real people on both sides who are genuinely interested in working together to preserve the history and traditions of the RAN Fleet Air Arm. It requires actions, not platitudes.

The present day *Albatross* is little more than a pathetic cardboard replica of the past and we no longer have a Fleet Air Arm, but rather a Naval Aviation Force Element Group.

With apologies to 'Banjo' Patterson,

**'The name is US Navy don't you see,
The old name better sounds to me.'**

Barry Roberts

Dear Ed

With reference to the article in the last edition by 'Toz' Dadswell, I would be interested to find answers to the following:

* Is the 'John' Robotham, referred to in the article on VW-232, actually LT Cuthbert Robotham, ex-805 Squadron, who was my pilot of Sea Fury 108 in Ireland, onboard *Sydney* and at RANAS Nowra from 1948 - 1951? (See photo 1.)



* Was the side number of 100 issued to another aircraft after the mishap to Sea Fury TF-926 at Dungiven, Ireland, in 1948? (See photo 2) [07 DEC 48 - Lt. Henry Young, pilot.]

The other photographs may be of interest. See photo 3) [Eglinton, Ireland, 26NOV48 TF-953 - Lt Sherbourne, pilot.]

Congratulations on a great journal, I look forward to receiving my next issue.

Ted 'Bungy' Williams - ex-LAPM

Dear Ed

I was most impressed by your journal (*Slipstream*) there were a few old faces that I remembered from the *Sydney* days, and with the informative comments made in the journal, it is no wonder that it has such a wide coverage.

But if I may, I stated that if the *Sydney* had gone down in Typhoon Ruth, it would have been the worst naval disaster in Australian history. The first *Sydney* went down with 700 souls and, I might add, no information can be obtained about her and another 50 year embargo has been placed on information as 'it is still of a sensitive nature'. Bull!

Thank you for giving me the space to let the boys know about 'Goodbye Tomorrow', it was very much their story and something that they can share with their grandchildren. It is now a part of written history and is in the Government Archives in Canberra. So – we who were few, are as much a part of history as anyone else. I know that there are still a few who haven't got the booklet, it was a limited edition and there aren't many left.

I will say good luck to you all, keep well.

So – turning right - that's it!

Yours aye

Richard 'Stix' Middleton

[The last few copies are available from the author, 52 Macdonald Street, Dickey Beach QLD 4551 for \$11.50 which includes mailing cost anywhere in Australia. Phone: 07 5492 7433.]

Dear Ed

The 12 nautical mile limit laid down by Defence for the award of the Naval General Service Medal (NGSM) clasp 'Malaya' means that those who served in HMAS *Melbourne* will need to have done the 1957 cruise plus two others in order to meet the 28 day qualifying period. Given that anyone with a basic grasp of naval tactics, and an IQ above room temperature on a cold day in Europe, knows that the area of operations for a carrier is the combat radius of its aircraft; *Melbourne* personnel are entitled to feel discriminated against and disappointed.

Is there any chance that a better and more realistic deal can be obtained for *Melbourne* personnel? Personally, I think it more likely that someone will come up with proof that Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy really exist. Sorry about that kids, but you had to know eventually.

So, does it really matter? Not a great deal, in fact. In the beginning, which was a lot longer than four years ago, it was necessary to focus on the award of the NGSM in order to achieve the prime objective, recognition of service for Veterans' Affairs pensions and benefits. This has now been achieved through the award of the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) 1945-75 and Returned from Active Service (RAS) Badge, so the NGSM is really just an add on.

Finally, I have confirmed with Pat Clarke, Director Honours and Awards, that time outside the operational area for the AASM/NGSM counts for the Australian Service Medal (ASM) clasp 'FESR'. So it is unlikely that you will be asked to return your ASM in order to get the AASM.

Barry Roberts

'This will never replace the Aldis lamp and semaphore'.

'Dooley' Lord – 22 August 2000 – After his first e-mail experience.

Dear Ed

Once again, I have a few questions concerning the research that I'm carrying out. I wonder if any of the members might be able to help me. I would like to receive information on the following:

1. The whereabouts of:

*PO Keith Bunning (Observer in Firefly VX-371, when Lt R E Smith was lost off the *Sydney*).

*Midshipman Debus (Observer in Firefly VX-381 involved in David Eagles mid-air over Jervis Bay).

*Lt J T Ferguson (Sycamore pilot who ditched in St Georges Basin, 12 October 1955).

2. The correct numbers of aircraft that were damaged and written-off in Typhoon Ruth. The aircraft type, and if possible, Serial Numbers and/or Side Numbers.

3. The numbers commonly referred to as 'side numbers' when combined with the tail code K, NW or Q, correctly written would be K/105 or 105/K? Any ideas?

4. When were the letter prefixes VF, HC, HS etc. first used? The date and by what authority?

Regarding the photograph of the crashed Firefly on Page 18 of the last edition of *Slipstream*; the accident occurred on 11 January 1950 at RANAS Nowra. The aircraft was VX-379 K/214. The cause was slow reactions by the pilot, Lt (P) Keith Clarkson and the DLCO during ADDLs approaches. The pilot and the observer suffered minor injuries. Who was the Observer? Who was the DLCO?

Thank you.

Nigel Apperley - [Correct answer, Nigel. Ed.]

Dear Ed

Congratulations to 'Chips' Gray on a fine article on 'Dear Old Mumbles' as we on the real depot called him, I am not sure that we had the same respect for him that 'Chips' had, but then again, we were not privy to the same information that he had.

However, I do know that rather than visit the Sick Bay at Nowra during the 1950s, quite a lot of the ratings had more confidence in the doctors in the town.

Maybe if the same sort of research had been carried out into the working conditions of the lower deck, there wouldn't be the same amount of claims for industrial deafness that exist at the present time.

Compassion is a wonderful thing, particularly when you can give it, and better when you receive it when it is needed. I am not sure whether we should have received it when one of our first duties at Nowra was to skirmish the airfield for the remains of a pilot who was killed rehearsing for an air display. After reading that article by 'Chips', I now think that the task may have been more suited to the SBAs.

I don't know that anybody in the Fleet Air Arm ever received any counseling when the planes and the pilots met with tragedies. I know that I can still see a Sea Venom crashing into the sea some 20 miles east of Moreton Island. It carried two men that I had just been laughing and talking with ten minutes previously whilst I was fitting them up with their parachutes and dinghies in the Safety Equipment Section. Maybe we were tougher than the

(Continued on page 10)

people who fought in later wars were but we still have memories. We were real friends with some of these men as we used to make them brews and in return they tried to crash into our 'Uckers' games when we were ashore at Nowra... I have just released the *true duties* of the SE Branch!

I can also recall that whilst resident in one of the accommodation huts in 'C' Area, an 'anonymous' messmate had a friend amongst the SBAs who supplied him with wood alcohol. When the 'Happy Hawkins School of Department for Young Gentlemen' closed, he and his friends would mix the wood alcohol with 'goffer's and scoff it. This fellow used to wake up in the morning with green bile running from his mouth. I believe that they all finished up committing suicide sooner or later.

Clive Podd

[The only people I've heard of seeking medical attention ashore, were usually the ones allergic to the smell of roses around a certain cottage on base. Ed]

Dear Ed

I was doing a clean out the other day and came across a snapshot of Keith Potts. I think it was taken in the Junior Officer's sleeping accommodation (Casbah) onboard Sydney in 1953.



I first met Keith in 1951 when we were recruited for aircrew. Although we were both at times at *Albatross*, we never met until we joined others at *Cerberus* for another session of recruit training. With that group was George Barron, who Ray Burt (NSW), has informed me, died from a heart attack about eight years ago. Keith did not enjoy as long a life as George did.

One fine day in 1956, *Melbourne* was at flying stations off Moreton Bay. I was crewed with John Sutcliffe in a Gannet (816 Sqdn). The Gannets were programmed to be first off the deck, but a last minute change, for some unknown reason, saw Barry Thompson and Keith in their *Sea Venom* (805 Sqdn) directed onto the catapult for take-off ...both had only seconds of life left.

On launch, their aircraft dived uncontrollably into the ocean and their bodies were never recovered.

Keith's last words to me were, 'I have organised my plotting chart. I will be able to navigate around the bottom of the ocean with it now'. At the time I didn't realise the prophetic nature of his statement, but over the last forty-five years I have often reflected upon his words.

Keith was a larger than life person. I was privileged to spend many hours with him in training, serving, and enjoying a 'run

ashore'. He loved the Navy and I'm sure his only goal in that respect was to serve permanently, and as long as possible. It must have been a huge blow to his widowed mother in Western Australia when she learned of his death. He had always mentioned her with great respect.

That day was a very sad time. The accident attracted only a short paragraph in the newspapers and was quickly brushed aside. Nowadays, such an incident would be placed under the microscope with answers expected. In 1956, no answers were provided.

Whilst talking to Brian Gale (RN), at a recent function, he mentioned that around that time [1956], *Sea Venom's* were notorious for their sudden plunge into the sea off the catapult. He went on to say that he could recall about eight similar incidents that had occurred in the Royal Navy with a great loss of life.

I am sure that if this story goes to print, there will be many that remember Keith with sadness and regret.

Barry 'Dooley' Lord

Dear Ed

I enjoy *Slipstream* and eagerly await each issue. Recently I procured the enclosed article from friends in the NSW Cornish Association. As it may be of interest to your readers I ascertained that publishing is permitted with acknowledgement of the author, I do hope it will be of value to you.

Keep up the good work.

Neil 'Mac' Macmillan

WALL TO WALL WRENS

By Iris Drinkwater

The bleak Cornwall coastline, with its high cliffs and deadly rocks, over which the Atlantic Sea rolls, has an indescribable rugged beauty. In the far distant past it was the scene of many a shipwreck, and the haunt of smugglers. In wartime it was used for the training of anti-aircraft gunners, as well as training the GIs who would scale the cliffs of Omaha Beach on D-Day.

But on 16 September 1943, the only place Lt. Jack Omohundro could find to make a forced landing with his B-17 Flying Fortress, 'Belle of the Bayous', was the small gunnery range on the cliff top at Treligga. Known as *Vulture II*, Treligga was a satellite of nearby RAF St. Merryn airfield, it was unique in that it was run entirely by WRENS.

There were three rough grass landing strips, each measuring 2,250 feet, intended for wheels-up landing by aircraft with engine failure or ricochet damage sustained whilst firing on the range. The only buildings were a tall brick quadrant hut in the centre of the range and a hut for living quarters. The girls operated the quadrant equipment to record angle of dive and accuracy of 'attacks' made by the aircraft from RAF St. Merryn.

The WRENS had to be prepared for any eventuality and their equipment included an ambulance, a crash tender, and an asbestos suit in case a crashed aircraft caught fire. WREN Marian was proud that she was big and tough enough to wear the suit. When interviewed by a newspaper reporter in 1943, she said, 'We haven't had any experience of blazing aircraft yet, but I've sat on the galley fire to test the suit.'

On Sunday 16 September 1943, a low mist hung over the

Cornish cliffs. There was no flying and the girls were having a 'make do and mend' afternoon in their quarters. The Duty Watch consisted of eight WRENS, including a Petty Officer and the Commanding Officer. The CO and the PO were chatting in the PO's Mess when, above their voices and the music from the gramophone, they heard the sound of an aircraft.

Looking out of the window they saw a B-17 flying low to the north and behind the camp. 'His engines sound as if he's in some kind of trouble, but we don't want him in here,' said the CO; who then went to telephone RAF St. Merryn in the hope they would be able to contact the pilot and direct him to their airfield.

'He's circling again now Ma'am. A bit lower now, it looks as if he wants to land.' The PO was giving a running commentary to the CO who was passing the information on to RAF St. Merryn.

The B-17 circled again, even lower this time. The CO thrust a Verey pistol into the quaking hands of the PO, who had never fired one before, and said, 'Go and fire him a red. He simply cannot land here!'

The PO pointed the pistol in the direction of the aircraft and pulled the trigger. The pyrotechnic went into the air and burst in a red flash. Aboard the B-17, the navigator, after seeing the flash, said to the pilot, 'Seems like they don't want us here, Skipper.' The pilot replied, 'Yeah, but I guess they're going to be disappointed. Well, here we go. I sure hope I don't overshoot that runway...'

The PO continued her commentary, 'He's approaching very low, Ma'am. I don't think he's going to make it... He's... Oh God! He can't do it... He's rising again... Over the sea now... He's making another approach... lower... lower. He's touched down! Coming along towards the quarters, Ma'am... rather fast. Slo-owing down a bit... Yes! ...Yes! He's done it! He's down about fifty yards from quarters.'

As the B-17 rolled to a stop, the navigator said to the pilot, 'Good for you, Skip. You made it. Here comes our host to meet us.' As he said it, his eyes nearly popped out of his head. 'Boss,' he said, 'It ain't a host, it's a dame...Gee, they're all dames! Well, what do you know.'

The crew was accommodated at St. Merryn and were frequent visitors during the time need to repair 'Belle of the Bayous'. The next problem was how to get the aircraft airborne. It was one thing to make a forced landing in desperate circumstances, quite another to get in the air from a short runway. Jack Omohundro was a pilot. He had to try it.

The CO drove him the full length of the 'runway' and he made a mental note of every landmark. 'Yeah, I should be off the ground just about here, but if I'm not airborne by the time I get HERE...I guess I'll have had it, Ma'am.' And indeed he would, for if he didn't gain height soon after take-off, he'd be over the cliff and into the sea.

Hands were shaken, good-byes were said, and Jack Omohundro climbed aboard the 'Belle of the Bayous'. The engines were started and the aircraft slowly taxied to the end of the runway. The WRENS were all outside in a silent group. They saw the plane turn and heard the engines begin to roar as she started her run. The Petty Officer clenched her hands behind her until her nails dug into her palms. No one said a word. They could hardly breathe.

The aircraft gathered speed... halfway along the runway now

and the wheels still on the ground...three quarters of the runway used up and the wheels still refused to lift...then, so very slowly, she rose a little... a little higher... and he'd made it!

The sighs of relief were like escaping air from a bottle that had been corked for a long time.

Jack had not said his last goodbye... not yet. He turned, flying low over the little group still watching, dipped his wings in salute... and was gone.

[The above story was taken from an account of the incident written by the Petty Officer, Nora Bellot.]

Today, all that is left of the gunnery range at Treligga is the deteriorating Quadrant hut and the flagpole. But, if you walk the length of that one-time grass 'runway', like I did, you can only wonder at the courage of the pilot who landed a B-17 there, and then flew it off again.

However, as many of you reading this will know, and I have come to learn, the courage of the pilots and their crews knew no bounds during World War II. When their planes were shot up, or short of fuel, or both, they set them down anywhere there was a big enough piece of clear land; and if it wasn't big enough... they still set them down. On a beach, on a cliff top – and if they were lucky enough to walk away, they went back and did it all over again.

Whilst all these activities were taking place, there were kids like me. Playing in the cornfields, blissfully unaware of the drama unfolding overhead. I could pick the red poppies growing in amongst the golden corn, not knowing that some of you were looking down and thinking how good those fields of England looked on the homeward flight.

After the war Jack Omohundro stayed on in England, flying out of Gatwick for PanAM. Now retired, he lives with his wife in California, I am honoured that he writes to me from time to time.

Notes from the log of the 'Belle of the Bayous' 16 September 1943 – 1800.

Lt. Jack Omohundro in Flying Fortress #229749

Lt. Herbert L Barton – Navigator – '*Certainly is a nice place to make a forced landing.*'

Lt. John P Carson – Co-Pilot – '*Whew! I'm glad that's over.*'

T/Sgt. Gerald M Brown – Engineer/Gunner - '*No place better to land in England.*'

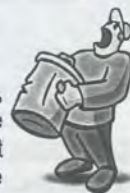
1st Lt. Robert R Matthews – Bombardier – '*A wonderful finish to a bad beginning.*'

S/Sgt Russel R Nelson – '*Landed here after completing 25 missions and am having a swell time.*'

IT CAN'T GET ANY WORSE

A C-141 was preparing for departure from Thule, Greenland, and they were waiting for the truck to arrive to pump out the aircraft's sewage holding tank. The pilot was in a hurry, but the truck was late in arriving, and the airman performing the job was extremely slow in getting the tank pumped out.

When the pilot berated the airman for his lack of speed and promised to have him punished, the airman responded: 'Sir, I have no stripes, it is twenty degrees below zero, I am stationed at Thule and I'm pumping sewage out of airplanes. Just WHAT are you going to do to punish me?'



Dear Ed

Enclosed please find the long awaited article 'RANAS NOWRA – THEN and NOW' following my visit to Nowra earlier this year.

All best wishes.

Jack Routley

RANAS NOWRA – THEN AND NOW

1948 - 1950

By Jack Routley

It was my great pleasure and privilege to have participated in the preparation of facilities and flying from RANAS Nowra from 1948 through 1950. Until accommodation was available at the airfield, we were housed at the Nowra Hotel with TLC provided by Mary and Wally Watson. We moved into our new home before the commissioning in August 1948. While the runways were non-operational, I flew at the RAAF Central Flying School, East Sale, Victoria. By June 1949 RANAS Nowra had runways, a control tower, communications, GCA, a YG beacon, and a Station Flight equipped with a trusty Wirraway. We were all set to take to the skies.

Early flying included communications testing, radar, GCA and YG beacon calibrations, familiarisation with the local area, aerobatics and exploitation of this reliable and friendly aircraft.

My records show only one Wirraway (side number A20-145). We probably had only one aircraft in Station Flight at that time. By October, a Sea Fury appears in the inventory, but only for a single flight – so it was either a 'bird of passage' – or the single flight was disastrous! Since I do not remember a disaster, it must have flown on its way to other operational pastures.

My recollections of the accommodation and facilities were that they were adequate and comfortable in a mostly Nissen Hut environment. I particularly remember one of the roadway intersections being named 'Rhode's Lane and Lane's Road'. This was in honour of Commander Rhodes RAN (Executive Officer) and Lane RN (Commander Air) – two of the pioneers of those early days. Runways and taxiways were well surfaced, lighting and communications worked successfully. The local area was a pleasant place to fly, with good landmarks – and the natives were friendly.

My tour of duty ended in February 1950. There was an enjoyable round of farewell parties to celebrate another memorable association with the Royal Australian Navy. In the haze of these departure rituals, I acquired an aircraft propeller (reasonably legal), had a clock mounted in the hub and presented it to the Wardroom as a token of friendship and gratitude for happy times as RANAS Nowra came into being. There was not time (or funds) to include an inscription. The clock was ceremoniously mounted above the bar.

AS TIME GOES BY – Time whistled along – I began a new career in the USA and had lost all contact with friends in both the Royal and Royal Australian Navies. When the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the commissioning of RANAS Nowra occurred, I was out of touch. Some considerable efforts to find me, by my good friend, 'Nat' Gould, were unsuccessful. I am very frustrated at having missed this important event. However, a decision to return to Australia this year brought me back into contact again,

thanks to the FAAA of Australia, some good work by John Arnold and the wonders of e-mail. There were joyful reunions with 'Nat', Bill Stevenson, 'Digger' Burke, Fred Randall and a few other survivors of those ancient times. Of all the friendships I have enjoyed during two long careers, the 'Australian Connections' have been the warmest, closest and most meaningful. Thanks for those happy relationships.

RANAS NOWRA ... 2000 – My impressions on returning to RANAS Nowra earlier this year are that this is now a first class base. Permanent and good-looking buildings have replaced most of the old huts. The airfield facilities look impressive, appropriate to the present role and aircraft (mostly helicopter) operations taking place there. Squadron offices look professional, runways, taxiways and launch pads seem in good shape. I couldn't find Rhode's Lane or Lane's Road, they seem to have vanished in the mists of time.

The Wardroom has undergone a transition to a better building – though said to be only used at lunchtime these days. A propeller with clock is mounted above the bar. This looks like the one presented in 1950, but since there is no inscription, it is not possible to be sure. If there are no other claimants, and there are no objections, I would like to have an inscription plate prepared and send it to be placed on the clock. Funds are now available. A 'feed-back' on this question would be most welcome.

The Museum is impressive and includes very well displayed aircraft, weapons, equipment, models and photographs depicting the history of Australian Naval Aviation. Affiliation with the USA Smithsonian Institute emphasises that this museum has the highest of credentials. The 'new' floor provides a polished appearance and brightness, adding to the effectiveness of the displays. Interactive exhibits planned should encourage participation, help underline the message and add viewer appeal. The museum is a testimony to the skills, creativity, and the many hours of spare time work contributed by enthusiastic volunteers over the years. They have helped bring this story to life. Congratulations to all concerned and every good wish for continued success.

FINALLY ... THANKS – It is a great pleasure for me to be in communication, once again, with the survivors of that wonderful group of Aussie Aviators I was fortunate enough to share squadron experiences with in days gone by. My sincere thanks to John Arnold and others who helped arrange this reunion – the chatter and jokes continued where they left off, 55 years ago. Including Damon Runyon-ese excerpts from the flying programme that 'Nat' reminded me of, for example:

'I am standing at the corner of Market and Pitt Street, when who should come by, but a bunch of Naval Aviators. Now normally I want no part of such characters as these. They are trouble. Especially since they are fresh from Mindy's Bar and are jovially throwing me a large 'Hallo', it would be very injudicious to ignore....etc. etc.

In conclusion, thanks to Mr Mark Clayton, Fred Randall and those who made my return to Nowra earlier this year so memorable. I hope to return someday to christen the clock inscription.

'If the world were a logical place, men would ride side-saddle.' *Rita Mae Brown*

RAAF BASE NOWRA

By Mrs Tempe Merewether (Helsham)

Eighteen months ago I had an opportunity to visit HMAS *Albatross*, the Naval Air base at Nowra. I took this trip mainly to see how much of the previous RAAF base was recognisable from when I was stationed there as a WAAF W/T from October 1942 to May 1944.

The only part of the station that I could relate to was the N-S airstrip, which I think is now much longer. The E-W airstrip I never got close to, this portion of the station was pretty well out of bounds to WAAF personnel.

In 1942 when I first arrived there with three other W/T operators (we were the first four in the signal office) it was a long drive, out along the main road south of Nowra [Princes Highway]. There was a shorter route along a dirt road [Albatross Road] past the HF/DF station that we didn't use very often.

The two huts allocated for the WAAFs, were made of unlined galvanised iron with no partitions, each housing about thirty girls. Our ablution block was some distance away – not very convenient in the middle of the night! Our mess, another unlined 'tin' hut, was also some distance away; to which we walked armed with mug, knife, fork and plates. In the summer, the temperature in this building, as with our accommodation hut, was unbearable and not conducive to eating hot stew.

There was smallish hospital, picture theatre, and quarters for

the officers and sergeants, which I believe, were quite comfortable. We had about a fifteen-minute walk from our hut to the Operations building which housed signals, cipher, meteorological and operations offices, all quite small and compact; nearby was the administration building. The hangars and other buildings were a long way further down the hill beside the airstrips.

There were two squadrons in residence when I arrived at Nowra. 73 Squadron, a reconnaissance unit equipped with Ansons; they were out on patrol every day, on wireless silence, unless they spotted something to report. This did occur one day when I was on watch, suddenly the whole office was rushing about, almost in panic. Years later, having heard of the number of ships that were sunk along the coast by submarines or mini-submersibles during those war years, the reaction was understandable.

The other was 100 Squadron, which was a training unit for Beaufort crews; they worked in association with a small naval establishment at Jervis Bay, learning the art of dropping torpedoes. Dummy 'cigars' were dropped from the aircraft at targets in Jervis Bay; these were recovered and returned to the Nowra base to be used again and again. Only once did I actually see a live torpedo. Many a time the Air Force personnel would hitch a ride to Jervis Bay sitting on the tops of the torpedoes, or in the 'U'-shaped frames designed to hold them, on the back of large trucks.

There was a small RAAF station at Jervis Bay where the signals personnel would be stationed for a month at a time. As I remember, the airstrip was small and not used very often.

There were the usual accidents at Nowra when aircraft crashed or had mishaps, sometimes killing the young men who flew in them. Life still went on, and there used to be all manner of visiting aircraft with VIPs coming and going. On one occasion, I managed to talk one of the pilots into taking me on a 'test flight', which was to be my first time in the air. They made me wind up the undercarriage, a task that Anson crew would remember as not being an easy one! That one flight gave me a love of flying which after all these years I have never lost.

Despite all the uncomfortable housing and the fairly basic food, we all had a good time and made many friends who are still part of my every day life. I would not have missed it for worlds.

I was posted from Nowra to Canberra – but that is another story.



A TALE of TWO TIGERS

A travelling circus had just arrived in Canberra when two of the tigers escaped. They decided that they had better split up in an effort to avoid capture. They agreed to meet in one week at a designated spot.

A week passed and one tiger arrived at this spot. He was a sight to behold, an ear was missing, his coat was mangy and filthy, and he stunk to high heaven.

After a while the other tiger showed up, a fine example of the species. Well fed, healthy, and a shiny fur coat.

The happy cat said to the sad cat, 'Man, you look like you've been to hell and back, what happened?' The sad cat replied, 'You won't believe this, I've had sticks and rocks thrown at me, people have tried to run over me, and someone even shot my ear off, all within the first hour. I've been running for my life ever since!'

The silence was broken when the sad cat asks, 'What's your story, you look like you've fared pretty well?'

'Well I did okay, I went around the city until I found these offices occupied by Defence. When I went in, I discovered that I could eat a whole Commodore a day and he wouldn't be missed!'

Aircraft in back yard for 30 years to return to RAAF home

Courtesy RAAF Museum Web site
Media release 23 March 1999

Mr Geoff Mallett is giving up his pride and joy – a 1948 Avro 707A research aircraft that for 32 years has been in the backyard of his Williamstown home.



The aircraft, WD280, which was the only 707A to be operated in the RAAF and the only complete example left in the world, is being moved to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook.

RAAF Museum Senior Curator, David Gardner, said that the aircraft will be lifted by crane from the backyard and then transported by road.

Mr Gardner said, 'The aircraft can only be transported on a Sunday, due to traffic restrictions. Ten different statutory authorities are involved in the move, including Vic Roads, Wyndham and Hobson's Bay City Councils, Optus and Telstra.

'In order for the aircraft to fit comfortably into the backyard, one of the windows on Mr Mallett's house has been reversed so that the probe (on the nose of the aircraft) actually sits inside the window pane. The move will be quite delicate because at the moment it's a very snug fit.

'Mr Mallett has spent a considerable amount of time maintaining the aircraft and protecting it from the elements, including construction of an outdoor shelter. This means that there is very little additional curatorial work that the Museum will need to do,' he said.

Mr Mallett said he was initially reluctant to give up the aircraft, but was pleased that it was to be retained in Australia. He pointed out that he had purchased the 707A with the intention of eventually swapping it for a Mustang or Spitfire.



WD280 was constructed in the United Kingdom and transferred to the RAAF in March 1956. It completed approximately 486 hours of flying, 203 of these in Australia, mostly for aerodynamic research and had its last flight in 1963. Mr Mallett purchased the aircraft at a Department of Supply auction in 1967.

'I dropped a lot of hints, but unfortunately, it never came to fruition,' he said.

'The backyard seemed like the most convenient place to put the aircraft at the time. I'm sure my wife will put the space to good use now, as she's a very keen gardener.

Perhaps the person most looking forward to the arrival of WD280 at Point Cook, is Mr Randall Green, a Werribee resident who piloted the aircraft between 1957 and 1959. Mr Green said that the low speed, high incidence test flying done in the 707A from Laverton provided very valuable information.

'The 707A was a scale version of the Vulcan, so we were collecting a lot of research and development information for that aircraft. The 707A was also the RAAF's first Delta wing aircraft, so it was a very different flying experience from any other aircraft,' Mr Green said.

Of the aircraft's current condition, Mr Green said. 'It looks just like the day I last flew it, as though you could jump in, press the starter and fly it again.'

'I think it's a real achievement that we've been able to retain the aircraft here. It is a very valuable asset for the RAAF Museum and will help form a crucial part of the Museum's collection.

The aircraft will be prepared for static display at the RAAF Museum, Point Cook.

In April 1999, the RAAF Museum undertook to move the aircraft by road. Apart from consultation with the authorities as mentioned above, about 70 neighbours and the media were also consulted to make the move as seamless as possible. Apart from a couple of broken tiles on Mr Mallett's roof, there was no damage to his property.

[So now you know what happened to the AVRO 707A that shipped aboard the *Melbourne* all those years ago. Ed]

Naval Tradition – The grizzled old Ordnance Chief was really chuffed when his grandson joined the Navy and finished up serving alongside him. He taught his grandson all the ropes about life in the Senior Service.

One day, whilst chatting to his grandson, he suggested to him that if he wanted to live a really long life, the secret was to sprinkle a little gunpowder on his porridge every morning.

The grandson did this religiously and he lived to the age 103.

When he died, he left behind 14 children, 28 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren and a four-metre hole in the wall of the crematorium.

Communication under pressure – A man spoke frantically into the phone; 'My wife is pregnant and her contractions are only two minutes apart!' 'Is this her first child?' the doctor asked. 'No you idiot!' the man shouted down the phone. 'I'm her bloody husband!'

'The best that science can devise and that naval organisation can provide, must be regarded only as an aid, and never as a substitute for good seamanship.'

THE FELIXSTOWE F2A FLYING BOAT.

By John Goble

Readers who noted in *Slipstream*, July 2000, the beautiful model of this famous flying boat which has been presented to the Museum, may be interested in a short history.

The origins of the Felixstowe can be traced back to a flying boat designed by Glenn Curtiss at Hammondsport, N.Y. He had been financed by a wealthy businessman, Rodman Wanamaker, to build an aircraft to take up the challenge of £10,000 offered by the London Daily Mail in 1913, for the first trans-Atlantic flight.

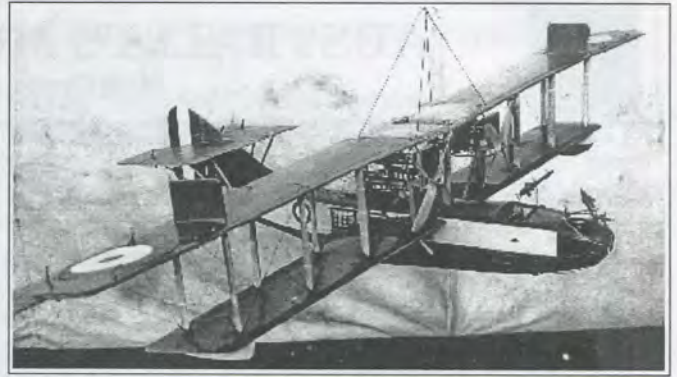
The pilots chosen for this attempt were Lieutenant John C Porte, RN (Rtd) and Lieutenant J H Towers, USN. Porte had been invalided from the RN due to tuberculosis in 1911, but this did not stop his enthusiasm for aviation and he was well known as an early flyer. He was also associated with a company which had the British rights to build Curtiss flying boats. Towers became a Rear Admiral in the USN and during WW2 set up the immense naval aviation training organisation known as the 'Towers Scheme'.

The completed aircraft was named 'America' however, WW1 prevented any attempt to win the prize. Porte returned to England and was accepted into the RNAS, and the aircraft was bought by the Admiralty. It became the forerunner of the Curtiss H4 flying boat. Following trials more Curtiss boats were ordered culminating in an order for the larger Curtiss H12. These latter being known in service as the 'Large America' while the smaller one became, fairly logically, the 'Small America'.

As WW1 progressed the flying boats were operated from air stations along the east coast of Britain, the most well known being Felixstowe (Suffolk) and Great Yarmouth (Norfolk). In September 1915, Porte was appointed as Squadron Commander at Felixstowe.

Following operational experience it became evident that the hull design of the Americas had a number of shortcomings in the rough waters off the east coast. It was also lightly gunned for its size. Even so this did not prevent them operating when conditions were suitable. The most famous H12 was No. 8666 which became the first flying boat to shoot down a Zeppelin (L22) on 14 May 1917. Ten days later it attacked another off Terschelling Island. Other accounts of its activities would take more space than is available here. The arrival of the long range flying boats in the Heligoland Bight caused a change in the Zeppelin's operations, as they were forced to higher altitudes which made their reconnaissance task more difficult due to cloud cover and reduced visibility.

Flying boat reconnaissance and patrols in the Heligoland Bight also resulted in many duels with German seaplanes.



At Felixstowe, Porte progressed the design of the Curtiss Large America with a new hull, including a higher tail assembly and additional planing step, together with provision for 'side gunners' each side in the rear fuselage, and installation of RR Eagle 375HP engines.

The Large Americas and the Felixstowe flying boats flew antisubmarine patrols in a pattern known as the 'Spider's Web' in the southern part of the North Sea until the end of hostilities. They were also used as 'big brother' escort (and aircrew rescue) for long range DH4's into the Heligoland Bight.

To make maximum use of the flying boats versatility and extend its time on task at long range, Porte built special lighters on which to tow the aircraft closer to their operating area. When ready to launch, the lighters would be 'flooded down' so that when the flying boat was clear it could take off on its patrol. A lighter was later modified to fly off Camel aircraft; one of which was to later engage and destroy Zeppelin (L53) off Borkum Island on 11 August 1918.

The Felixstowe series of flying boats ended with the immediate post war version known as the F5. The F2a's remained in service until 1921 when they were struck off charge. Some 15 of the F5 were sold to Japan for the Naval Air Service. So far as it is known none of these remarkable Felixstowe flying boats have survived.

Wing Commander Porte died in 1919 aged 36. The official historian for the RAF said of him: '*The shortest possible list of those who served the country in its hour of need would have to include his name*'.

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FEELING SMARTER

A herd of buffalo can move only as fast as the slowest buffalo, and when the herd is hunted, it is the slowest and the weakest at the back that are killed first.

This natural selection is good for the herd as a whole, because the general speed and health of the whole group keeps improving by the regular attrition of the weakest members.

In much the same way, the human brain can only operate as fast as the slowest brain cells.

Excessive intake of alcohol, we all know, kill brain cells, but naturally it attacks the slowest and weakest brain cells first. In this way, regular consumption of beer eliminates the weaker brain cells, making the brain a faster and more efficient machine.

That's why you always feel smarter after a few beers.



AUSTRALIA'S MUSEUM of FLIGHT

Mark Clayton – Museum Director

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport the Hon. Peter Anderson MP officially opened the museum's new Stage Four "Federation Wing" on Saturday, September 9th. Local, State and Federal politicians, sponsors and Foundation governors were among the invited guests who attended the opening ceremony which was, appropriately, held on the new shop mezzanine overlooking both the main display hangar and the airfield.

Construction of the new \$1.3 million facility was supported by the Commonwealth's Federation Fund. The new two-storey Wing includes dedicated archival, theatre, collection storage, administrative and exhibition facilities which should significantly enhance the museum's growing stature as a cultural heritage institution of national significance.

This importance was reinforced by the Deputy Prime Minister who used the occasion to also announce the gift to the Foundation of the Bob Wills

Collection which is the country's largest privately owned aviation archive and library. The acquisition of the Wills Collection, which dwarfs the museum's own archival and library holdings, is particularly timely and significant given that its content relates to both Australian military and civil aviation. As previously mentioned the museum has recently broadened its collecting and exhibition interests - and name - to encompass all aspects of Australian aviation, both historical and contemporary. Included in the collection are more than 10,000 photographic images.



Captain John Wood, CO HMAS Albatross, with Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, open the new wing of the AMoF.

Photo by: ABPH Richard Prideaux
HMAS Albatross Phot. Section



WAITING TO BE CATALOGUED – Part of the 'Bob Wills Collection' stacked in the new Archives Section of the Australian Museum of Flight

Photo courtesy Peregrine

Though accompanied by little fanfare the Federation Wing opening was also used to proclaim the Foundation's new 100-seat theatre as the *Admiral Robertson Auditorium* in honour of that visionary gentlemen who has done so much to help develop our institution. A small honour but nonetheless, one that was richly deserved. I feel the Association's National President Admiral Neil Ralph also deserves special mention in this regard for having shouldered the Stage Four management task burden from start to finish again, without fuss or fanfare.

Though not evident to the public at the time of the Federation Wing opening, construction of the new hangar mezzanine walkway was also commenced with completion scheduled for November 2000. This substantial elevated structure will extend from the restaurant level almost 2/3 the length of the main hangar and will include a three-storey viewing tower. Many of the display aircraft - including the C-47 - will have to be displaced during this construction phase which will inevitably result in still more disruption, public inconvenience and extra work for our staff and volunteers who I commend for having endured so much, thus far.

Work on the next stage (Five) exhibition redevelopment programme is also gathering momentum with a view towards having this programme completed by mid-2001. Significantly both the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and the Museum of Victoria have agreed to place their surplus aeronautical collection items on long term display here at the Museum Of Flight. These strategic partnerships provide further evidence of the museum's growing professional esteem.

The Federation Wing opening here on September 9th coincided with the Museum's Millennium Airshow, the first of what could yet be a succession of large annual airshows culminating in a 2003 Centenary of Flight extravaganza. The event proved enormously successful, so much so that the traffic was reportedly delayed for up to an hour along Albatross Road. You can be assured though that we'll be taking steps to avoid any further inconveniences of this kind in the future. The museum recorded its highest ever airshow attendance despite the fact that the weather was marginal and, that 80% of our participating aircraft had to cancel. As ever though the Navy, the RAAF's Roulettes and the RNZAF's Skyhawks put on a stunning show which was well complemented by a number of entertaining handling and aerobatic performances. Our thanks also to the volunteers, staff and reservists who worked so hard not only on the day but also, in the weeks beforehand. Encouraged by this recent experience we are now looking to hold just the two airshows in 2001 (April 22 and October 7th) with the latter being a large sponsored event.

Another notable recent development has been the award of a \$10,000 grant to allow for archival quality copy negatives to be made from each of our (several thousand) B&W photographic prints. This year-long project is expected to commence shortly, assisted by the 'acquisition' of the Photographic Section's mobile darkroom.



The next edition of *Slipstream* 'should' be ready for distribution in January 2001

The deadline is 15 DECEMBER

817 Squadron 50th Anniversary Year and Event

By Commander David Gwyther, RAN
Commanding Officer 817 Squadron



I regret that I must inform you that the '50th Event' we had planned on 25 November will not occur.

We are as disappointed as I am sure you are. However our commitment to supporting the Olympics has consumed our spare capacity and we have had insufficient spare time and personnel to commit to getting the Event finalised. This is our second attempt to get the Event off the ground, the first time around supporting the efforts in East Timor consumed our efforts.

It has been a busy 50th anniversary year. We kicked off the Squadron's birthday with a five aircraft formation (lead by 'Shark 50' in 50th anniversary livery) over Wollongong, Sydney, Canberra and all points in between in March. In April we went to Goolwa with three aircraft where we exercised our right of Freedom of Entry and conducted a fly-past over the ANZAC Day parade in Adelaide celebrating the Squadron's birthday in our adopted home port. We also participated in the Korean War memorial fly-past in Canberra in April which was fitting as Korea was 817's first operational deployment as an RAN Squadron and was where we achieved our first battle honours. In the first seven months of 2000 we also supported SUCCESS flight and the first phase of LPA First of Class Flight Trials all whilst training a record number of aircrew.

The Squadron remains heavily committed for the rest of the year with our Olympics commitment running through until the end of October. We are supporting LPA FOCFT phase two in MANOORA as we speak. We are commencing operational flying training for three junior aviators in October. Next year we are planning on SUCCESS flight returning to sea for the first half of 2001 and several embarkations in the LPAs next year including a major commitment to Exercise Tandem Thrust mid year. Basically we are flat out!

We have celebrated the Squadron's proud history all year. Whilst we would still like to have an Event of some kind it will be a difficult task within the program that we have. I would like to publicly acknowledge the efforts of the Squadron personnel who put a lot of effort into the Event and have left us with some valuable lessons learnt and an excellent business plan with which to go forward should the opportunity present itself. In particular 817 XO LCDR Geoff Woods, WOATV Tim Standen, POATA Nobby Clarke and Mrs Liz Coates made significant sacrifice. I also appreciate the interest from past Fleet Air Arm members in the Event.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the members of 817 Squadron. They have achieved great deal over the past 15 months under a high workload within limited resources, I very much appreciate their efforts. The Squadron has a busy and exciting future carrying on the great work of those who have gone before us.

Slipstream promotes another reunion...

The photograph shows the Griffon engine – now cleaned up somewhat – which featured in the article 'Barnacle Bill Griffon' in the January 2000 edition of *Slipstream*.

After being submerged for fifty-two years in Port Phillip Bay, it has not only promoted local interest as it now displays in the Australian Museum of Flight, it has also revealed several old friendships of that era.

The two 'bods', Gordon Cansdale (ex- AM (E)) and Roy Allman (ex-LEM (A)), who stand there admiring the 'relic', are both ex-members of 812 Squadron (Firefly Mk1). Whilst serving aboard HMS *Theseus*, they watched the two aircraft (PP589 and TW677) as they locked together and plunged into the bay.



Roy (Pictured on the left) later joined the 20th CAG and served three years on loan to the Royal Australian Navy before returning to the Royal Navy. Gordon finished his allotted time in the RN and migrated to Adelaide in 1954, then to Liverpool and then Kenthurst, where he now resides.

The secretary of the 14th CAG reunion has received the *Slipstream* and renewed the interest of some of that original group; letters and e-mails are flowing swiftly and frequently as more names come to light. Thanks to the large circulation of this great magazine, it enables many Service friendships to be renewed.

Gordon is on his way to England and is taking the original photograph to add to the 14th CAG records and archives during their reunion in October this year.



The Flagpole

A group of 'Subbies' were given the assignment to measure the height of a flagpole. So they go out to the flagpole with a ladder and tape measure. In no time at all, they are falling off the ladder and dropping the tape, the whole exercise is turning into a real fiasco.

Finally, the 'Buffer' comes along to see what they are trying to do. He then calls over a couple of his 'troops' who quickly lower the flagpole and lay it out flat. Taking the tape measure he measures it from end to end, gives the measurement to one of the 'Subbies' and walks away.

After the Chief has gone, one 'Sub' turns to another and laughs, 'Isn't that just like a bloody Chief? We're looking for the height and he gives us the length!'

MOMENTS IN TIME



YEAR 1949 – NAR CLASSES 14/15

Rear L-R: Bill Gault – George Harvey – Arthur Jarratt – ‘Colonel’ Coombes – Max Altham – Jim Napier – Mick Bloomfield – Ernie Harrison – ‘Scotchie’ McMillan – Jack Leiske – Keith Harris
 Front L-R: ‘Bungy’ Williams – ‘Rusty’ Brooks – Jim Parsons – ‘Shorty’ Wilcox – Mr Crozer – Kevin Mansfield – Bob Manners – Ron Hayes – Ron Cole
 Note the Training School Spitfire in the background. *Photo courtesy Max Altham*



KURE 1953

L-R: Syd Bull – ‘Jock’ Wylie (RN Loan) – ‘Pincher’ Martin – Harry Gibson – ‘Morrie’ Green and two charming hostesses
Photo courtesy Bob Cronin



HMAS SYDNEY LEAVING SYDNEY HARBOUR BOUND FOR KOREA

‘Second trip 1953-54’ - *Photo courtesy Clem Conlan*



18 MARCH 1955 - HMAS SYDNEY IN MELBOURNE

Return to the ship after flood relief duties
 L-R: SBLT A.G. Batten – LT N. Macmillan – LT J. O’Farrell – CPO Observer D. Giles. *Photo courtesy ‘The Age’*



1949 – MOTOR TRANSPORT SCHOOL – RANAS NOWRA

L-R Back Row: Boyer Ewer – P. Wood – L.J. Eddy – Ron Forrest
 L-R Centre Row: PO Lowte – Mr Davies – PO Barnes
 L-R Front Row: W. Castles – L. McKiernan *Photo courtesy Ron Forrest*

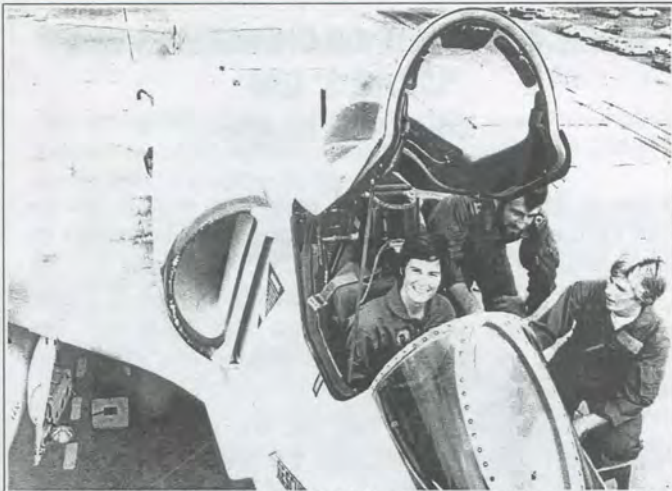


16 OCT 1964 – AIRCREW BRIEFING – ‘MELBOURNE’

L-R Front: LTCDR Neil Ralph – LTCDR ‘Toz’ Dadswell – LT Alistair Davies-Graham. *Photo courtesy ‘The Age’*



11 SEPTEMBER 1963 – 'CHOPPER' BRIEFING – 'MELBOURNE'
 L-R: LT R. Lea (Pilot) and LT G. R. Smith (Observer) being briefed by
 Commander George Jude on the area to be searched by Wessex
 helicopters during Exercise Carbine. Photo courtesy 'The Age'



17 MARCH 1980 – RAN PILOT AND U.S.A JET 'JOCKETTES'
 RAN LT Allen 'Nobby' Clark shows two US pilots, LT Lucy Young (left) and
 LT Andrea Rice, the layout of an Australian A4 Skyhawk on the deck of
 HMAS Melbourne. Taken during RIMPAC 80 off Hawaii. Photo 'The Age'



PETTY OFFICER AIR MECHANICS (AE) COURSE NUMBER 1/ 1973
 L-R: R.Hunt – D. Platt – J. Miller – A. Wilson – J. Waskiw – R. Kinross – G. MacKenzie – W. Callingham
 G. Reid – D. Parkinson – B. Fisher – D. March – B. Edwards – P. Keeley – D. Gatfield – D. Roberts
 Photo courtesy Peregrine



RANAS NOWRA 1955
 Lord Louis Mountbatten and Captain Fanshawe



1961 – HERVEY BAY
 Ian Henderson aboard Melbourne
 Photo courtesy 'Spike' Jones



What are the details? →

WHEN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS WAS 'VICAR'S' GIN

By John Buchanan (Snodgrass)

Kangaroo Valley RSL Sub-Branch would have boasted few ex-RAN members fifty years ago. That was possibly the reason for the secretary of that establishment addressing a letter to, 'The Captain, HAMS *Albatross*'. It was an invitation for the Air Station to be represented as the Sub-Branch Gala Xmas Ball. The invitation was for two officers and three ratings **OF GOOD REPUTE** to attend.

As RANAS Nowra's pig farm had not, at that time, been established, Captain Beale accepted the 'HAMS' as a slip rather than a pun. He was more concerned by the 'good repute' requirement! A prudent man, he gave the C of E Chaplain the honour of representing the Air Station and the responsibility for selecting another officer and three sailors of good repute.

Fighter pilot, 'Dicky' Bird was chosen by the Chaplain. Ideal as driver of the Land Rover to negotiate the steep and narrow winding track over the Cambewarra Range with its horseshoe bends... at night!

The three sailors? No problem. As OIC of the Station library, selection of the duty-watch librarians had been his prerogative. Accordingly, those three Naval Airmen he'd hand picked, Noel 'Bluey' Peacock, Geoff 'GJ' Strickland, and John 'Snoddy' Snodgrass, nicely filled the 'Ball' bill.

On their leader's advice, overcoats were worn to combat the cool night air in their breezy vehicle. Although 'twas Xmas, there was little conversation during the crossing of Cambewarra Range. 'Dicky' performed his dextrous 'terratics' over the tortuous route, keeping his passengers on the edge of their seats, mouths open! Coats veiled the trembling.

What a welcome sight was that huge, timber, Kangaroo Valley dance hall! It was ablaze with lights and decorated with coloured streamers and balloons. Countless floral displays surrounded linen covered trestles, groaning under the weight of an array of home-made gastronomic delights. From a group of happy revellers, the Sub-Section President materialised to greet and welcome the Senior Service.

This affable, ramrod 'digger', showed them where to hang their coats on the verandah, then with true country hospitality, he suggested a few festive beers in the RSL across the road...**for the officers!** Our sailors of good repute were thus left marooned in an unfamiliar land of plenty. Plenty of friendly locals, plenty of good country music, plenty of scrumptious 'scran', but totally devoid of any form of alcoholic comfort!

Lots of lovely girls seated in gossiping groups around a very adequate dance floor were, it seemed, heeding parental advice. When approached by any of the sailors (of good repute) each would plead exhaustion necessitating she 'sit this one out'. If but

one of our gallant lads could succeed with just one of those delicate beauties, the barricades might fall and the tenor of the evening might change. Oh for a tot of 'Bundy' rum!

Those fortunate officers had been imbibing at no expense at the RSL for a long hour, when 'Snoddy' announced that he'd seen the Chaplain put a bottle of something in his coat pocket at Nowra. It might have been Scotch! It might still be out there on the verandah...*Lead us not into temptation...*

'It's Gin!' said 'Blue'. 'The seal's broken but it appears pretty full'. It was agreed that one decent swig each, then top it up with sweet mountain water and no one would know.

The warmth of the raw spirit did wonders for their morale. Had those officers returned after a reasonable time all would have been well, but... It was just after the lads' second visit to the verandah, that 'GJ' made the breakthrough. What a fine demonstration of the 'quick-step' he and his energetic partner gave the applauding country folk! The next dance saw three partnered sailors gracing that 'Pops' treated floor.

It was after their third sortie to the Gin bottle that our lads observed the return of the President and his very cheerful naval officer companions. 'Now', the merry Chaplain said, 'it's time for you to have one on us!'

They moved to a dark corner of the verandah while the three sailors looked on in trepidation. The Chaplain now had the bottle and a small silver cup, which he filled and handed to 'Ramrod'. 'Gentlemen, I salute the Fleet Air Arm', he pronounced as he took a deep draught. Immediately his expression changed to one of horror and he blurted out, 'What in hell is this bloody stuff?'

Enough to relate that the Chaplain was seriously embarrassed by this diplomatic *faux pas*; and he did avail of a remarkably expressive and colourfully naval vocabulary some little time later, whilst discussing the matter with his subordinate librarians...of, now arguably, good repute.

One consequence of the calamity was a programme amendment. The time for the group's return to *Albatross* was brought forward considerably. Another was in the total absence of conversation during the return journey, even though 'Dicky' drove with extreme caution all the way. It didn't really seem like Christmas

Postscript: This matter was never again referred to in any conversation between the Chaplain and his librarians. He was a very forgiving person. However, during 1951, our three heroes were, one by one, re-rostered to the general duty watch list wherein the various duties demanded no specific character references.

All three are now septuagenarian returned veterans and are of impeccable repute... *I think.*



A SPECIAL NOTE FOR THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE UK ARMED FORCES

I have received a letter from a firm of Solicitors in Bristol, UK, entitled, **H M Armed Forces Pension Action Group.**

Included were notes as to eligibility to take action against the Government (specifically, The Minister of Defence, The Minister of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Minister for the Civil Service) in respect of time served in the Armed Forces where no pension rights were said to accrue.

Should this information be of interest to any of the readers, please send me a self addressed, stamped envelope. *Editor*

Welfare Report

*Compiled in conjunction with the
Regular Defence Force Welfare Association*

Good things come to those who wait; and Mr David Murray, Assistant Director Compensation within the Department of Veterans' Affairs, has issued a directive concerning procedures under Section 31 of the Veterans' Entitlement Act (VEA).

Clear instructions have been a long time coming and that section of the Act was open to interpretation.

Mr Murray is seeking dissemination of the advice contained in 'the directive' to all clubs, sub-branches and outposts (as he puts it). Copies of the letter can be made available.

Section 31 of the VEA is the first avenue of appeal, and is important to all Pension Officers when they assist a client.

Just a reminder to persons who are claiming a disability as Service Related. Any illness, injury or disability has a relevant Statement of Principle (SOP). These are determined by the Repatriation Medical Authority and are the only accepted 'umpire' in determining eligibility.

More later.

Sabre

ROYAL NAVY - July 2000

From a Sunday newspaper article headed - 'Gays off to sea'

Admitting homosexuals into Britain's Royal Navy has caused fewer problems than sending the first Wrens to sea ten years ago, a senior officer said yesterday.

Rear Admiral James Burgnell-Nugent, who is assistant Chief of Navy Staff, the Navy's second most senior position, said that the move has caused less difficulty than many of his colleagues had expected.

The Armed Forces were forced to drop their ban on homosexuals last January after a ruling against Britain at the European Court of Human Rights.

Admiral Burnell-Nugent, 50, a married father of four, said that the ruling had raised some issues over accommodation aboard ships but otherwise had not caused serious problems.

'I think it has caused less of a ruffle than the issue of women at sea did ten years ago,' he said.

'That is not to say it is not without impact.'

* * * * *

The above article brought to mind the following story:

The Captain was reviewing the ship's company at Divisions one day when he noticed a sailor with an obvious sign of sexual arousal. Calling over the Regulating Chief, he ordered him to arrange a week's compassionate leave for the sailor.

At Divisions a month later, the same thing happened with the same man. Once again he was granted a week's compassionate leave.

At Divisions another month later, the same thing happened again. 'Chief!' roared the Captain. 'Haven't we given this man two compassionate home leaves?'

'Yes. Sir!' the Chief responded.

'Then what the hell is his problem, Chief?'

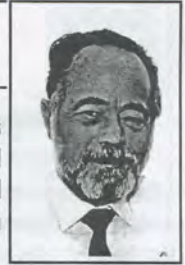
The Chief salutes and says, 'Sir. It's you he's fond of.'

POLITICALLY CORRECT SANTA by Harvey Ehrlich

'Twas the night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck...
How to live in a world that's politically correct?
His workers no longer would answer to 'Elves',
'Vertically Challenged' they were calling themselves.
And labour conditions at the North Pole
Were alleged by the union to stifle the soul.
Four reindeer had vanished, without much propriety,
Released to the wilds by the Humane Society.
And equal employment had made it quite clear
That Santa had better not use just reindeer.
So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid,
Were replaced with four pigs, and you know that looked stupid!
The runners had been removed from his sleigh;
The ruts were termed dangerous by the E.P.A.
And people had started to call for the cops
When they heard sleigh noises on their roof-tops.
The smoke from his pipe had his workers quite frightened.
His fur-trimmed red suit was called 'unenlightened'.
And to show you the strangeness of life's ebbs and flows,
Rudolf was suing over unauthorised use of his nose
And had gone on TV, in front of the nation,
Demanding millions in over-due compensation.
So, half of the reindeer were gone; and his wife,
Who suddenly said she'd enough of this life,
Joined a self-help group and left in a whiz,
Demanding from now on her title was Ms.
And as for the gifts, why, he'd ne'er had a notion
That making a choice could cause so much commotion.
Nothing of leather, nothing of fur,
Which meant nothing for him - and nothing for her.
Nothing that might be construed to pollute.
Nothing to aim. Nothing to shoot.
Nothing that clamoured or made lots of noise.
Nothing for just girls - or for just boys.
Nothing that claimed to be gender specific.
Nothing that's warlike or non-pacific.
No candy or sweets ...they were bad for the tooth.
Nothing that seemed to embellish a truth.
And fairy tales, while not yet forbidden,
Were like Ken and Barbie, better off hidden.
For they raised the hackles of those psychological
Who claimed the only good gift was one ecological.
No baseball, no football ...someone could get hurt;
Besides, playing sport exposed kids to dirt.
Dolls were said to be sexist, and should be passé;
And Nintendo would rot your entire brain away.
So Santa just stood there, dishevelled, perplexed;
He just could not figure out what to do next.
He tried to be merry, he tried to be gay,
But you've got to be careful with that word today.
His sack was quite empty, limp to the ground;
Nothing fully acceptable was to be found.
Something special was needed, a gift that he might
Give to all without angering the left or the right.
A gift that would satisfy, with no indecision,
Each group of people, every religion;
Every ethnicity, every hue,
Everyone everywhere... even you.



NATIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT



By the time you are reading this, the Annual General Meeting will have been and gone, and for some of you this report will be history. The Agenda contains all the standard items including the state of our finances, Capitation and Membership fees and Slipstream costs, which have increased slightly as a result of the Goods and Services Tax.

Both New South Wales and the West Australian Divisions have put forward Notices of Motion for discussion that are, in brief:

From NSW Division – That the decision taken at the last AGM i.e., 'that the annual meeting of the Federal Council and each Reunion be held in Nowra' be overturned and the Association revert to rotating the meetings / reunions between each of the Divisions / State with the host Division being supported with a repayable loan from the National Executive to cover the costs.

From WA Division – That the Constitution be amended to allow for the expansion of the National Executive which at present consists of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary, to include a representative from each Division. In acknowledging the tyranny of distance, with meetings of the

Executive presently being held in Nowra, it is envisaged that the more distant Divisions will appoint a proxy from the local members who will report back to the Division and vote on decisions in accord with that Division's wishes.

The other major item for discussion will be the President's suggestion that was first floated in the last edition i.e. 'that we consider deferring the 2001 Reunion which at present is planned for October, until March 2003, in order to provide to more members the opportunity to witness, and possibly participate in, the Air Pageant to be held at Albatross celebrating the 'Centenary of Flight'.

There will be more on these items in my next report.

A reminder to all members – If you change your address, **PLEASE** inform your Divisional Secretary who will pass the details on to me. The Editor does NOT look after the distribution of *Slipstream*. Failure to comply with this request will result in non-delivery of your copy.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to wish 'you and yours' all the best for Christmas and for 2001.

Gordon Edgecombe

A.C.T. DIVISION



Having emerged from the throes of winter, we are now enjoying the new colours of spring, albeit with a fair share of rain which has the countryside looking lush once more. The winter was one of the coldest on record and caused a high incidence of the 'flu and severe upper respiratory complaints.

The social programme has been nil these past few months but we are looking forward to a Barbecue in conjunction with the Naval Association shortly and will wind up the year with our Annual Christmas Cocktail Party on November 26th.

We were very saddened to learn of the passing of a former associate member in Phyll Rodgers, wife of Des Rodgers. This occurred in Western Australia and at present we are not sure of Des' present whereabouts. We all extend our deepest sympathy

to Des on this sad occasion and we will certainly miss Phyll's cheerful additions to all of our previous social occasions. She was a great supporter of the Association.

We are sorry that Richard Scott and Vicki have now departed the local scene for warmer climes on the Sunshine Coast. We thank them both for their support of our Association and wish them well in their new ventures.

Sadly, that is all the news for this time. As Xmas is fast approaching, all that remains is to wish all members from near and far a very happy festive season and that 2001 fulfils all of your expectations.

Brian Treloar

TASMANIAN DIVISION



Not much news this time, but we are still alive and well. Our Annual General Meeting was recently held in Launceston, some apologies were tendered for various reasons, but we still had the usual good attendance.

As Geoff Singline was standing down, Barry Simpson put up his hand for election as President. As you may remember, Barry was our President when the Tasmanian Division first commenced. All members would like to thank Geoff Singline for his time at the wheel, a job well done! There are no other changes to the committee – as you can see, I'm still the scribe.

Whilst browsing through the last edition of *Slipstream*, I noticed some names and faces from a long way back, especially John Ahern's photograph of Gilbert Nixon on his motor bike at

Nirimba. I have an almost identical copy of that print, along with some others of Class E-13 Engines. We were the first Technical Training School class to go there and finish our training after *Nirimba* commissioned.

Who could forget the walk on a hot day that 'liberty-men' had to make from the Guard House gate to the Quakers Hill railway station.

On Page 18, the photograph of the 'Guard of Honour – Man O' War Steps – Sydney', showing 'Roger' Raddatz on the right; we don't look like that any more, mate!

Anyhow, back to the Tasmanian News. Barry and Roma Simpson have returned to the 'Island State' after travelling many

thousands of kilometres and going through some tyres on the 'main island'. From his 'dits', they had an excellent cruise and looking for some more of the same. He met up with some of our old mates from our 1951-57 era and brought back some photos. Man! What forty-odd years have done to us!

In the last edition, the Editor noted that this is the last issue

before Christmas. He sure got that right! Where has the year gone? The only thing we seem to achieve is getting older, greyer – or balder.

In conclusion... all of us 'down here', wish everyone 'up there', a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Matt 'Jake' Jacobs

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION

We have been in hibernation for the last three months. At times we were convinced that we were living in Tasmania. However Spring is here and already the 'Mexicans' (derogatory term used by 'banana benders' describing southerners who can afford Queensland holidays) are filtering back with tanned skins. Our most notable is John Saywell, who claims that for three months of the year one has to spend it north of the Tropic of Capricorn. John is our Vice President and is a good envoy for us during his travels.

There have been some health hiccups for one or two members, but generally we are a well-kept bunch. Mary Widger has been on the sick-list, fortunately she is now 'back on top' and it's hoped that she stays that way. Dinsley Cooper had a few weeks in the sickbay and also Jack Kreig, whose problem was self-inflicted. He was involved in the most dangerous of all sports, lawn bowls, and foolishly attempted to pick up his bowl unaided, the result being five weeks out of action with disintegrated disks.

Jack bravely managed to represent us at the Korean memorial service which is held annually at Hindmarsh. We are getting a bit 'thin' with Korean veterans. Jack, Ron Richards and, I think, Bill Barry, is just about it. Ron would have also attended but he has his hands full these days attending to his wife, Marge, who is pretty well invalidated.

Our membership numbers have swollen. We welcome Henry de Boeck, George Turner, Brian Thomson, and a transfer from NSW, Paul Sheils. We have yet to formally sign Paul up but he is one of us. Henry and George were RN, George spending two years on loan in the good old 20th CAG days. Brian served from 1973 to 1995 so he is probably still trying to settle into 'civvy-street'. Our immediate past President, Peter Coulson, has opted out of life, and with his wife Sandy, who I believe is still in the Navy, has gone to live in Mt. Gambier. We wish them well.

The big event for the quarter was an event organised to celebrate the 52nd Anniversary of the commissioning of the Fleet Air Arm. John Siebert was the driving force behind this excellent idea and it turned out to be good fun. We held the celebration in the 'Adelaide Room' of the Naval Association headquarters in Hutt Street, it was a real trip down memory lane for us all. The majority were from the early days with a mix of younger members to bring about the perfect balance. Henry de Boeck, although never a serving member in the RAN, remembered the brashness of the 'Aussie' trainees at Siskin as the RN tried to get the likes of John Ferguson into aviation mode. We were also politically incorrect and restricted the function to ex-FAA members, or those closely associated with the FAA. CMDR Robin Pennock RAN (Rtd), who was at one time the Executive Officer of *Albatross*, attended. He

claimed he did not feel out of place being amidst such a group of uncouth 'birdies'.

That's about it for the time being. Dinsley Cooper has already planned our Xmas festivities. We all wish every Division a good end to the year 2000 and hope the next, 2001 brings good tidings.

Barry Lord – Secretary



Skyhawk pilots at the 52nd Anniversary get together
L-R: Peter Clarke – Kym Baddams – John Hamilton – John Siebert
Photographs courtesy Barry Lord



Left to Right: Henry de Boeck (RN) – Brain Gale (RN) – John Berry – Mary Widger – George Turner (RN) - John Saywell – 'Dooley' Lord – Richard Widger (RN) - Mary Rayner (RN) - Henry Young and John Ferguson

VICTORIA DIVISION

On behalf of the Committee and Members of the Division, greetings and best wishes to all the readers.

The Division held its annual FAA Anniversary Dinner on Saturday 26 August at the Victorian Reception Centre, this being a part of the Harbour View Motor Inn Complex at Hastings. Forty-two members attended, with the majority opting to stay overnight, the main reason being that we are all getting older and tiring easily. It had nothing to do with the dinner or the amount of Port being consumed in my room at 0245 by some of the members – who shall remain nameless. There were quite a few looking quite seedy later on in the morning – come to think of it, I don't recall seeing Sue Litchfield at breakfast!

All jokes aside, the dinner was very well accepted and I feel sure that everyone enjoyed themselves, but it would have been nice to have a few more members attend. My thanks to my 'good lady', and your Special Co-ordinator, Val, for the efforts she has made to make this event such a success.



RAN FAA Memorial HMAS Cerberus
Les Jordan and John Ikin
Photograph courtesy Alan Clark

On Sunday, we held our annual Memorial Service at HMAS Cerberus. This year, the service was shared with the Merchant Navy. We had approximately fifty members attending, with 'Happy' Clark giving an excellent narrative on the FAA. Chaplain Paddy Sykes RAN, gave a 'first-class' service and was of great assistance on this memorable occasion. To them both, we give a hearty 'Thank You'.

Whilst on this subject, I would also like to convey our thanks to the Mess President and Staff of the Warrant Officer and Senior Sailors' Mess, HMAS Cerberus, for their continuing assistance in permitting our Association the use of their facilities on this annual occasion.

For eleven of our members, the conclusion of the church service was the signal to jump in their cars and head off to Bundaberg to attend the Queensland Division Mini-reunion. It proved to be a very good reunion and we thank the Queensland

Division for their organisation and hospitality, it was greatly appreciated. 'Those Bears know how to have fun'.

On a personal note, I met up with a couple of chaps at the reunion that I hadn't seen since 1955, thus proving the value of such get-togethers.



AROUND THE DINNER TABLE AT BUNDABERG
L-R: Merren Mathews – Ben Mathews – Loris Jordan – Sylvia Ikin – Val Christie – Ron Christie – John Ikin – Les Jordan

Another 'first' at the 'Bundy' Reunion Dinner, usually the Handlers have a clear lower deck for a group photograph, this year, not to be outdone, the Engineering Department (Spanner Wankers) also had a group photograph taken – I am happy to announce that we outnumbered the Handlers for once!

The next event, the Federal Council Meeting, which was held in Nowra early in October, was attended by your Delegates, John Ikin and myself, accompanied by our wives. From Nowra, Val and I proceeded to Maroochydore, to attend the combined RAN and RAAF Manus Island Reunion.

Victoria Division members are reminded that the last meeting of the year and the Christmas Break-up BBQ will be held on Sunday 10 December, commencing at 1100. Please let the Social Co-ordinator know if you are attending by 04 December so that she can make the necessary catering arrangements.

That's about it for now, so if we don't meet before the festive season, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Ron Christie

A RATCHET OF 'SPANNER WANKERS' AT THE BUNDABERG REUNION

Photo courtesy Peter Penny



NEW SOUTH WALES DIVISION

Saturday 09 September saw the official opening of the \$1.6m extensions to the Museum. The 'Federation Wing', as it is to be known, was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Transport, John Anderson MP. The wing is a great addition to an already great tourist attraction.

The opening was held in conjunction with an Air Day, and although we had the usual windy conditions for this time of the year, it was still a great day. The Press estimated that over nine thousand people attended.

At night we had our Anniversary Dinner and were able to encourage fifty members and family to attend. I had a good night and I think that everyone else did. Division guests for the dinner were the Commanding Officer *Albatross*, Captain Wood and Mrs Wood, COMAUSNAVAIRGRP Commodore and Mrs Eames, and our Patron, Commodore John Goble and Mrs Goble.



Patron, J D Goble, 'attacks' the Anniversary cake under the watchful eye of Max Altham
Photo courtesy Peregrine

Commodore Keith Eames was our guest speaker and he gave us a great insight into life in today's Fleet Air Arm.

During the course of his presentation it crossed my mind that perhaps we should be making a bigger effort in encouraging younger serving members to join our ranks. There is no need to wait around until serving personnel reach retiring age and leave the

service before we try and get them to join the Association. Men and women of any age, any rank and right arm rate joining us right now would have to be a big plus. The young ones of today are the old of tomorrow and if our Association is to flourish today and exist tomorrow, then we need to put in a bit of effort. The subject will be brought to the attention of the Federal Council at the AGM in October – perhaps some positive moves might come about.

Anyway, the Management Committee thanks all those who were able to come and support the Dinner, and I should mention it was great to welcome 'old-n-bold' Fred Randall, who turned up to enjoy the night.

We received a letter from Betty Middleton advising us that her husband, William 'Bill' Middleton had passed away. We all share Betty's sadness for the loss of her husband and our shipmate.

The Management Committee is once again conducting a raffle, a book of tickets was enclosed with the last edition of Slipstream to NSW members. As I pointed out last year when sending out tickets for the raffle, there are some people who are offended at being sent tickets unsolicited. To those people I apologised in advance, I do so again this year, and repeat that should you NOT want tickets sent for future raffles, please advise the secretary accordingly.

It should be pointed out that the purpose of the raffle is solely to subsidise our income in an endeavour to keep our membership

fees in check. The response from the membership has been great and the committee thanks you for your support. As a matter of interest, only a couple of books have been returned.



The three prizes are oil paintings with a current retail value of \$950 - \$700 and \$675, I am sure that the winners will be more than pleased. The date of the draw is 03 March 2001, the prizes will be freighted to the winners free of charge in Australia. Your support is requested.

Annual subscriptions fall due on 01 January 2001 and I wish to remind members that only financial members receive the Association Journal, so please pay up early to ensure you receive the edition in late January. While the membership fee for 2001 is \$25, should your wife wish to become an Associate Member (and I hope she does), her annual fee is \$12. [NOTE – this is the last edition before the subs are due and no further reminders can be sent - so - do it now before you forget. Ed]

Since the last report, we welcome six new members to the NSW Division. To John Thornthwaite, Frank Clavey, Brian Gribble, Bob Willis, Gordon Cansdale and John Gordon, WELCOME ABOARD!

Good health and best wishes to all the readers.

Max Altham - President

Having a good time at the NSW FAA Anniversary Dinner - wish you'd been there.



1. The Beasleys
 2. Ray Burt – dying with the 'flu'
 3. The Smithers
 4. Neville Newbold
Denny Lynch
 5. June & Kevin Camm
Brenda Arnold
- Photographs by Peregrine

QUEENSLAND DIVISION

Hello to our members all over Australia from the Queensland Division. We've just enjoyed our Reunion in Bundaberg over the first weekend of September. There were about 150 of us attending from all States except ACT and Tasmania. We missed you guys. 'Snow' Hall and Bevan Daws came over from WA. It looked like a take-over bid from Victoria with most of their Executive Committee there – Past President Les Jordan and Loris, President Ralph Mayer and Margaret, John and Sylvia Ikin, Ron and Val Christie. We kept them at bay and I'm sure all had a good time. Heard that John and Sylvia tried to get some new members from the Dingo community on Fraser Island! It was good to see Peter and Deidre Penny, Frank and Alice McPherson and George Szymoniczek up from the Nowra area. 'Happy' and Beryl Clark arrived on the Tilt train. 'Happy' took ill at the Rum Distillery and we didn't see him again. I hope he has recovered.



THE OLD PILOT'S MATES

L-R: Owen 'Baldy' Holston – Des 'Ned' Kelly – Mick Blair – Bill 'Darky' Strahan – Ted Hundley – 'Snow' Hall – Colleen Conellan (Standing in for her late husband, Bob.)

'Just think, we used to get a shilling a day extra to do four trades and look after an aircraft by ourselves. Could you imagine receiving a half-penny an hour nowadays?'

The various competitions were thoroughly enjoyed – Golf, Lawn Bowls and Ten Pin Bowls. Wayne McNee won the golf and Des Kelly was runner up. (I came third and owe Des a Lotto ticket). It was the most enjoyable golf day I've ever had –there were firecrackers and many derogatory comments as play proceeded. Geoff Beardsley got me on camera trying a back handed shot out of water. I cooled off quickly! The booze cart did well - I was on soda water that night. Lawn bowls was won by Peter Penny, Ted Winning and Errol Shelley and runners-up were Ron Powell, Dave Randall and 'Duck' Kennedy. The ten pin bowling was held on Sunday and some were given good handicaps. Dawn Mewett won the day and Lorraine Tite was runner-up. Our Principal guest at the dinner on Saturday night was Mayor Kay MacDuff, she also presented the trophies. 'Duck' Kennedy got a cuddle photo with her.

Commodore Geoff Morton, AM RAN (Rtd) flew up from Caloundra in a Cessna 172 on Saturday afternoon - most of the flight carried out in smoke from the bush fires. At the dinner, Geoff spoke about the Fleet Air Arm, past and present, and on Sunday, at our Memorial Service, he gave the Ode. I wasn't aware that Geoff had been awarded the AM for Services to the RAN. Congratulations, Geoff, and thanks for coming along. Geoff was our principal Naval Guest, as CO of *Albatross* in 1994. We were

sorry that Di Morton couldn't come along due to the arrival of family visitors.

Our two musicians were made Honorary Members of our Division. Jim (the saxophonist), and his wife, Daphne, were introduced to Dee and I. Daphne, asked me if I had been at school in Kenilworth, I said that I had, it turns out that we were there together from 1946 to '49. She reckons I haven't changed much – either I was old then or am still a kid! It was a lovely reunion for us both.

Dee has a fan in 'Duck' Kennedy. At the end of the dinner, we went down to the RSL Lounge and 'Duck' was desperate to find his watch - a very expensive one from Switzerland. He was up and down the stairs looking everywhere for it. We were talking to him when Dee suddenly asked him if that was it under a chair. 'Duck' looked and there it was! He was ecstatic and immediately ordered a round of drinks or two. We all had a lot of laughs and were the last to leave the Club.

The Remembrance Service saw about a hundred of us there. Once again, it was conducted by Pastor David Blackmore. When Mick and I first walked in, we couldn't see him and Mick reckoned I would have to give the service if he didn't turn up, but luckily he was there. Our one mistake was to invite the piano man to play the hymns. They were all very dirge-like and the National Anthem was a disaster. During the second verse I thought we were 'singing' to the tune of the Naval Hymn and had to stop as the giggles were breaking out. No one could get the right notes or tune! David asked at the end if anyone found the right note and got a negative, but lots of laughs. David was also presented with Honorary Membership, even though he was General Service.

Bill Strahan had made and donated a 'Beer can' aeroplane as a lucky door prize and it was won by Bevan Mewett. Bill's strict instructions were that no Handlers were allowed to touch it. The last one was severely damaged in a driveway heavy landing by



'For past assistance and service to the Queensland Division'
Pastor David Passmore (L) receiving his Honorary Membership
from Barry Lister

Photographs on this page courtesy Mick Blair

one of such ilk. Bill also managed to arrange a group photo of the spanner engineers (you thought I was going to say 'wankers') and spoke a few words, although he doesn't have clear recollection of doing it. It must have been due to the company he was keeping!

Bob Scoby came from Adelaide. Bob was a PO cook at RANAS 'a few days ago'. Jack Berry, ex-steward, won the NTP at the golf. Our raffle 1st prize was won by Glen Hartig, who had the choice of 3 prizes, but had gone missing. After a short while, I made an executive decision that he would win a 'cool box' (made by Ron Forrest) with a carton of good stuff. I didn't get any complaints. 2nd and 3rd prizes were won by May Linnaker and Bruce Lawrence. During the dinner we presented the RSL with a plaque in appreciation of their hospitality for the two reunions.

Don Daniels has injured his shoulder and is due for a 'pinning' operation so couldn't make it to the reunion. Max Gant was moving house. Ted Hundley made it and caught up with 'Snow' Hall and others. The weekend was enjoyed by all and most things went smoothly. I thank my committee and Ron Forrest for their efforts and everyone for their support.

Thank you, George Beasley, for your 'fill-in' on the Sea Fury story. Very interesting. 'Bill' has my copy of *Slipstream* and is avidly reading it. He says to tell you that he is in good health and still lives in the same house. I get the impression he would like to hear from you!

Midge Burgess drove up to 'Bundy' in her new car which was won in a MS Raffle, she brought Mary Vinson with her and gave her strict instructions that she wasn't to eat any food in the new car.

We are holding our Christmas function on December 10th (Sunday) at the Currumbin RSL- BYO food and drink. We are trying to book the BBQ. The Britannia Club and Restaurant in the Wintergarden Centre, Queen Street Mall, have a separate room for us on Anzac Day with a bar, food can be brought in from the eatery. It will mean minimum fuss and no travelling until after the function.

Dee and I spent a few days in Canberra recently and had two days skiing at Perisher Valley. Dee hadn't skied before and my last time was 1974. We had a great time and only fell over several times! Caught up with Toz and Gwen Dadswell briefly. Toz has just started playing Lawn Bowls. Hope you are winning a few, Toz. Canberra has a surplus of kangaroos and driving can be a hazard around the suburbs. One night, a big 'old man' 'roo cleared the northbound lanes of the Monaro Highway, leapt out from the median strip and landed full frontal on the driver's door of a nice new Falcon on the southbound lane. The 'roo fell down, then up and took off like a 'Bondi Tram'. The car door was a mess, as was the lady driver of the car, she wasn't hurt, but severely shocked!

Warren Walters now resides in Salinas, California, and he and Maria were married on the 5th September at a civil ceremony at Carmel. The Church service is still on the 4th November and we are looking forward to being there with them. He tells me that he has bought a new set of Jack Nicklaus golf clubs for \$280 US. I'll definitely have to investigate that.

We gained a new member, Alan Paul, at the reunion and he did appear to enjoy himself. Welcome aboard, Alan. Gary Linnaker spoke briefly on the recent update regarding the AASM and NGSM awards relating to Malaya. We are waiting to see how we will go with the NGSM. It depends on how they see qualifying service. I guess we'll know before too long.

Best wishes to all for the Festive Season.

Barry Lister - President

Spotted at the Bundaberg Reunion



L-R: Trevor 'Snow' Tite – Bevan Mewett – Ron 'Wilbur' Forrest and Terry 'Boxer' Banks Photo courtesy Mick Blair



L-R: Brian Sargeson – Garry Reid – Peter Penny and Noel Fischer Photo courtesy Mick Blair



Kaye and Bevan Daws – Peter and Janie Fleming Photo courtesy Peter Penny



L-R: Bob Scoby – Trevor and Marie Bolitho – Carol and Bill Heaney Photo courtesy Peter Penny



Fay and Harry Harkness Photo courtesy Peter Penny



Alan 'Smiley' McGowan – Leo Kirkman Photo courtesy Peter Penny



NAVY ARTISTS IN EAST TIMOR

From the notes of John Downton FBAS FRAS ASMA



Monday - 16 February 2000 - On an overcast, dark morning, I stepped out from doorway onto a snake. A quick shuffle, and a side step that would have made Fred Astaire green with envy, plus a lot of luck, helped to avoid being bitten. It wasn't what I needed at this time with a fast moving tour of duty ahead of me.

Around 1400 on the day before, I received a telephone call and was asked if I could be ready to go to East Timor in three days time. One hour later, the phone rang again and I was told to be at Kingsford Smith Airport at 0830 the next day for a flight to Darwin. In spite of such short notice, I agreed.

Somewhere down the track I knew that these events might occur, last year Commodore Robinson, of the Royal Australian Navy, had asked me if I would consider going to East Timor as a Navy artist. The realisation that the Australian role as peacekeepers in East Timor was coming to an end and history was in the making had prompted the call, hence the urgency.

Arriving in Darwin, I was met by fellow navy artist, Ian Hansen, an ex-navy man with a twelve-year stint behind him. He told me that we should have been in Darwin the day before. A Naval Police 'paddy wagon' driven by a lady sailor (Dawn) pulled up. With a twinkle in her eye and a mischievous grin, she opened the cage door and asked us to get in. Then with a laugh, she quipped, stow your luggage in here and hop in up the front.

I had been warned not to bring too much luggage along as I would have to carry everything wherever I went. Fortunately, even though I am a 'plein air' [open air] painter, I decided to leave the heavy paint box and associated gear behind. This decision turned out to be a very good one and I concentrated on sketching, backed up by photography, from this I could then sketch up major works in the studio on return.

We were taken to HMAS *Coonawarra* for briefing on the activities ahead of us. A fabulous meal followed and then a shower and bed.

Early the next morning, Dawn picked us up again, we were required at the airport by 0600. After clearing customs, we were bundled into an American C-130 Hercules aircraft. This massive machine is so noisy that everyone was provided with earplugs for the journey.

Arriving at Comoro Airport, Dili, we were given a large bottle of water and told to take it with us everywhere and drink often to prevent dehydration. We were later to top this up on every ship we visited.

Clearing customs once again, we were taken to the other end of the airport and put aboard one of the world's largest helicopters, a Russian Mi26 (I think), it was, it was manned by a Russian crew for a private company attached to the United Nations. After having stringent safety briefs by the Americans and the Australians, we couldn't help but notice the 'lack of' on the helicopter. Just sit anywhere, no need for seatbelts, no life jackets in sight. Journalists from around the world had joined us and they just lay on the floor for a rest, even though we were travelling out to sea over a lot of water to avoid Indonesian territorial waters and boundaries.

The aircraft had massive blades that appeared to me to be rotating too slowly; the inside of the helo seemed to be as large as a Hercules. The air rushing in from the open portholes provided the only cool breeze as we headed off to Oecussi in the East Timorese enclave that is surrounded by Indonesia.

We landed on the grass runway and stepped out into the tropical heat, it really made its presence felt and the sweat started to pour off us. This area was now guarded by the Jordanians who appeared to be friendly towards us. I was told that they were regarded with suspicion by the locals, but during a later visit there was more local acceptance of them. This was in contrast to the reception given to the Australians, who were greeted with smiles and a hello, or their language equivalent.

As no one was waiting for us, the Jordanians drove us to the opposite end of the airfield and we walked into Oecussi where we witnessed the hand over by General Cosgrove to the Jordanian UN peacekeepers. It was a wonderful sight with Australians and Jordanians lined up doing parade drill to the sound of a lone piper and the Jordanian drums. The Jordanians were ordered to ground their arms and remove their berets, these they replaced with the light blue beret of the United Nations, they then retrieved their weapons and stood to attention.

Beyond the coconut palms on the foreshore we could see the comforting blue grey silhouette of HMAS *Melbourne* cruising close to shore.

General Cosgrove's speech in the sweltering heat was short, yet as always, full of hope and praise. To me he came across as a man genuinely concerned about all under his command, be they Army, Navy or Air Force, and, of course, the Timorese people.

After the ceremony, it was a quick safety brief on the oval and into a helicopter for the trip to HMAS *Melbourne*. We were greeted warmly by the skipper, Andrew Gough, and taken to the wardroom to meet the other officers. We also met the Reverend David Thiem, who was on leave from the Uniting Church parish of Queanbeyan, to serve as Chaplain on the *Melbourne* in Timor.

HMAS *Melbourne* was celebrating its eighth birthday, so we were taken to the sailor's quarters for the cutting of the cake by the Captain and crewmembers. Cake was passed around to all.

HMNZS *Endeavour* came alongside to transfer fuel to the *Melbourne* whilst both were steaming ahead at speed. The Chief Engineer, a terrific person, took us below to show us the engine room. The gearbox alone was as big as a truck. A modern engine room is real space age stuff, like the control centre on a Hollywood idea of a spacecraft. At night the ship was darkened and only dim red lights were in the passageways. After your eyes got used to it, it was surprising how much could be seen.

After travelling all night, the ship anchored off Dili. Close by was the old *Moresby*, now under new ownership and a change of name. She looked so sad – all rusty and chunks missing out of her hull.

It was then into the sea boat and off to HMAS *Labuan*, a LCH (Landing Craft Heavy) that was anchored just off shore, not far

away was United Nations five-star floating hotel. While our boys are doing it tough, this gigantic hotel was floated in for luxury quarters for the UN.

Labuan's crew was a happy and helpful lot; they seemed to have an air of decency and pride about them, no doubt something that working together in the Navy gives them. While waiting for the next day's work, the crew enjoyed a swim in the sea off the ship's bow. They reckon that if the sea wasps don't get you, the sharks' will – that's if they can get in before the sea snakes and crocodiles.

Whilst aboard, *Labuan* picked up Timorese refugees at Suai. Most had only a plastic bag containing their worldly possessions; some carried a few small chickens that had their feet tied together with string to prevent them absconding. The sailors rigged up an awning to provide them with shade and supplied them with ship's drinking water. I felt great compassion for the old people who had been uprooted from their special place and had their homes and livelihoods destroyed because of politics. They were all taken to Betano, where parts of HMAS *Voyager* still remain close to the beach. Badly damaged during WWII, the ship was deliberately run aground and destroyed to prevent it falling into enemy hands.

Once underway again, the helo from the *Melbourne* arrived and hovered overhead. Dangling on a 'string', we were lifted off for return to the *Melbourne*, which was now on the other side of East Timor.

The cross-country flight showed that even the farmhouses that were way up in the hills and mountains had not escaped the wave of terror. As an artist, looking down at the rivers and mountains

that the navigator was following, was a painter's dream. High mountains covered in a tropical haze, reigned over steep hills cultivated with corn and pineapples (where not destroyed), at their feet, vast gorges and river runoffs, not unlike those seen in New Zealand.

Aboard *Melbourne* once again, we were to witness a night firing practice. Kitted up in very long cotton gloves, and cotton headgear that covered everywhere except a small area for the eyes and nose, and with a steel helmet jammed on top to complete the outfit, we went up on deck in the dark.

Suddenly a flare was fired. It drifted down on a parachute until the sea quenched it. A second one *whooshed* out from the ship closely followed by the order - FIRE! The most deafening **BANG...BANG...BANG** rent the air and continued for what seemed a long time. Projectiles, glowing red, arched over the water forming an arc like the Sydney harbour bridge and then quickly closing in on their target. The streaking projectiles hit the water and ricocheted off again, arcing once again into the night

sky, still glowing red. No doubt a painting will eventuate from that experience.

Friday – 18th February 2000 - This morning we were awakened by a shrill pipe and a hearty, 'All hands. Wakey... Wakey...Wakey!' Later we were transferred by sea boat to the oil tanker, HMNZS *Endeavour*. From here we were able to get a good view of *Melbourne's* manoeuvres protecting the oiler in a refuelling at sea situation.

The crew of the *Endeavour* was marvellous. The Captain welcomed us aboard and we were given a tour of the sleeping quarters, and shown the wardroom where we would eat and relax. On the sideboard – yes, this is a very roomy ship – was a garden gnome. The story surrounding the gnome was that another NZ ship's crewmember, whilst on leave and under the influence, 'liberated' the gnome. His mates tracked down the brightly coloured gnome's previous address, and from then on, wherever the ship sailed to they would take the gnome ashore and take a photograph of him with his 'minders'. In due course the photograph would be sent to the original owners with a message something like, 'Having a good time, wish you were here'. This went on for some years until the gnome was once again 'liberated'

by the crew of the *Endeavour* and retained as a trophy.

Endeavour's crew, as in most ships now, included a lot of women. The crew were all fitness fanatics. One bright person wrapped a volleyball in cheese cloth and tied a piece of cordage to it, the other end was attached to the deck so that if the ball went over the side, it could be retrieved. It worked quite well, apart from the players

occasionally getting caught up in the cord. Having been asked to join in, I was smashed in the face by the ball as it left the hands of the skipper. I suppose that made me the only visitor to be smacked in the face by the Captain.

We were now anchored in Dili harbour, when night fell we could see many lights in the hills behind the town. No doubt many lanterns were in use, and possibly some electric lights because some of the power had been restored by this time. There were no traffic lights in Dili hadn't been restored, probably because there was next to no traffic as most of the vehicles had been burnt out.

Next morning we were in the sea boat again and taken ashore at great speed. On arrival we waited for our escort to take us for a look around Dili harbour and the hills and mountains behind. It must have been a beautiful place before it was destroyed.

We were taken to the headquarters for the entire Australian operation in East Timor to meet up with Commodore Robinson once again. Everyone was doing it tough, his office, like that of his

(Continued on page 30)



'Distant Dili – East Timor' A painting by the author, John Downton

next door neighbour, Major General Cosgrove, was in the library building. This building had not escaped the earlier rampage and had no windows and holes in the walls. Being the headquarters, there were wires hanging down from the rafters for the computers and other electronics. Maps were attached to the walls and the place had a look of general chaos, even though it was running very efficiently.

Commodore Robinson took us to lunch at the Army base across the road. It was M.A.S.H. style with its tents and layout. The food was basic but good. Afterwards he took us to his sleeping quarters, another burnt-out building. Just a stretcher on the floor enclosed with a tent-like mosquito net. There was a personal fan, a few replacement clothes and a makeshift place to write, this was all that made his home from home. Our soldiers do it just as rough, and in some cases rougher, some of the stories were hair-raising.

We were then picked up in what we were told was the only Navy vehicle in Dili. Ian Hansen, Commodore Robinson, his aide, WO John Perryman and myself then went up into the hills.

Looking out over the cemetery where the Indonesian Army had massacred so many people before independence, I saw a peaceful scene. Yet, terrible things had happened here. Up the hill and across the street was the cemetery where Indonesian soldiers were buried. These areas, we were told, were places where bitter militia fighting and killing took place after independence. As the Australians started to arrive in East Timor, Indonesian soldiers and militia were discarding their uniforms here and burning them, this was so they could try and mingle with the locals and escape.

Higher up in the mountains the air became cooler, so it was easy to see why lots of locals lived up there. We came across off-duty Australian soldiers, rifles still at the ready, voluntarily assisting in the restoration of a shrine from WWII; a large pool area which would be filled with clear mountain water. From here, and further up the pot-holed road, we could look back to Dili and the harbour, then through the tropical haze to where a giant statue of 'Christ with open arms' dominated the peninsula. It was said that the statue was a gift from Indonesia in the past, maybe this was why it hadn't been vandalised. The ships could be seen in the harbour and looked so peaceful and serene from this height.

We returned to Dili and the shore lined with coconut palms. Like many other tropical islands, East Timor's harbour has a lagoon behind an outer reef. Shipping makes its way through the reef, which is marked with navigation pylons.

An Army operated LCM [Landing Craft Medium], with a cargo of fuel tanker trailers was preparing to go to the *Endeavour* to get them filled. We hitched a ride and it wasn't long before we were scrambling up the rope ladder on the ship's side.

The massive aircraft carrier, USS *Bon Homme Richard*

arrived, covered in helicopters.

Major General Cosgrove and Commodore Robinson came out to the *Endeavour* by sea boat to thank the New Zealanders for their support. The ship's gangway had been suspended down the side ready for them. On arrival, the General remarked to the Captain, 'I see you've put out the geriatric steps for me'. We were asked to meet the General and we shook hands with him. He then thanked the crew for their part they had played and presented the ship with a nicely framed Interfet armband, surrounded with the flags of the participating nations. It was a real prize for the ship.

Later, we observed the arrival of HMAS *Jervis Bay* – an awesome ship indeed.

Next day we took a sea boat to *Labuan* once again, it was loading in Dili port before an overnight trip to Oecussi to deliver stores. The area around Oecussi can only be described as spectacular, with high mountains close to the sea and their ridges glowing light grey green in the sunlight. When the stores had been unloaded, it was back to Dili, unload the containers, and then out to swing on the buoy for the night.

A container lashed to the inner deck of *Labuan* served as home. There were eight bunks inside, visiting soldiers slept alongside the two of us and a crewmember of the ship. With air conditioning it was very comfortable.

23 February 2000 – We transferred to HMAS *Jervis Bay*, however, orders were mislaid and we had to sit on the wharf in the hot sun for two and a half-hours. The water bottle was once again pressed into service. During the wait, Ian did a good little painting as Thai soldiers were arriving to board the ship.

Once onboard, we witnessed the farewell to the Australians, which was taking place on the wharf. Timorese

dignitaries with a small percussion band said their goodbyes to General Cosgrove and presented him with a special scarf. A female soldier rushed up to the General after the ceremony was over and asked if he would autograph her Interfet armband. Typical of the man, he graciously signed it with a message, much to her delight.

We were shown to our seats in the VIP area, then went on deck to wave goodbye and watch the review of the fleet on their way out of the harbour. The LCHs came first and swung into a curve that brought them for a very short time level with the *Jervis Bay*. Then came all the other ships, including our good friends the New Zealanders. The *Endeavour* looked so proud in the brilliant sunshine. Aircraft of every description flew over in formation. Truly a wonderful sight.

The speed of HMAS *Jervis Bay* soon left the fleet behind. At about 40 knots, we were on our way to Darwin, a distance of 433 nautical miles. Riding in this fast craft is not unlike riding in a jet plane, the sensation and noise are the same. Many were sea sick, especially among the Thai Army boys on the deck lower down. I felt for them.



John Downton in his studio working on 'HMAS *Jervis Bay* – Dili Wharf – East Timor'

The sailors had removed some seats and put stretchers in place for the general and the Commodore. After lunch, the General did have a snooze. He climbed into a sleeping bag, boots and all. He was asked, 'General, wouldn't you like to remove your boots so you can relax better?' 'No', he replied. 'This way I am always ready for anything that comes along.'

One more meal – this one a space age invention that heated itself in the package without the use of flame or a stove.

Later we went up to the bridge where we could see the soft glow of the navigation equipment on the faces of everyone standing around in the dark. The 'driver' of this mighty machine was a young woman, whilst the skipper sat in the background. Lookouts and radar personnel were intent on their jobs.

Torrential rain greeted us in Darwin and we soon became very wet. It was after midnight and my flight to Sydney was at 6:00am, so off to the airport again.

The whole exercise was fascinating, watching our Navy at work in these troubled times. They went about their tasks with efficiency and decency, each person giving that little bit extra and looking after each other in that true Aussie spirit.

We can be proud of them all – and proud to be Australian.

Note from the Editor

The mention of the garden gnome in the previous article, reminded me of one that I published in *Slipstream* Vol.4 No.1, way back in 1993.

It concerns a little brown garden gnome that was removed from its 'parents' by a couple of 'clucky' sailors. It is reprinted here for your edification.

THREE OF SAND AND ONE OF CEMENT

Courtesy Column 8, Sydney Morning Herald

'We know the urban myth about garden gnomes taking overseas holidays, but the Royal Australian Navy vouches for this story.

The concrete aboriginal, Neville, who sat for many years on the gun turret aboard HMAS *Parramatta*, has been around the world the equivalent of three times.

Neville was shanghaied from a garden in the eastern suburbs by a group of sailors who may have been tired and emotional at the time.

Many nautical miles later, the sailors, feeling guilty, started sending Neville's owner postcards (signed by their charge) from various exotic locations.

The Navy's public affairs officer, Lt Patrick Southam, said Neville retired when the ship was decommissioned in January last year and the sailors wanted to return him. But the owner declined as she felt he had enjoyed naval life. Neville was last seen living in the Navy's historical collection on Spectacle Island.'

[And why was he called Neville? It is suspected that he was named after the late Senator Neville Bonner. This suspicion was reinforced after the Senator sent the concrete Neville an umbrella to keep the sun off. Ed.]



The Other 'Gannets' - or if you thought the Fairey Gannet was ugly

When Specification GR.17/45 was issued by the British Government for the development of an Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft, Blackburn Aviation was one of the main bidders for the development contract together with Fairey Aviation. Both companies submitted designs for a two place aircraft able to carry all its radar equipment, operator and weapons within a single airframe.

The first prototype Blackburn aircraft was powered by the Griffon 56 engine of 1491 kW (2000hp). Driving contra-rotating propellers it was never the intended engine, but a substitute for the Napier Double Naiad which did not reach production.

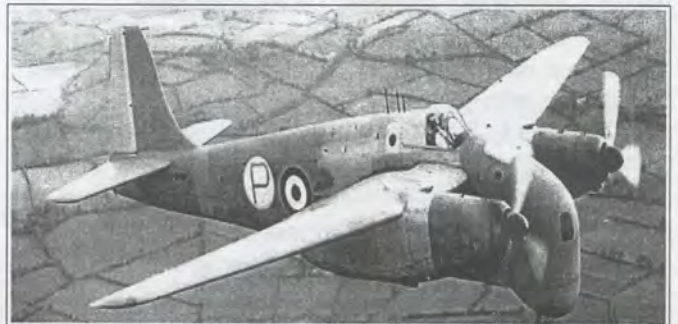


The First prototype Blackburn Y.A.5 (WB781) photo Blackburn Aviation, courtesy of Roger Jackson, A.J. Jackson Collection

The Y.A.5 first flew on 20th September 1949 with deck landings trialed in February 1950, this is five months prior to the Fairey Gannet making its first carrier landing.

There was one other aircraft vying for the anti-submarine role, albeit under a revised specification (M6/49). This specification was a direct response by the British to counter the growing Soviet submarine fleet.

Short Brothers redesigned the last airframe of the Short SA 1/2 Sturgeon to produce the Short S.B 3.



The Prototype S.B. 3 (WF632) photo courtesy R. Franks

Housing a radar scanner and two operators the S.B.3 was powered by two Armstrong Siddely Mamba turboprops of 1100-kN (1475-shp) and first flew on 12th August 1950, piloted by Tom Brooke-Smith. Now that's an ugly airplane.

This short article is an extract from the forthcoming book on the Fairey Gannet in Service with the RAN, and serves as an introduction to the Gannet story. If any FAAA members wish to contribute their experiences or association with the Fairey Gannet for publication, please contact :-

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OBITUARY

DONALD JAMES DAVIDSON

Although not unexpected, the news that the other member of the 'terrible twins' had finally succumbed after years of battling a debilitating disease was, nonetheless received with great sorrow via a call from Bill Vallack in Sydney.

I first met Don in the late months of 1951 when, together with many others, we endured the challenging confrontations with members of the interviewing board at the shore base of HMAS 'Penguin', for direct entry applicants for aircrew training with the Royal Australian Navy. Whilst he had been pursuing a career as a draughtsman and I as a bank 'johnny', fate was to consummate a lasting friendship as we, and eleven other members of Navy Course NAC 4, strove to achieve our utmost ambition.

Wings parade for pilots, the successful remnants of 9 Course, RAAF, at Point Cook on 6th May, 1953, included just four of the original thirteen strong Naval contingent – Don Davidson, Rob Waites, John Williams and myself. We joyously celebrated our successful graduation with the knowledge that we all were to progress to operational training as fighter pilots on the much-loved Hawker Sea Fury FB II. John Williams suffered physical damage following an unsuccessful launch from the legendary moose mounted in the Sergeants' Mess that evening, leaving just the three of us – Don, Rob and I – to share the trials of our operational training in the United Kingdom in 1953/54.

Automatically commissioned as Acting Sub-Lieutenants (P) on graduation from Point Cook, our service careers followed parallel paths for the next four years. Firstly with 805 Squadron (Sea Furies) 1954-56, jet conversion with 724 Squadron (Vampires) 1955, night fighter training with 766 Squadron RN at Yeovilton (Sea Venoms) 1956, twin jet conversion with Airworks at St. Davids, Wales (Meteor T 7) 1956, continuation night fighter training with 228 OCU RAF, North Luffenham (Meteor NF 11) 1956-57, and finally 808 Squadron back at Nowra, 1957-58. Youthful as we still were, a nonsense developed wherein we conjured up nicknames for one another. It eventuated that such pseudonyms were generally unacceptable, except in the case of Don. The basis for these nicknames was the back-spelling of each individual's surname. Don, being a Davidson, became popularly known as 'Nosda', a nickname which survived for his life-span.

When Gavin Kable inherited command of 808 Squadron from Peter Seed, Gavin, being the first Observer to command a front line night fighter squadron, chose Don as his pilot. Gavin was subsequently succeeded by Garth Hanchard-Goodwin, who selected Don as his Senior Pilot, a position he held for the remainder of his short service career. An avid fan of Bay Adams, an acknowledged ace of the RAAF during the Second World War, significantly throughout the major Middle East battles, Don, I feel, aimed to duplicate his performance, given the chance.

High spirited, a skilful fighter pilot of above average capabilities, physically strong and popular amongst his peers, he worked hard at perfecting his airborne performance, and played hard to release the stresses of this young man's profession. We two were inseparable in the early days of our service, delighting in the friendly competition borne of our discovered natural suitability for our airborne tasks.



The late Donald James Davidson 12-6-1932 - 11-8-2000

At times, it almost seemed we had something of the familiarity of real twins, finding commonality in a number of life's experiences and expectations. Squadron graphs kept to record the regularity of hooking desired arrester wire No. 3, showed how hard we both tried to keep the graph line straight. Came the time when I embarrassed our CO, Fred Sherborne, by catching a late wire and entering No. 1 barrier during a 'shop window' demonstration aboard HMAS Sydney in front of the Minister for the Navy, Josh Francis, Don, some weeks later duplicated my misadventure, though not intentionally, and not in front of the Minister.

Prime Minister Menzies' alarming statement of his government's intention to close down the Fleet Air Arm in 1963, resulted in a scattering of a number of experienced front line pilots, mostly then Lieutenants, to the security of the major Australian airlines, Don opting for Qantas which he joined in May, 1960. Here, he would continue to demonstrate his fluent expertise in all things aviation, soon achieving command on the 'heavies', and passing on his skills to those who were lucky enough to share a roster with him. Our friendship, cemented during the years of shared experiences, endured over the ensuing years, he, dedicated to his career with Qantas, the security of his family in Sydney and a new-found interest in competitive national sailing competitions. I had, of necessity, chosen a career path with TAA, and it was many years later before our paths again crossed, this time in retirement.

Mutual friends, Judy and Phil Rowe, organised a gathering of many Fleet Air Arm friends at their home in Pymble in 1980 or thereabouts, where most of Don's friends were to see him for the last time. Already afflicted with the genetically inherited terminal disease of Huntington's Chorea, Don overcame, on this one occasion, a personal dilemma to appear in public with the barely perceptible onset of this decadent disease from which both his father and sister had died.

Mid-term in his career with Qantas, Don had experienced back problems, necessitating the welding of two of his vertebrae. Continuing to pursue his new love of competitive sailing, in which sport he displayed the talent of a champion progressively in Mirrors, Fireballs and Solos, the resultant inconvenience following his operation became unbearable, and he was forced to forego this pleasurable pastime. Furthermore, recurring simulator checks involving asymmetric control proved to be beyond his enduring capability, and he was forced to take early retirement from a profession to which he had given so much.

The debilitating effect of this dreadful disease he had inherited caused Don, in his infinite wisdom, to deny all contact with the outside world. My last audience with him, perhaps ten years or more ago, consisted of a most enjoyable lunch with he and his wife, Olga, at their abode in Bayview, a Northern suburb of Sydney. We were able to enjoy a magnificent lunch, a few ales and much reminiscing with appropriate jocularly, as though the years had not intervened. Yet Don chose to slide into obscurity from that day, and I was never again able to gain an audience with him, due only to his stubborn insistence.

Don married his childhood sweetheart, Olga Tom, twin sister of Norma, in Sydney on 22nd January, 1955. I had the great honour of being his best man. Their marriage produced four children – three sons and a daughter, all of whom survive him: Tony now 43, Mark 42, Rick 40 and Barbara 29.

Moving from Bayview to Mollymook in the late 1980's, Don adopted the life of a hermit in his own home. Attempts by many of his contemporaries failed to change his resolve, and he departed

this world in the manner of his choosing. He will be sadly missed by all who crossed his path, yet who could not understand his self-imposed isolation from family and friends who loved and respected him.

I am quite certain that I echo the sympathetic concern of all whose paths in life brought them in contact with this man of many talents, for those he has left behind. To Olga, her three sons and daughter, and three grandchildren, may your memories of happy days and your pride in a husband, father and grandfather, an achiever of great substance, overshadow the grief of your sad loss.

'Underneath the Arches' - 'Shine on Harvest Moon' - 'Sweet Rosie O'Grady' - what a great harmonising duo we were. 'Tis a bra brecht moonlit necht th' necht. Y'alright, ye ken!

Bon Voyage, 'Nosda', old mate

With deepest respect,

Geoff Litchfield

CONSOLATION for the SECRETARY

- If the secretary writes a letter - it's too long;
 - If he sends a postcard - it's too short.
 - If he attends a meeting - he's butting in;
 - If he stays away - he's a shirker.
 - If he offers a suggestion - he's a know-all;
 - If he says nothing - he's useless.
 - If the attendance at a meeting is slack - he should have called the members up;
 - If he calls them up - he's a pest.
 - If he asks for a subscription - he's insulting;
 - If he doesn't - he's lazy.
 - If the meeting is a big success - the committee gets the praise;
 - If it's a failure - the secretary is to blame.
 - If he asks for advice - he's incompetent;
 - If he doesn't - he's swollen-headed.
- Whether he likes it, or whether he doesn't,
If the others won't do it, the secretary must!

HELP WANTED



The Tasmanian Secretary of the Naval Association has in his possession the Service Records of:

R 46872 - NA1 AH3 David CROSS

David enlisted from Tasmania in the 1950s. Anyone knowing the whereabouts of David, or his next of kin, please contact the Editor.

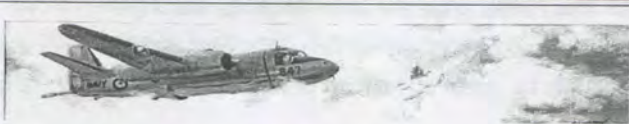
WILL YOU BE HOLDING THE LUCKY TICKET IN THE NSW DIVISION RAFFLE?

1st Prize - 'A Show of Strength - HMAS Melbourne' (\$950)

2nd Prize - 'Silhouette - HMAS Melbourne' (\$700)

3rd Prize - 'Tracker's Home Run' (\$675)

by John Downton



BANK ON MY ACCOUNT, OLD CHAP

My Dear Bank Manager,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing the cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, some three nano-seconds must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque, and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my entire salary, an arrangement which I admit, has only been in place for eight years. You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account by way of penalty for the inconvenience I caused your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to re-think my errant financial ways. You have set me on the path of fiscal righteousness. No more will our relationship be blighted by these unpleasant incidents, for I am restructuring my affairs in 2000, taking as my model the procedures, attitudes and conduct of your very own bank. I cannot think of a greater compliment, and I know you will be excited and proud to hear it. To this end, please be advised of the following changes.

First, I have noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you I am confronted by the impersonal, ever-changing, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh and blood person. My mortgage and loan repayments will, therefore and hereafter, no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by personal cheque, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee of your branch, whom you must nominate. You will be aware that it is an offence under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope.

Please find an *Application for Contact Status*, which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his/her medical history must be countersigned by a Justice of the Peace, and that the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof. In due course I will issue your employee with a PIN which he/she must quote in all dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than twenty-eight digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required to access my account balance on your 'phonebank' service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further by introducing you to my new telephone system, which you will notice, is also very much like yours. My Authorised Contact at your bank, the only person with whom I will have any dealings, may call me at any time and be answered by an automated voice. By pressing the buttons on the 'phone, he/she will be guided through an extensive set of menus:

- 1 To make an appointment to see me,
- 2 To query a missing repayment,
- 3 To make a general complaint or enquiry, and so on.

The contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service. While this may on occasion involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration. This month I have chosen a refrain from The Best of Woody Guthrie:

*'Oh the banks are made of marble
With a guard at every door
And the vaults are lined with silver
That the miners sweated for!'*

After twenty minutes of that, our mutual contact will probably know it off by heart.

On a more serious note, we come to the matter of cost. As your bank has often pointed out, the ongoing drive for greater efficiency comes at a cost – a cost which you have always been quick to pass on to me. Let me repay your kindness by passing some costs back. First there is the matter of advertising material you send me. This I will read for a fee of \$1 per A4 page. Enquiries from your nominated contact will be billed at \$5 per minute of my time spent in response. Any debits to my account, as, for example, in the matter of the penalty for the dishonoured cheque, will be passed back to you. My new 'phone number service runs at 75 cents per minute (even Woody Guthrie doesn't come free), so keep your enquiries brief and to the point. Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy, if ever-so-slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your humble client.

Jolyon Ansuz



Jumpers: The Army paratroop major was used to harassment from Air Force fliers about 'crazy Army paratroopers' jumping out of a 'perfectly good aircraft'.

'Obviously the Air Force knows there's no such thing as a *'perfectly good aircraft'*, the irritated officer finally countered one afternoon, 'because they pay you bastards four times as much to stay in the aircraft as the Army pays its men to jump out.'

'You've got it all wrong, Major,' an Air Force sergeant replied. 'The Army figures that anyone stupid enough to jump out of an aeroplane voluntarily, is going to be too dumb to bitch about the salary.'

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THE FRONT COVER – Several members of the FAAA visited the Australian War Memorial to see the Hawker Sea Fury recently placed on display in the Bradbury Aircraft Hall. A presentation was given by John Kemister, the Large Technology Objects Conservator. As previously mentioned in this journal, the aircraft turned out to be a composite of three aircraft, numbered VX730 – TF 925 and VW 232. As the largest section was that of VX730, it was given that serial number with the call sign 109. During the preservation procedures at the AWM, very faint traces of twenty-one mission markings were found on the side of the fuselage. The AWM are still seeking parts to complete the project, e.g. gun, vertical and oblique camera mounts. If any of the readers have **any** information in their log books regarding VX730, please contact the Editor.



Barry Grainger visited the Australian Museum of Flight



During a visit to Nowra, Gus Tuck and Artie Lisle visited the Slipstream office

TO THE 'WestAussie' MEMBERS
 Now that Slipstream has been distributed – please
 wake your scribe very gently. Ed



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A LAST FAREWELL

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

E.J.Morrison – 2000



Walter John Lombard – June 2000



Richard James Dunford – 25 July 2000



Peter James Redpath – 25 July 2000



William (Bill) Middleton – 28 July 2000



Beryl Macfarlane – 02 August 2000



Donald James Davidson – 11 August 2000



Valerie Wright – 28 August 2000

(Known to many whilst working at the Captain's Office, RANAS Nowra.)

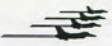


Terry Delaney – 14 September 2000



Raymond Buchholz - 13 October 2000





ANTI-SUBMARINE SEAHAWK HELO'S AND A SQUIRREL LIGHT UTILITY HELICOPTER
Photographed near the Shoalhaven River, Nowra. Photo courtesy RAN



THE
DAYS
OF
WINE
AND
ROSES



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