

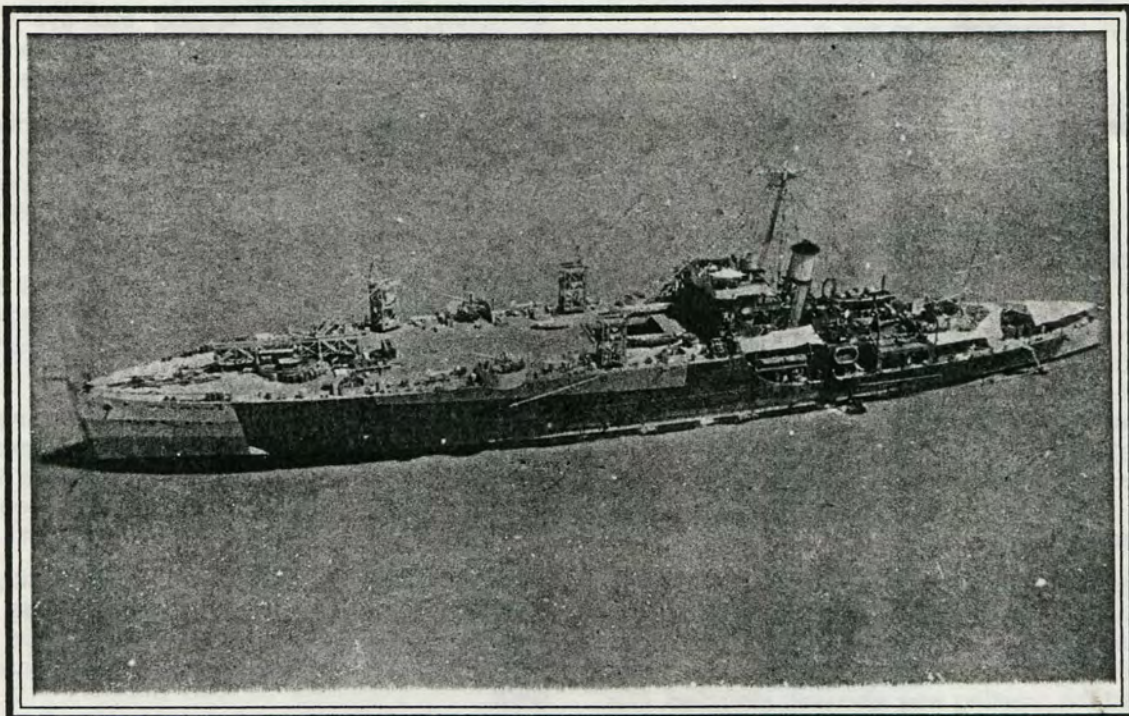
FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION of NEW SOUTH WALES

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SLIPSTREAM



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** The views and opinions expressed in articles printed in this journal, do not necessarily reflect the views and the opinions of the Association or Committee of Management.*

** Articles followed by an acknowledgement are subject to COPYRIGHT.*

** FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH - kindly provided by R.D.S. Baldrey (See Contact Column) and shows HMS Albatross at Bombay in 1943. We apologise for the poor quality of the copy, but the original photograph was extremely grainy.*

EDITORIAL

Thanks to all those members who sent in photo's and letters in answer to the January SLIPSTREAM.

We have had several members asking us for information regarding Re-union '92. We request that those who need more information get in touch with Les Matterson on (044)217945 or write to 252 Kinghorn St Nowra NSW 2541.

For the non locals, the Sea Venom on the pole at the corner of Kinghorn St and Albatross Rd has made a welcome reappearance. The aircraft was removed late last year for refurbishing and repainting. The only objection about it, is that the tip tanks have been painted the red and white check with the white colour being the base colour. I wonder how many locals have noticed that?

It was a very welcome sight at the Senior Sailors Mess on Sunday March 8th. For the first time since our becoming a fully fledged association, we had a quorum for the Annual General Meeting. The BBQ that followed the meeting was also well attended. Our thanks are extended to Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Walters for supplying the salad and coleslaw.

Welcome to the new members of the Committee, and thank you to the existing Committee members who re-nominated and were accepted.

I have heard a very disagreeable rumour that the one and only Wessex 31A is to be sold, or is up for sale.

I can't see the logic in this, after all, I would have thought that this aircraft would be part of the Fleet Air Arm history. I will investigate this further and let you know. * Ed.

WELFARE OFFICER'S REPORT

In the last edition of Slipstream, I mentioned the changes to the DFRB/DFRDB Acts whereby widows receive the full rate of payment for the six pay periods following the ex-servicemans death.

Other changes that apply, affect the widow's of those servicemen who opted for commutation when they left the service, which is probably the larger majority of members.

After the six full payments are received, the rate is then reduced to a rate equal to five-eighths of the rate at which retirement, or invalidity pay was payable to the deceased member immediately before his death: or if the member had commuted part of his pay, *at a rate equal to five-eighths of the rate at which retirement or invalidity pay, as the case may be, would have been payable to the member immediately before his death if he had not so commuted.*

This does not apply to members on DFRB who completed time for 'pension' but were invalidated, as they had no entitlement to commute.

It's funny, but it would appear that every time the DFRB/DB Acts are amended, the Public Servants who frame the legislation create more anomalies.

The wide media coverage given on the anniversary of the Voyager disaster, once again highlights failings in the Commonwealth Employees Act that covered those of us not entitled to Veteran's Affairs (Repatriation) coverage.

Basically, Compensation Act claims must be made within a set time of the service related incident that caused the disease or injury; outside that time, the Statute of Limitations applies.

The Voyager crew who are now experiencing medical problems that are attributable to the disaster, and didn't claim for them for them before the time limit expired, have had to resort to Supreme Court action. The only winners being the legal profession.

Surely a grateful Government (and Opposition) could issue a medical entitlement card to provide cost-free medical consultation and treatment, after all, they already do this for the unemployed and disadvantaged!.

An issue high on the Regular Defence Force Welfare Association (RDFWA) agenda, is the inadequate coverage for those who served for many years but didn't gain 'eligible service' in Korea, Malaya, Vietnam etcetera, and paid-off before Mr. Whitlam changed the rules in 1972.

** Ivan (Chips) Gray, Welfare Officer.*



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SYDNEY 2000

FOREWORD BY
HIS EXCELLENCY REAR ADMIRAL PETER SINCLAIR, AO
GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

I was delighted to receive recently a copy of "Slipstream" which brought me up-to-date with current activities of the Fleet Air Arm Association.

As the Fleet Air Arm moves further down the rotary wing path, it is important that the history of the fixed wing era be preserved and recorded for posterity. "Slipstream" is making a positive contribution towards that latter objective, but I hope that it will not be too long before a more concerted effort is made to compile a comprehensive history of the Fleet Air Arm whilst some of the memories are still fresh in peoples' minds.

The restoration of the Sycamore helicopter and Sea Fury, Firefly and Sea Venom aircraft are labours of love, which deserve to be successful. They will make fine additions to the already impressive Museum fleet and I wish the projects well.

All members of the Fleet Air Arm, past and present, have special cause for pride in their contribution to the achievements of the Royal Australian Navy over its long history. Naval aviators have to deal with the most challenging aspects of both the sea and air environments and this engenders not only the highest of professional skills, but also a sense of spirit, dedication and comradeship which is second to none.

Through the publication of "Slipstream", and in other ways, the Fleet Air Arm Association is performing a great service in maintaining this 'Squadron Spirit', and I wish it continued success in this important role.

Governor



HIS EXCELLENCY
REAR ADMIRAL PETER SINCLAIR, AO
GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

ALBATROSS 'HAPPENINGS'

Many of our readers may be interested in an update on activities at the Naval Air Station. The past decade has seen many changes in the Fleet Air Arm. Since the loss of the aircraft carrier, naval aviation has shifted focus towards a predominantly rotary Fleet Air Arm. Recent developments and future plans for NAS indicate that aviation will continue to play a major role in the RAN's operations.

Despite the austere economic climate there has been a significant amount of facilities work conducted at Nowra over the past twelve months. Runway 26/08 was resurfaced last year and the refurbishment of runway 21/03 is almost complete at the time of going to press. As part of the latter activity there has been a major effort to upgrade the perimeter roads, and readers will be pleased to note that the old 'pig farm' road is no longer a menace to the suspension of four wheel drive vehicles.

Cost savings are being implemented through the increased use of AVTUR fuel as a replacement for the more expensive AVCAT in all aircraft used in shore operations. Parallel to this, we are upgrading electrical installations in the hangars to enable the more volatile AVTUR to be used. Other refurbishments in replacing deteriorated expansion joints in concrete hardstandings and resealing of bitumen areas will reduce the danger of damage to aircraft through FOD.

Thanks to the co-operation of the Army, four unwanted (but new) prefabricated hangars have been made available and are to be integrated into one large hangar on the former H hangar site. This hangar will provide much needed storage space for operational aircraft ground equipment and aircraft spares.

Approval has now been received from the Parliamentary Works Committee for the construction of Stage II Administration Centre and Squadron Building. This involves the expenditure of \$6.7 million and the builders are already on site for the Administrative Centre - where the old Stores Complex was located.

Introduction of the Seahawk into service continues most satisfactorily. Pilots report that the aircraft is a delight to fly and includes the latest in helicopter technology. For example, the satellite navigation system is so good that the aircraft can be monitored or flown around the GCA pattern with greater accuracy than that available with the precision approach radar. On occasion, comment on the performance of the PAR air traffic controllers does need the application of diplomacy!! Serviceability of the Seahawk has been most impressive and the Gulf Deployments have proved an ideal testing opportunity for operations in harsh climatic conditions.

Unfortunately progress with the Seahawk simulator has not matched introduction of the aircraft and a lot more soft ware work is needed to exploit the ASW training systems.

Number 2 Squadron RNZAF is now totally integrated into operations at Nowra and form part of an important Fleet training activity. While some of the locals have forgotten about 'the sound of freedom' there is no doubt that the joint agreement between Australia and New Zealand has been a resounding success. Favourable Fleet comments on the professional performance of the NZ aviators are received regularly.

723 Squadron embarkations of the AS350 Squirrels continue in our FFGs and when combined with our Seahawks prove to be a very cost effective high-low capability mix for Gulf-style operations. The HS 748s continue to provide valuable electronic warfare support to the Australian Defence Force and the Fleet in particular. A replacement is now beginning to exercise the minds of the future planners.

The effort continues to preserve the history of naval aviation and construction of Stage 2 of the Museum complex is moving ahead in leaps and bounds. The two storey restaurant and function centre is expected to be substantially completed by the Coral Sea Commemorative Air Day scheduled for 9 May this year. Further construction is planned for Stage 3 with the addition of landscaped gardens, a large car park and a multifunctional workshop.

The Australian Naval Aviation Museum is rapidly becoming a key tourist attraction in the Shoalhaven and an important asset in the preservation of the nation's aviation heritage. It is also a very valuable source of positive PR for the Royal Australian Navy.

Looking ahead, plans are progressing for the Coral Sea Commemorative Air Day which will bring together one of Australia's finest displays of aviation.

** Article kindly submitted by CDRE R. Partington, Commanding Officer, HMAS Albatross.*

RETIRING SECRETARY'S REPORT

I fell asleep the other night, and while I had my snooze,

I dreamed each member came right up and promptly paid their dues.

But when I found it was a dream, I nearly threw a fit,

It's up to you to make it true.

Please, oh please REMIT!

** Jim Lee*

THE NZ FARMER WHO MAY HAVE BEATEN THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

The place in history held by Orville and Wilbur Wright for making the first sustained power flight became even shakier when a retired US Air Force officer claimed that a German-born flyer achieved that feat in Connecticut two years earlier.

Even shakier, because this is not the first claim to the Wright Brother's place in history. The name of Gustave Whitehead was put forward some time ago, as having flown in August 1901, two years before Orville piloted their machine aloft on December 17, 1903. There are others who say that a Californian eccentric, Lyman Gilmore, flew in May 1902.

But the most convincing challenger is a retiring New Zealand farmer, Richard Pearse, who is said to have taken off from a country road near the small South Island town of Temuka. That flight, his champions say, took place on March 31, 1903 - nine months before the Wright Brothers.

Pearse nearly lost his place in history. When he died in 1953, he had spent two years in an old people's home and was bedridden.

By that time, few people remembered the flight back in 1903. He surprised his doctor by asking help to renew patents he held on an autogyro design; in fact, he said shortly before his death, he was concerned to protect the patents because the Wright Brothers had once breached one of them.

The doctors knew that Pearse had some old aircraft parts at his home, but even after the aviator's death no one took much notice. The beneficiaries of the estate were not interested in his belongings and told the executor to dump everything - including an aeroplane - because it was worthless.

By chance, an auctioneer brought in to value the estate suggested that a local aero club might be interested in the old aeroplane. It was not long before an Auckland man, who was collecting exhibits for an aviation museum, heard about the machine and grabbed it.

The estate received five pounds for the aeroplane and about three hundred sheets of paper regarding Pearse's designs that were found on a rubbish heap. The aircraft was one of Pearse's later designs.

One thing led to another. A newspaper report about the find brought forward Pearse's two sisters who told the new owner about the early flight. The search then began in earnest for the original aircraft involved in that flight in early 1903.

Someone remembered a pile of metal and junk being tipped over a river bank. The bank was searched, and piece by piece, the propeller and engine were uncovered.

At first the aviation world was unimpressed with the suggestions coming out of New Zealand that perhaps, after all, the Wrights were not the first people to have managed a powered flight. Over the years similar claims had been made only to be disproved by tiresome and painstaking investigation.

But gradually, Pearse's posthumous claim was taken more seriously, largely through the work of several dedicated men. One was the enthusiast who bought the aeroplane from the estate for five pounds, George Bolt, who was a retired Tasman Empire Airways engineer.

The other was a part-time author, Gordon Ogilvie, who spent several years piecing together evidence and wrote the most thorough account of the episode in 'The Riddle of Richard Pearse'.

One of Pearse's brothers had recalled helping Richard with the aeroplane. They had taken it - one day in June, 1901, he said - out on to the road running past the farm. They started the lightweight motor which Pearse had designed and built, and Richard had then taxied vigorously up and down the roadway. But the craft would not take off.

What is certain is that Pearse made many trial runs before July 1903, because in that month there was a tremendous snowfall which allowed witnesses to date their recollections after so many years had passed.

Ogilvie, in piecing together all the evidence he collected, came to the conclusion that success came on Monday, March 31, 1903.

The crowd who came to watch that day, saw Pearse make several unsuccessful attempts to get airborne. By late afternoon only a few were left.

A last effort was made, the remaining spectators restraining the machine while Pearse revved the small motor to its maximum. Then he was away and, at a speed of about 32kmh, the craft lifted off the ground, pitched and veered to the left and landed on a hedge. It may have travelled as far as 137 metres in the air.

Pearse hurt his shoulder in the crash and was taken to the Temuka hospital, but there was nothing broken. Unfortunately, the hospital was burnt down several years later and the records which could have pin-pointed the date of the medical examination were lost.

Whether he was able to maintain a powered flight before the Wrights remains a matter of controversy, but at least Pearse is now recognised as a pioneer aviator after so many years of neglect.

Whether Gustave Whitehead or Lyman Gilmore will be similarly honoured remains in question.

**** This article was written by Robin Bromby and published by kind permission of the Sydney Morning Herald.

* * * * *

HISTORY LIVES WITH THE HELP OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

The saying that every picture tells a story is certainly true of the pictures in the Australian War Memorial. But many of these pictures, or indeed, many of the memorial's other artefacts, would be unable to tell their story without the help of modern technology and the skill of the conservators at the memorial's Mitchell Annex.

Conservation has been described as 'preserving objects for the future'. This includes ensuring they are stored in an environment designed to prolong their life, handling them correctly (and as little as possible), using non-destructive, reversible conservation treatments, and displaying them in a way that involves a minimum of exposure to pollutants and risk of damage.

Conservation in Australian museums is much younger than the museums themselves. The War Memorials conservation laboratory at Mitchell was the first purpose-built laboratory of its kind in Australia and it's only twelve years old.

It had its beginnings in the report by a committee of inquiry set up to examine national collections and museums in Australia. The report stated: "As the deterioration of valuable collections in Australian museums, great and small, has reached the proportion of a crisis, conservation should have a high priority..."

The War Memorial, which at the time had 12,000 art works, 40,000 relics and 240,000 photographs amongst its large collection, took up the challenge. Its laboratory of 3,000 square metres was opened in 1980.

Now eighteen conservation staff work in five specialised laboratories: metals and wood, paper and photography, textiles, paintings, and analytical chemistry.

They are backed up by administrative staff and the Contracts Conservation Unit. Students from the conservation course at the University of Canberra often help out, gaining valuable experience in the process.

Despite the number of conservators, the well-planned building and the sophisticated equipment, there is more work than the staff can handle. Some items are sent to outside conservators for treatment. Large relics that cannot be treated in-house because of their size are tested by outside organisations.

The three conservators in the memorial's metals and wood laboratory care for a wide variety of objects including those containing stone, concrete, plastics and rubber. They have to consider all aspects of each material in an object so they can use the most suitable treatment, storage and display techniques. For example, bronze in a gun may react with wood and steel, hastening the deterioration of all.

The range of artefacts treated in the paper and photography laboratory is also wide: letters and

diaries (some dating from the Crimean War and the Boxer Rebellion), parchments, posters and maps, watercolours and drawings, even papier mache models, as well as the memorial's large collection of photographs, some dating from the 1850's.

Paper is most at risk from its own acidity, an inbuilt problem compounded by exposure to light and changing temperature and humidity. Preserving paper involves treating it to slow or halt the deterioration, and storing it in a stable environment.

Relics treated in the textile conservation laboratory range from uniforms and their accessories, such as buttons, belts, leather boots and webbing, to flags, saddlecloths and embroidered articles.

Correct storage is also of paramount importance for textile objects. The conservators devote most of their time to preparing items for storage and also for display in the memorial's many galleries.

The memorial has about 3,000 oil paintings, all under the care of the paintings conservators. The collection includes paintings by some of Australia's best known artists, from the official war artists of two world wars to, more recently, Sir Sidney Nolan, who donated his "Gallipoli" series. The paintings conservators need both scientific and historical knowledge to treat the diversity of art materials and painting styles in the collection.

Modern technology comes to the fore in the work of the analytical chemistry laboratory. Techniques such as infrared and ultraviolet spectroscopy are used on the premises, while the memorial has access to the facilities at the Australian National Gallery for X-ray and ultraviolet vidicon inspection.

Other highly technical analyses such as X-ray diffraction, scanning and electron microscopy, mass spectrometry and refractometry are carried out for the memorial by other Canberra institutions. These tests help the analytical chemistry staff determine the composition of items in the collection and the materials used to repair relics in the past. They also help staff to evaluate new conservation materials and techniques.

A brand new 'state-of-the-art' computer system to link all parts of the War Memorial is the latest in technological aids. When completed, this system will hold all information about each relic: registration details, condition report, photograph, location and movement details.

Computerisation will greatly help the conservators monitor the condition of the relics. And now that the relics are stored in arguably the best museum storage in Australia, that task is much easier.

The nation's heritage is in the best of hands at the Australian War Memorial - the hands of the dedicated conservation staff. As senior metals conservator, David Hallam, says: "Without a Conservation Section the War Memorial collection would gradually disappear and wouldn't be usable by the Australian public in the future."

*** Article written by Ann Parkinson and reprinted with thanks from the Dept of Veteran's Affairs newspaper, 'Vetaffairs'.*

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HISTORIC FLIGHT UPDATE

SEA VENOM RESTORATION

Since my last report, we have been able to do a considerable amount of work to WZ937. It was decided after spraying the booms with undercoat, the final finish would not come up to the standard we required. It was decided then to strip all of the old existing paint from the Aircraft instead of just sanding back. This has taken many Saturdays and Sundays to accomplish. We are desperately hoping that by the time of the re union in May that the aeroplane will look in all its old glory.

Our request in the last issue of Slipstream for photo's of WZ937 was answered within one day of being posted. Thanks to Graham Walker for his photo's. Also thanks to Ben Beningfield for his letter.

Our request for this issue is for any photo's of Venoms fitted out with DEL MAR target, or with Ikara. I think the Ikara request might be asking a bit much, as it was top secret at the time.

Meanwhile WZ895 has been progressing slowly. At this point of time the aircraft has been broken down into its major components, ie wings inner and outer removed, tailplane removed, booms removed and main undercarriage legs removed. Two major jobs are in progress at the moment, one is to remove the whole canopy section, which if you don't mind me saying is a right pain in the ---. The other is to remove the metal side of the engine fire wall, again not an easy job. With these two items removed, it will allow us to re fabric the fuselage properly. If anyone can remember how to get the Stbd Acre 9 unit out you are quite welcome to come and have a go. Also where are all those wing fuel tank removal experts, plenty for you to do as well. We are fortunate in having a skinny Subby working on the team, he got the oxy bottles to remove, still hasn't quite figured them out as yet.

Jules Ducret hops into the cockpit every now and again, looks around at the mess we inherited, scratches his head and flees to another job. Just going back to the Acre 9 units for a moment, I thought I was being smart in picking the Stbd one to remove, thought it was the easy one, gave the port one to Rod Tremlett to remove, he had it out before I had even removed the heat exchanger unit, oh well you can't win them all.

Welcome to Ken Park, our newest recruit, says he is really enjoying himself. He has been very busy removing all the hydraulic pipe lines from the main fuel tank bay and gun bay. Don't think he is going to need an oil change for a while.

I had a very welcome phone call from the New

Zealand people who operate a Venom explaining briefly how to start a Venom using air. They are following up with a letter explaining in detail how to go about it. Once again we hope that our Sea Venom may be running in time for the reunion in May.

Tony Penno Project Manager.

GANNET XA434 RESTORATION

Gannet XA434 (846) spent some twenty two years as either a guardian of the main gate to HMAS Albatross, or, as a public display on the old dummy deck. During this time the aircraft, being exposed to the elements, the paint work had virtually become baked to the aircraft skin, which in retrospect restricted any evidence of corrosion.

On the 28th May 1990 a dedicated group of volunteer workers took on the mammoth task of refurbishing the aircraft to a static display level for exhibition in the new Naval Aviation Museum, Nowra.

It was first thought that we may be able to get away with just feathering the edges. However, this proved very time consuming and the decision was then made to chemically strip the aircraft back to bare metal. This procedure took many hours of work out in the open behind 'J' hangar which at times was very cold and windy. the stripping completed, the aircraft was moved to 'E' hangar where the final cleaning of the external surfaces and the detailing of the cockpits was carried out. Also repairs to the wings were completed.

Fronting up religiously every Saturday and on the odd occasion during the week, our tireless bunch of toilers, (who became addicted to the task) brought the aircraft up to her present state as can now be seen in the Museum.

In conclusion I would like to relay my thanks to the various departments at HMAS Albatross who rendered their assistance and particular thanks to Ray Larder, Cris George, Ron Ross, Ken Day, Rob Partington, Dave Mowat and Ralph Turner who made the whole project work.

Don Parkinson, Project Manager.

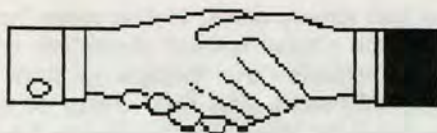
This is the last report from Don relating to the Gannet, we thank him for keeping us informed. (Ed)

SYCAMORE XD 653 RESTORATION

A very brief report as the aircraft is all finished except for the painting, which we hope will be completed by May. In the meantime, a lot of hours have gone into stripping the old rotor blades back to bare wood and repainting them.

We are now starting on Wessex 31A N7-217 (827).

Don Parkinson Project Manager.



CONTACT COLUMN

GEORGE CROSS ISLAND ASSOCIATION

The following letter from A.(Tony) Spooner DSO, DFC, Air Forces Vice-President of the GCIA, is reprinted here in part only...

Dear J.A.

Whilst in Malta, I had a lot to do with 830 Squadron and a bit also with 828 Sqdn. Several 830 pilots and observers including their (then) active CO, Lt 'Pancho' Pain, DSC, actually flew as supernumary crew members in my ASV equipped Wellington (I was CO of the Special Duties Flight-Luga, hunting down ships at night for the Navy [Force K] and the FAA [830/828] to attack). I knew both Howie and Frank Hopkins and signed up the latter as a GCIA member before he died. Edgar Bibby DSO, DSC, was a good friend. He died not too long ago after a long illness. Jackie Sewell DSC, and I, were great friends. He scored nine and a half victories in Fulmars before being killed in 1941 or '42. I occasionally now meet Stewart Campbell (830), who had to ditch on 11/11/41 and was a POW until escaping. Also Myles Osborne DSO, DSC, now living in Spain, has given me the true account of the disasters of that night. He was also a POW due to the stupidities of on that night of the 11/11/41.

I actually saw poor Lt Stevenson (830), being shot down. Steve had flown with me on several occasions. We tried to drop him water etc. in Mae Wests.

If you have any members who were in Malta between 10/6/40-13/5/43, please ask them to join our George Cross Island Association via Don Mogg (ex-RAF/RAAF), 70 Lancaster Street, COORPAROO, Queensland, 4151.

Yours fraternally, Tony

*** A short biography of the writer appeared in the January '92 edition of Fly Past magazine. Tony and his crew became one of the most successful and decorated, of all crews within Coastal Command - two DFC's, four DFM's and a DSO.*

*After 105 operational sorties, totalling over 1,000 hours, he was given a well deserved rest. During the build-up to the D-Day landings, he was appointed as liaison officer to ensure close RAF/RN cooperation during this greatest ever combined operation. ***

FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION OF GREAT YARMOUTH

Dear Shipmate,

I am a member of the above Association and thought that you might like this photo of the old HMS Albatross, taken in Bombay in 1943. (See front cover of Slipstream)

When my three year 'foreign' was up, I was at the FAA base at Nairobi, Kenya, and was drafted to HMS Albatross, then at Mombasa, for the trip back to UK. She was at that time operating with 'Walrus', but the day I joined her, all the kites were flown off and we sailed back to UK empty, calling at Cape Town, W.Africa and Gibraltar and home to Devonport.

We caused quite a stir as we sailed into home waters and into the home base with, as you can see by the picture, our unusual

camouflage, almost white with a dark destroyer with a high bow wave painted on her side.

We were all given weekend leave and on return to the ship, collected our gear and sent to the FAA main base, Lee-on-Solent.

What happened to the old 'Albatross'? I don't know, never heard of again. She was a lovely ship and as there were no aircraft on board and I had nothing to do, I volunteered for look-out duties and spent the voyage home as look-out on the port wing, just below the bridge.

If this is of any interest to your members, I was a PO/AF(O) and finished up at the School of Aircraft Maintenance (SAM) at Worthy Downs (HMS Kestrel) and was demobbed at the end of 1945.

We received your Contact Column from January '92 Slipstream with the letter from our secretary and loved the jokes overleaf.

Good luck to you all from us 'Poms' and keep in touch with the 'old country'.

Yours sincerely, R.D.S. Baldrey.

BANKSTOWN AERODROME 45/47 & THE BPF

Dear J.A.

I read 'Slipstream' with great interest, especially the Contact Column. I would like the address of Harry Bannister of the PONAM Association. (page 8)

I lived at Bankstown for a number of years. Under cover of darkness, late one night (I can still see the search lights above), bus loads after bus loads of service personnel arrived at Bankstown Aerodrome.

After a few days Bankstown was hit by a very large number of sailors. These half-starved sailors, eyeing our well stocked fruit shops. They couldn't believe what they saw. Neither could we; uniforms hanging off thin shoulders, war tired, lonely, sick, and some still in shock who had lost their ship. Most had not seen any pay for such a long time.

Bankstown people opened their hearts and homes. Soon the Bankstown British Centre opened, I worked there with the boys and also helped in the kitchen. There was games, dancing and lots of singing, they WERE the good days, 1945/47.

I have a number of photo's of these men, some may have passed on, but I would like to send them to Harry Bannister, he may find their grandchildren, sisters, brothers or wives.

I remember Ray Flower, R. Walters, Eric Brooks, Eric John Horsley, Jerry Connolly (who got back 3 minutes after his mum died), Alf Wood, Alf Hemsworth (who married Connie Woods, an 'Aussie'). Like one of your readers wrote, 'the mind grows dim'.

At the time I was with the Voluntary Women's Naval Service as an SBA. We moved our quarters to Snapper Island where women had never been before, it was here that I met my husband Ken. Three years later I returned to the Bankstown Aerodrome to work as a spray painter and fabric worker. The Navy huts were still there but housed the British Baltic Sea refugees. Their life was hell!

God's Blessings and mine. Francis Greenaway. (nee McKee)

The recent 'attack' on the Brits by the PM generated a few letters, the following par summarises the whole: *'Those of us who fought on Land, Sea and Air, could not be responsible for the mistakes of POLITICIANS, so let's hope that this speech will not damage our relations between our allies'* ***** CONTACT PR OFFICER FOR ADDRESSES OF CORRESPONDENTS *****

THE ROMANCE OF FLYING FROM A CARRIER

Who am I to write of flying, let alone from an aircraft carrier, when I am not a pilot? And how does romance enter into it?

All the so called romance and glory goes to the pilot - and the risk too. But let me tell you of how the aircraft mechanic feels as he watches his aircraft take-off from an aircraft carrier at sea, and finally to return to land-on at the conclusion of the flight.

In the days when aircraft consisted of a lot of piano wire, Sitka spruce and fabric, flying was enjoyed by a comparatively small number of people who relied upon the seat of their respective pants, and their devil-may-care attitude toward life in general. Small wonder flying was considered to be romantic: it was!

Looking back, the picture seems to have changed overnight, with the outbreak of war, the role of the aircraft, and mass production. Individually, pilots thrilled to being in the air at the controls, but flying became a grim, serious job for thousands, and the romantic aspect faded to the hum-drum existence of a taxi-driver or highway trucker. The romance of flying was dead.

During the earlier days, some of the glamour, excitement and colour of the pilots rubbed off on the mechanic who looked after the aircraft. For an aircraft had a personality, and mechanics tended their machines with pride and loving care. But, just as flying became less romantic, so too, the aircraft mechanic's attachment to his aircraft was supplanted by 'centralised' maintenance, specialisation, and what at times became a monotonous and oft thought thankless task to 'keep-'em-flying'.

Thus it had become for me, when I first stood on the deck of a carrier and took part in the preparations to fly off the ship's aircraft. What an engaging picture! Aircraft being ranged on the flight deck by the handlers, to all appearances too closely bunched together. Mechanics giving their aircraft a last minute check. Final orders from the bridge coming over the loud hailers. "Aircrew, man your aircraft. - Start up". The roar of a thousand harnessed 'horses'. Propellers

dissolve into silvery discs, inches away from rudders and wing tips - wind lashed chockmen lying on the deck at the wheels - the 'thumbs-up' from 'Bats'. The ship turns into wind. The final check of wind speed over the deck by 'Wind', our nickname for the control room assistant and his hand held anemometer; reminiscent of the mythical Greek god Mercury in very earthly dungarees, holding the stage and enacting his little drama, legs braced against the wind, his outstretched arm, the spinning cups of his instrument. After what seems a long delay, the green light flashes from the control bridge. "Fly off aircraft". The flight deck officer gives the signal, the engines roar becomes a thunder and one by one, in quick succession, the aircraft take off, climb free of the ship - a happy 'jink' to starboard, and away on their mission.

The immediate thrill of watching the aircraft take-off was replaced by the thoughts of pilots and crews as the aircraft rapidly disappeared from view. How did

they feel, miles from their ship, over an endless expanse of restless sea, with no familiar landmarks for comfort or solace? How dependant they are on their aircraft and on the men who keep the aircraft service-able! "They are at any time," you say. True, of course, but how much more important and responsible the aircraft mechanic's job seemed just then.



Finally the aircraft reappear. First specks in the distance, then quickly growing larger, to zoom past the ship in a fast 'beat-up', the natural expression of jubilation on return to the island haven. The loud speakers blare, "Stand-by to recover aircraft." Trained crews take up position. The ship is ready for the final act, and what a performance! All the drama and tension of a high trapeze act in a three ring circus can be felt as the pilots culminate months of training and practice to bring the aircraft safely back to a rolling, pitching deck. One is gripped by the amazing sureness of an arrester hook as it picks up a wire and abruptly brings the aircraft to a stop: the coordination and split second timing of the landing routine: barriers go down, the aircraft taxis forward, the barriers go up, wires are reset, the next aircraft is already in the landing 'groove' over the ship's stern. The 'goofers' watch from vantage points in the island and sponsons. The keen eyed air mechanics watch for any signs of trouble with their aircraft: the puff of 'smoke' of a propeller 'pecking' the deck, or a bursting tyre. The happy relief on every face when all aircraft are safely back on deck. The performance is

over. But work on the aircraft is not over.

While some aircraft are in the air, others are in the hangar being readied for their turn to fly. The men are on the job, working long tedious hours in cramped quarters, under artificial lights, and some stomachs which never will get used to the roll of a ship at sea. Yes, taking part in the 'play' requires a lot of hard work from one and all. By now, though, the initial impressions of confusion have been distilled into a realisation of the integrated effort and vigilant attention which has been demanded of everyone to detail which has been demanded of everyone and which have welded individuals into a compact efficient team, working towards a common end.

Flying from an aircraft carrier is an exciting operation filled with tension borne of the element of danger. For those who play a part, it is a demanding and enriching experience in team-work and team spirit, seldom found to the same degree in other situations or occupations. All the hard work, sweat and trials are forgotten in the knowledge of the achievement and a job well done, which results in a glowing feeling of pride and satisfaction for all participants; a feeling of well being; a rich reward for any labour.

For me, at least, these were the necessary ingredients. The romance of flying was reborn.

* Article written by Wt.Eng.A/E RCN Gordon M. Cummings, ex-RCAF, 1951. After a tour of duty in HMCS Magnificent. With thanks to Canadian Naval Aviators and Associates Newsletter, October 1991.

GET A GRIP ON THIS ONE!

The following article appeared in the recent edition of 'TAGS', the journal of the Telegraphist Air Gunners Association of the UK. It was written by Terry Peet, Captain, Royal Flight, United Arab Emirates.....

' I realise that us younger members, I am 56 now, don't match the derring do of the gallant band of TAGS from the war years, but occasionally we did have our moments, perhaps I may be forgiven a peace time story.

On the 10th April, 1958, I was launched on a night anti-submarine patrol in a Gannet from Ark-Royal. The pilot and observer got on with their respective jobs while I settled down to a long night trying to keep in contact with Ark Royal on the HF radio. I might mention, it was blowing a gale and it felt lovely and cosy inside that Gannet.

The tranquillity was not to last as the pilot said, "I think we may have a problem". We had, the elevator was no longer connected to his 'stick' and he had no up or down control of the aircraft.

On hearing this news, the observer jettisoned his canopy, which does two things:- lets the gale into the aircraft with a noise like a thousand banshees, and removes the HF aerial from the aircraft. I heard someone say, "Stand-by to bail out"; and I believe the observer did get his leg over the side.

At this point, I found the control rod passing through my cockpit, hanging in two bits. Thinking of wider issues, such as, would I rather fly back than float, I managed to hold the two bits together and the pilot did a masterful job of flying us back and landing at Hal Far.

Only two things spoiled the outcome, being kissed by the Engineering Officer on arrival back at the Ark Royal, and turning left instead of right when being presented with a memento of the occasion.....'

RADAR TRAPS ITS INVENTOR

This was the newspaper heading some years ago when the inventor of radar, Sir Robert Watson-Watt was caught speeding by a radar trap and was fined.

The irony of the situation did not escape him and he put pen to paper and wrote a poem entitled:

"A ROUGH JUSTICE"

Pity Sir Robert Watson-Watt,

Strange target of this radar plot;

And thus with others, I can mention

The victim of his own invention.

His magical all-seeing eye

Enabled cloud bound planes to fly:

But now by some ironic twist,

It spots the speeding motorist

And bites no doubt with legal wit

The hand that once created it.

Oh, Frankenstein, who lost control

Of monster-man created whole

With fondest sympathy regard

One more, hoist with his petard.

As for you, courageous boffins

Who may be nailing up your coffins,

Particularly those whose mission

Deals in the realm of nuclear fission:

Pause and admire fate's counter plot

And learn with us what's Watson-Watt.

**Robert Watson-Watt

IF? You are one of the few people who have not paid their subs, which were due in January '92, this will be your last copy of Slipstream!

CRIBBED FROM THE CURATOR

The curator's quarters at the Naval Aviation Museum are a veritable 'treasure chest' for the seeker of Naval aviation history. Like any other type of history, it will only be as good as the information that is garnered and recorded.

There are large 'bricks' of historical content that are readily available because they were of sufficient impact at the time of occurrence to warrant extensive reporting.

The 'mortar' required to hold the bricks together, is made up of the photographs, letters, notebooks and diaries, generated by the people who were personally involved at the time. Each dab of 'mortar' consolidates the whole and reduces the conjecture.

Apart from anything else, first person narratives are much more interesting than the dry-as-dust official versions, which are often carefully 'pruned' to protect the guilty.

The following article is an entry from the diary of LCDR Haynes, DSO, RAN, which has been donated to the museum. It relates to an aerial attack carried out on German occupied harbours of northern Norway. (The aircraft mentioned is an Albacore.)

THE PETSAMO/KIRKENES RAID

Summer of 1941.

...During a Russian Convoy escort duty, the Admiralty, in their great wisdom, decided that we should raid Petsamo and Kirkenes with torpedo and bombs..

It was light all night and we thought it would be better done at midnight instead of midday, but such was not to be.

We were about 80 miles from the coast and 'steamed' in, in a fine formation to find the 'Gerry' 109F's and 110's expecting us and flying round a conically shaped hill. Before we could get into the harbour proper, we were all under attack.

A general melee occurred and we all forced our way into the Inner Harbour and dropped our 'fish', some of us had already been downed and it was everyone for himself. We (Bobby Head was my pilot and a most obedient chap) took off inland at first, thence to the north to hug the high cliffs of the fiord, all the time under fire from a 109F. My pilot was concentrating on close flying whilst I was the chap with the view, and was saying into the Gosport tube, "Slow down" - "Flaps down" - "Turn if you can", etc., etc., and the shot was hitting the rock, mostly ahead of us.

Finally we got to the head of the fiord and took our departure by ourselves for the carrier, Victorious, still

right on the deck. We thought at first that our opponent had taken off, but it was not to be. Instead of a beam attack, he went up a couple of thousand feet and started diving at us. Of course we were watching him and as soon as he was committed to the dive I would say to the pilot, "Down flaps" - "Slow down" - "Turn right or left", and from our flat out speed of 100 knots, we would decelerate to just above the stall, about 70, and the attacker would have to go up again. After a few goes at us, he must have decided that other game was easier and disappeared, thank goodness. We had a few holes, but in an hours time we were circling the carrier, looking for our chums. Not one appeared. We could see them striking the Fulmar fighters below, and a couple of Albacores, but no great assembly of aircraft.

We landed on and gradually the doom and gloom became evident, and out of our squadron of sixteen. (I think) only three remained. Well we joined forces with the remains of the other Squadron and did an attack on Tromso and some other place and in due course returned to Scapa.....

If you have any of the raw materials that the 'mortar' is made of, how about contacting 'Windy' Geale, the curator of the Naval Aviation Museum? I'm sure he would be delighted to hear from you, and, if you don't wish to donate your bit of 'treasure', arrangements can be made for copying.

* Article by Peregrine. With thanks to LCDR Haynes and Bob Geale.

* * * * *

RN FLEET AIR ARM ARMOURER'S ASSOCIATION

Calling all 'bombheads'! The Association has 393 registered members and is in contact with over 500. There are only three Australian members on the membership list at the moment, two of them from around the Nowra area. If you are eligible to join and would like more information, please contact:

Mick Holdsworth, Aylesham Lodge, Adisham Road, Barham, Canterbury, UK. CT4 6EY.

Items of national interest are high on their agenda as evinced by this item from their last Newsletter.

'NATIONAL CRIMPLENE BAN'

I ask you all to give your support to help ban the sale of Crimplene. Until recently it was not fully appreciated how much distress and anguish the manufacturers of Crimplene cause. Join this worthy cause to stop the senseless slaughter of baby crimplens.

** Many thanks for your Newsletter, Mick.

SPIN US A DIT

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY!

Nothing can replace that inner glow and warm feeling of self satisfaction that comes with your first major promotion. Joe felt like that when he had the 'anchor' pinned to his shirt sleeve to indicate that he was a Leading Hand.

Overnight, Joe grew to nine feet tall and could leap buildings at a single bound.

Within two days metamorphosis was complete. The once smiling, easy going Joe, was now an ideal substitute for Attila the Hun. The toothy smile was replaced with a scowl that seemed to say to anyone within range, "Watch it pal, this is authority you're dealing with".

As can be expected, he had quite a few problems at this stage, coming the 'bounce' with all and sundry and pulling rank at every opportunity. It was even suggested by one poor soul on the receiving end of Joe's new-found-power, that he should have the anchor tattooed you-know-where, so he could pull rank even when opportunity didn't present itself.

This didn't faze Joe one bit, he could suffer the slings and arrows etcetera, because he was a Leader and on the way UP, apart from that, he delighted in his perceived new power.

He became a real pain in the ear, and other points further south. Things were getting so bad that the Duty Mess Sweeper in Joe's hut, had to grease the door frames to prevent Joe's head getting stuck.

The big day arrived - comeuppance day - the big leveller.

Joe was advised by the Commander's Regulating Office that a bus-load of Sea Cadets would be arriving from Wollongong. They would arrive at the cinema at nine-thirty that morning and be billeted at Albatross for a week, Joe was to be the Leading Hand in charge of the group.

Joe felt a power surge through his scrawny hide, for a split second he almost felt quite faint. **IN CHARGE!** The words were music to his ears, his moment had arrived, a whole bus-load of Sea Cadets and he was, **IN CHARGE!**

No problems were envisaged with this little lot, he would make his mark. He could imagine how they would 'kowtow' when they found out that he was, **IN CHARGE**, with the full authority that the anchor on his arm bestowed.

The bus arrived with about two dozen Sea Cadets on board, they were all shapes and sizes and dressed in a variety of Navy surplus uniforms and hand-me-downs. The oldest member of the group wouldn't have been older than fourteen.

Alongside this 'shower', Joe was quite resplendent in his freshly starched and ironed working dress with razor sharp creases, his boots sparkled and his cap and gaiters were pristine white. Joe **WAS** nine feet tall.

As the bus withdrew, Joe paraded **HIS** division in front of the cinema.

He had a hell of a job on his hands making them dump their half-devoured meat pies, chocolate bars and soft drinks into the nearest garbage can. They tried to tell him that they had just bought the stuff as they came through Nowra, it was their breakfast!

Joe didn't want to know about it.

Eventually he had them lined up in some semblance of order, for twenty minutes he bellowed and roared as he put them through parade training; relishing every moment as he let them know who was boss and how tough the 'real' Navy was.

In line abreast he marched them from the front of the cinema, when they reached the roadway he moved them to the left in threes. At this point in the proceedings they got out of step. Joe brought them to the halt.

After discussing their probable ancestry at some length, and at full volume, he marched them off again, this time calling out the step, left, left, left right left. They stayed in step.....almost.

The 'almost', was a twelve year old Billy Bunter look-alike who was marching in the centre rear. He was so fat that he had knock-knees, when he marched, everything about him moved like the tide. Whilst on the march Joe tore strips off the poor little sod. The young bloke's short podgy legs were going like pistons, as he tried to change step without going base over apex.

Joe brought them to the halt, and then into line. Standing with hands on hips, he ordered the little fat bloke to break rank and report to him. The youngster complied. Joe towered over him like Goliath over David and proceeded to give him a real earful. In his concluding address to the kid, Joe said, "You're going to double up and down this road until I tell you to stop".

"Why?" asked the kid.

"Because", said Joe, "I'm a **LEADING HAND, GOT IT?"**

The kid looked up at Joe, wiped the start of a tear from his eye and uttered the immortal words, "You can go and get *stuffed*, you're not my dad!"

After that soul shattering experience, Joe changed and became quite a normal bloke again.

It's funny, you know, I can't remember what Joe looked like, but the kid....I'll never forget him.

* Article published in *Slipstream* by kind permission of Peregrine, from his book, 'Navylark'.

IT'S MOMENTS LIKE THIS YOU NEED.....

Exercising up north on Melbourne during a SEATO period, and operational twenty-four hours a day with one Gannet airborne at all times, found the Gannets of 816 Squadron with engine/gear train problems and they were falling out of the sky periodically. Pilots were reluctant to fly during this period (actual problem unknown at this stage until Lt. 'Wingnut' James landed back on board in a dying Gannet with bits and pieces flying out of the power plant.)

'Wingnut' landed despite the good advice from 'Air' to ditch the aircraft in the sea, and was awarded a 'gong' for his effort.

Effort being the operative word! For 'Skinhead' Kelson and 'Nugget' Williams who had been changing Gannet engines in 'A' Hangar more times than they had been changing their 'U' durps, considering how much sleep they'd had during this period. (They earned a medal)

However, with low morale it became necessary for the Squadron CO (LCDR Dadswell) to 'motivate the troops', so to speak, 'set the standard' etc., and so, on the day concerned, with his Observer and Crewman, manned a Gannet during this exercise.

The CO fired a cracker through one engine (with no result) and it was supposed to be a dud. So, he fired a cracker through the other engine successfully and was fully concentrating on his instruments and trying to keep the engine running when the paint around the engine panel (where the dud cracker had been fired) turned brown, then black, then burst into flames!

The CO, head down concentrating, ignored/didn't see/hear the flight deck crew jumping up and down and banging on the aircraft trying to get his attention etc.- and finally got the engine running to his satisfaction, looked up, ready to taxi to the catapult and was greeted with sheets of flame roaring back over the canopy! This resulted in a very fast shut-down and exit by the CO.

On reaching the deck safely, he looked up with concern for his Observer and Crewman, only to find that they had long departed.

We understand that the Observer who left his CO to burn was in hiding for several days.

* *Our thanks to ex-WOAVN Roger Hinrichsen for this article.*

* * * * *

Submissions for this column would be most gratefully received, also any other items of general interest.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Ladies and gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. We have a small problem. All four engines have stopped. We are doing our damndest to get them working again. I trust you are not in much distress.

* *Captain Eric Moody of British Airways as his 747 ran into a volcanic storm over southern Sumatra and plunged 25,000 feet before his crew managed to get the engines restarted, July 1982..*

Lord Castlerosse was taken to task by Nancy Astor over the size of his stomach.

"What would you say if that was on a woman?" she asked, pointedly.

"Half-an-hour ago it was," he replied.

EPIGRAPH

In memory of Maggie, who in her time kicked two colonels, four majors, ten captains, twenty-four lieutenants, forty-two sergeants, four hundred and thirty-two other ranks, and one Mills bomb.

* *On an Army mules grave in France.*

'STRINGBAG' MEMORIES

The following are true stories from the days of the Swordfish - reprinted here from the book, 'Salty Dips', published by the Ottawa Branch of the Naval Officer's Association of Canada.

YOU DO YOUR THING....., SIR!

A sub-lieutenant pilot was driving, with a Commander in the back of the plane. At a certain point, the sub said, "Do you think it's time we went back?" The Commander replied, "No, we are going to stay for a while." The sub said, "Yes, sir."

After about another half hour the pilot decided that was it; if he didn't go back then, he knew he wasn't going to make it. "Time we went back now, sir." The Commander replied, "No. We are going to carry on."

So the sub said, "Well, you take your half and stay and I'm taking my half and --- off."

* * * * *

And then there was the Swordfish pilot who force-landed in a nudist colony. When he came to, he looked around and said, "Geeze! I'm in heaven!"

For further information regarding 'Salty Dips', contact Bob 'Windy' Geale at the Naval Aviation Museum.

CONFIRMATION OF EAST COAST SIGHTING!

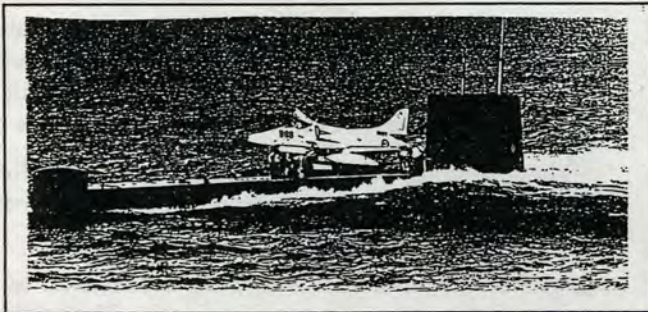
14 March, 1992 - Today is a red letter day for Giorgio Ambrusco, retired fisherman of Ulladulla, on the South Coast of New South Wales.

Whilst out fishing, almost twenty-four years ago, Giorgio saw something which the authorities later denied existed. This denial was to make him the butt of many jokes over the years, causing great distress, not only to him, but his family as well..

After all these years, Australian authorities are still non-committal on the subject, but recent photographs and information from McDonnell Douglas, USA, have confirmed what he saw.

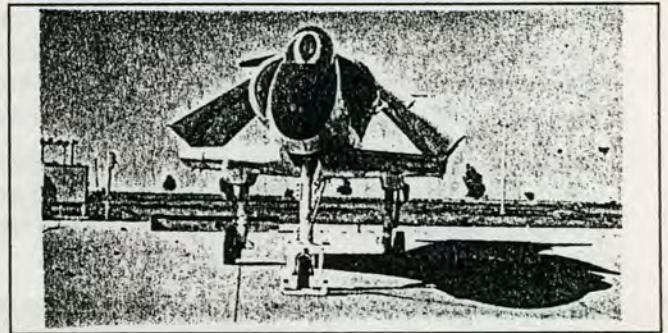
What did he see that day? The following is the transcript of a recorded interview he made with a local reporter on his return to shore all those years ago:

... "I was just drifting when I noticed a black object starting to rise from the sea about a kilometre away. At first I thought it was a whale surfacing, but as it got bigger I realised it was a submarine. Being a fisherman I've seen these things many times, but this was much bigger than the ones I've come across before. When it was fully surfaced I got the shock of my life when the forward deck appeared to open up and what looked like an aeroplane emerged. As quick as a flash men swarmed around it and the wings and tail seemed to get bigger. In no time at all, the nose of the thing lifted up, there was a tremendous roar and smoke and flame and the aircraft just appeared to leap from the deck. The whole operation only took a few minutes, while I was watching the aircraft disappear into the low cloud, the sub just vanished. My heart just go bang-a-bang-a-bang and I thought I was having a funny turn."....



Enquiries made at the time to RAN Air Station, Nowra, and the Department of Defence in Canberra, failed to provide corroboration, but it **was** suggested that Giorgio was 'probably seeing things'. This turned out to be a polite statement of his supposed mental condition compared to what his so-called friends have said over the years.

McDonnell Douglas have confirmed the existence of a one-off specially modified A4 Skyhawk for submarine use, due to budget blow-out, the project was discontinued in 1969.

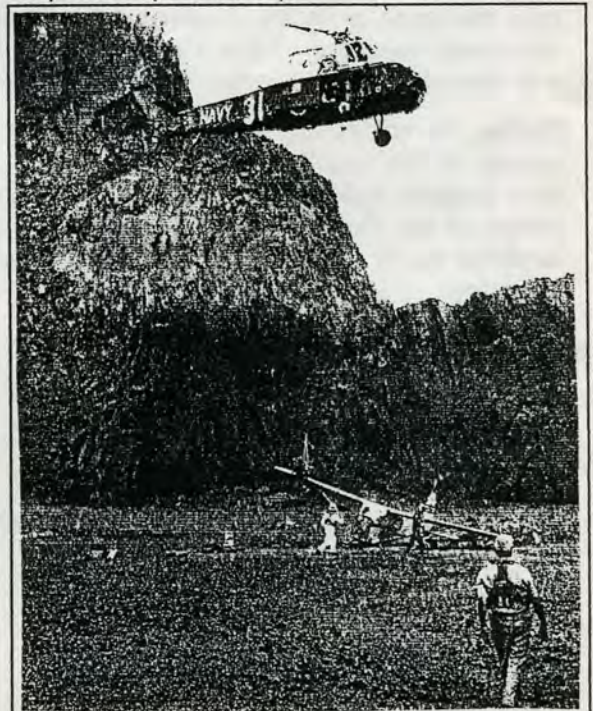


** With special thanks to Alf Ooladay, Defence Correspondent IJN News Service and McDonnell Douglas PR Centre.

* * * * * BLAST! FROM THE PAST

Extract from 817 Squadron Diary for 07APR75.

"With the heavy seas associated with Cyclone Betty abating, a Tracker from 816 Squadron sighted a downed aircraft on Mathew Island. An investigation revealed that the aircraft had crashed some eighteen months earlier. The owner, a Mr. Martinet, was contacted regarding possible salvage, he then made his way to the island via a French Minesweeper. After an inspection it was decided to salvage the engine only and the remainder of the aircraft was destroyed by 817 Squadron (Armourers).



NB: The light aircraft had crash landed in the crater of a dormant volcano. Wessex 31, shown in the accompanying photograph, is now on display in the Naval Aviation Museum, Nowra.

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

TASMANIA

One of the first things you learn when you join one of the services, is never volunteer for anything. So it was late in 1990 I somehow volunteered to try and form a Tasmanian Division of the Fleet Air Arm Association.

Two circulars were distributed to all known ex-Birdies with very little result. Working with Bob (Tassie) Douglas, we decided to call a meeting which would decide the matter one way or the other.

So after another circular and quite a few phone calls, on the 11th of August, 1991, after receiving nine apologies, ten ex-Birdies and their wives, met at the Folies Hotel at Campbell Town for a counter lunch.

With this pleasing result, it was agreed to form a Tasmanian Division, somehow, once again, without volunteering I was elected President. Margaret, my wife, took over the dual role of Secretary/Treasurer, and others formed a committee of five.

We decided to meet every three months for the present, these meetings were to be in the form of a counter lunch or barbecue to enable family involvement. We have since held two successful barbecue meetings and our membership now stands at 21 members and one Associate member.

At the present, most members are from the North of the State, but with the efforts of Les Kube, interest from the South is on the increase. Also, Tasmanians who were members of the Victorian Division were, with their consent, transferred to the 'Tassie Div'.

During the colder months, it is planned to hold a couple of film nights with members bringing along their photo's, slides. One member has a couple of videos of the Fleet Air Arm with aircraft doing deck landings etc. It should result in a couple of nostalgic evenings.

** Barry Simpson*

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Just a few lines to bring you up to date on what is happening this side.

The Annual General Meeting is over and the election of Office Bearers is as follows:

President - Hilton Devereux

Senior Vice - Ric Hammond

Junior Vice - Eddy Cook/'Pappy' Gault

Treasurer - Jim Caldwell

Secretary - Theo Bushe-Jones (AGAIN)

Committee - Harry Webster, Lou Burns, Lyn Crew, Neil McGrillis, Ron Tate, Tom Bennett, Jack Suriano, Bill Lake.

John Green will not be able to attend the Reunion, he had an altercation with another motor vehicle when he failed to see a stop sign hidden by a tree. He is up and about but received injuries to his legs, back and arms. The car received some major damage, so things being as they are, John will not be able to make it. I am trying to get someone to take his place.

Ron Tate was elected as Junior Vice President of the Naval Association and now taken on the responsibilities of high office. So far it has not spoiled the Casino outings.

Went with Lou and Harry Webster and wives to breakfast at the Casino, Sunday March 8th. Breakfast real beaut but the Casino was a disaster, no one had a win, not even 'Mr. Poker Machine' Ron, but it was a good outing.

Ran to earth A.J. Cox who is also making the trip to the reunion, also 'Murlex' Bradley, so we have two more.

Haven't seen anything in the papers about the Reunion News Release. When was it to come out?

We have a barbecue planned for Sunday 5th April at Camp Markham, HMAS Stirling, so we are hoping for a good fine day so the kids can take in the beach, and of course, we are out of the elements.

Spoke to Keith Murdoch a couple of weeks ago and he is still OK, has his days but is still partaking of a drink on a hot day, having a joke and not letting things get him down.

'Pappy' hasn't taken his Glad to the Casino for another week-end outing, can't figure out if it's lack of money or he's been banned. Haven't seen any posters there with his angelic face attached.

Ric Hammond has returned from visiting strange lands, like Queensland, where he spent a couple of months. He's not enjoying the best of health but goes fishing most days - I believe he actually catches fish!

Everyone else is in good health, to the best of my knowledge, and all are looking forward to the reunion and catching up with the mob.

Bryan Dunn will not be attending the reunion as he is going to Nowra at a later date for the Photographer's Reunion.

Must get this off or will not be in time.

Regards to all and we are looking forward to the reunion and meeting up with all the blokes.

**Theo Bushe-Jones*

DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH NAVAL AVIATION AND THE AUSTRALIAN FLEET AIR ARM

IN THE BEGINNING *Continued.....*

Corsairs from Formidable, Avengers from Formidable and Implacable and Fireflies from the latter disembarked to Nowra on 23 and 24 August. With the end of the war, there was little need for operational training for these squadrons and thus flying from Nowra was considerably reduced in comparison with the earlier disembarked periods. In September and early October, the majority of the American built aircraft were withdrawn from the squadrons, taken out to sea and dumped in their hundreds. Formidables Corsair squadrons were the first to leave Nowra, the personnel embarking for the United Kingdom on 25 September, and within a month the last squadron, 1845, had gone. The Firefly squadron from Implacable, 1771, had been disbanded as early as 14 September in order to provide aircraft and crews for the Light Fleet Carrier squadrons which were being converted from Barracudas to Fireflies. Implacable's Avenger squadron, 828, survived the general dissolution as it was the most recently formed operational squadron in the British Pacific Fleet and the carrier was scheduled to remain until Spring of 1946.

By the end of October the Royal Navy's air organisation in Australia was supporting a fraction of the number of aircraft which had been in the area two months earlier and it was decided to close down all of the Air Stations with the exception of Schofields, close to Sydney. Nowra was therefore decommissioned on 15 November 1945, at which time its parented units consisted of 723 Squadron, with 10 Martinets and No 3 and 7 Mobile Air Torpedo Maintenance Units. After dispersal of these units and the MONAB itself, the RN advised of its intention to close RNAS Nowra early in 1946. On the 15th of March RNAS Nowra was vacated by the FAA and returned to the RAAF. The only unit remaining in occupation was RAAF BTU. The RAAF listed Nowra Airfield "to be retained but not maintained."

On 15th October 1946 the Department of Civil Aviation requested that Nowra be returned to its control. However on 27 August 1947 the Air Board advised that Nowra would be retained for Naval purposes, on 15th December 1947 the control of the Nowra aerodrome transferred to the Department of the Navy. Navy planning was for a Royal Australian Naval Air Station to be commissioned at Nowra in July 1948.

** Continued in next issue.....*

HAVE YOU SIGNED UP A NEW MEMBER LATELY?

LATE NEWS SNIPS

PLAQUE PRESENTATION

The NSW Division of the Fleet Air Arm Association, with its headquarters in Nowra, are the proud recipients of a plaque from the UK.

Mr. Les Palmer, who founded the first branch of the FAA Association in the UK twenty-two years ago, personally donated the plaque which depicts the crest of that nucleus group, the Birmingham Branch of the FAA Association.

At his request, the plaque was presented to the NSW FAAA President, Mr. Bob Cronin, by Mrs Edna Cronin. The presentation took place at the Navy Community Awareness Centre, Kinghorn Street, Nowra, on the 12th of March, 1992..

Since the inception of the FAA Association in Birmingham, a further twenty-one branches have been established in the UK.

REUNION '92 UPDATE

Only a few weeks to go before the big event takes place. Please be advised, if you DON'T REGISTER-YOU DON'T GET IN! Some of the 'locals' seem to have the mistaken idea that if they already have a pass to get on board, they don't need the Special Reunion ID. They are wrong! Without the correct ID, they won't be admitted to any of the functions.

Registrations are still being taken from far and wide. Some of the British Pacific Fleet veterans are also attending. One of them wanted to know if the hitching rings for horses were still outside the two pubs in Junction Street, Nowra. He'll get a shock when he finds out that not only have the hitching rings gone, the pubs have disappeared too!

For those people requesting the times for each event during the week of activities, this information should be finalised shortly. An added attraction are the Joy Flights offered at very special rates by the Albatross Aero Club. If sufficient interest is shown by those with a sense of adventure who may wish to fly in a Tiger Moth, it is possible that one can be organised.

All enquiries should be directed to: Les Matterson, 252 Kinghorn Street, NOWRA, 2541 or (044) 217945.

U.K. VISITOR

Mr & Mrs H. Creasey of Preston, Lancashire, UK, whilst visiting the Naval Aviation Museum, called in to see National Vice President L. Matterson and NSW President Bob Cronin. Mr Creasey, an ex-RN PO Electrician had served on HMAS Sydney. He has made several visits to Australia because of his professional involvement with under-21 Cricketers.

STAGE 2 - NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM TAKES SHAPE

Since construction began on Stage 2 of the new facilities for the Naval Aviation Museum on 13 January 1992, considerable progress has been made.

This stage of the museum's development program incorporates the White Ensign Restaurant which was named after the White Ensign Club, Nowra. The Club's Board of Directors voted to wind-up the operations of the club and sell off the assets, after a period of losses which resulted from a number of factors. Once the club's affairs had been finalised and the building sold, the majority of the remaining proceeds was given to the Naval Aviation Museum after the Board of Directors had considered a number of proposals, for use of these proceeds, from the Nowra Community.

Memorabilia from the club has been saved and will be used for a display in the new restaurant to commemorate the contribution made by the club.

Other facilities which are included in Stage 2 comprise a kitchen with associated cool and freezer rooms, toilets, storage space and the main exhibition area.

Completion of Stage 2 is expected by the end of August 1992 and current planning envisages the museum being officially opened on Sunday, 1st November 1992, which is also the date of the museum's next air day.

The museum is now calling for dedicated people who are prepared to commit themselves to a day or two a week to assist in the operation of the museum. The Museum Director, Commander 'Spike' Campey, said that he hoped to have a group of about 30-40 helpers who are prepared to donate their time and energy to help the museum operate. Without this support, the museum's growth and establishment as a museum of international standard will not be possible.

Commander Campey went on to say that there were a number of areas in which these people would be employed. These included, retail shop operation, workshop, library, reception, administration, guides and floor-walkers to name a few. In some cases a training program will be given to those who have indicated a particular talent eg. tour guide, shop operation.

To give more details on these openings, there will be two information days held at the museum on Tuesday 14 April at 1030 and Thursday 16 April at 1030. These sessions are expected to last about an hour. Now is the time to become involved, from the beginning, so how about giving some of your time?

** Media release provided by the Naval Aviation Museum. The association requests that you give this project your full support.*

The enclosed letter and registration form should be completed and returned to the museum: PO Box A15, NAVAL POST OFFICE, NOWRA. NSW. 2540. (Enclosures only applicable to 2540 and 2541 Post Code area ONLY)



HELLO JILL - AGAIN!

In the last edition of 'Slipstream', the article 'Goodbye Jill - Hello Jack' briefly outlined the changes within the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS), since its inception in April 1945.

As that article stated, the acronym WRAN ceased to exist from September 1st 1991, and the title of all non-commissioned ranks became the male counterpart.

Throughout the 1980s, however - in line with the Equal Opportunity Act - previous male-only branches began to be opened to females. One of these was the 'Birdie' branch, and nowadays there are female ATCs, ATAs and ATWLs.

In fact, approximately 10 percent of the Navy's Birdies are female. At HMAS Albatross HS817 and HC 723 Squadrons, SITU (Seahawk in Transition Unit), the Avionics workshop and ASU (Aircraft Support Unit) all have females within their ranks.

Along with their male counterparts, the girls have the choice of joining up as apprentices, where they are required to complete a 27 month apprenticeship at HMAS Nirimba, or a ten week General Entry Recruit course at HMAS Cerberus, after which they must complete various courses prior to promotion.

Female Birdies also, theoretically, have an equal chance of going to sea with one of the flights - although there is limited opportunity for all Birdies now, with only the FFGs, HMAS Moresby, HMAS Success and HMAS Tobruk having flight capability - and only one aircraft per Squadron participating in any flight.

POATA George Viellaris has been a Birdie for 24 years and is currently serving with 723 Squadron. He says the females are expected to do the job they are trained for and that they do exactly the same daily tasks as the males in their branch.

The girls are certainly dressed for the task, no more dresses and heels - it's overalls or working dress, just like the lads.

However, after speaking with PO Viellaris and LSATC Sharon Horton of 723 Squadron, Alison Dickson and Kay Barter, ABATCs with 817 Squadron and ABATA Dimitra Domatulous, also of 817 Squadron, it became apparent that, in reality, there are still distinctions made between the Jacks and Jills of the Birdie world.

For example, some of the females complain about lifting heavy weights... the girls from 817 Squadron admitted that not all of them could do the job as well as the guys all the time. "We're not as strong as the guys in lifting heavy things - it does affect your work a little bit. You could do it, but you could injure yourself too, so you ask for help - the guys really get into you about that," they said. They added that the males also asked for help with lifting heavy weights, when necessary - but only from the other blokes!

PO Viellaris says that the girls who are not as efficient with the heavier tasks as the males are often assigned administrative tasks. Alison, Kay and Dimitra admitted that 'we do more clerical work than the fellas', and Alison mentioned that when she was pregnant, she became the computer operator.

Similarly, despite being held in the highest regard by PO Viellaris, Sharon Horton has not touched an aircraft for nearly two years.

Sharon joined the Navy via HMAS Nirimba in January 1985 and became the first female ATC to pass out. She is now employed running CAMMS - the Computerised Aided Maintenance Management System, which is a program that forecasts when an aircraft and/or its parts are due for servicing and overhaul.

Another distinction, according to Alison, Kay and Dimitra, is that the females are not allowed to use the Navy's spray paint - because it's carcinogenic properties could adversely affect their ability to conceive.

Male and female sailors can be given the same job to do, the same uniform to wear and may all be called Jacks, but there are still some who can conceive and some who simply can't. Within the Birdie branch this causes contention.

PO Viellaris said that before females joined the branch, regulators were able to post a flight crew to sea, no questions asked - because after training with a squadron, the next general step is the back of a ship. Now, the pregnancy of a member of a squadron can severely limit the make-up of a crew. Furthermore, PO Viellaris believes the girls have a 'far greater range of excuses' than the males for not going to sea.

As Alison states, there are a lot of reasons females may not want to go to sea. "I have a baby and I don't want to go on a two year draft. I'd rather stay here," she says. And even Sharon, who initially said she'd love to go to sea, added "...but it really depends on what phase of life you're at - for a female it's hard because she gets to a stage where she becomes maternal..."

Hmm. Seems there are some problems amongst the Birdies that they certainly never used to have to contend with.

** Many thanks to Denise Nicholls, HMAS Albatross, for this article.*

STOP PRESS

SEA FURY RESTORATION

We are making steady progress with the Fury.

A number of the cockpit control quadrants have been refurbished. The forward fuselage area is getting close to the paint stripping and close inspection stage, but so far there is still no evidence of any corrosion problems.

We are still having problems with obtaining the correct end fittings for the trim control cables, but I am sure we will overcome this.

We have contacted an aircraft hydraulic seal supplier who is sending us data on seal sizes and types.

We understand the engine build in Darwin is progressing but we haven't had a report on this.

** Oscar Harper. Team Manager.*

