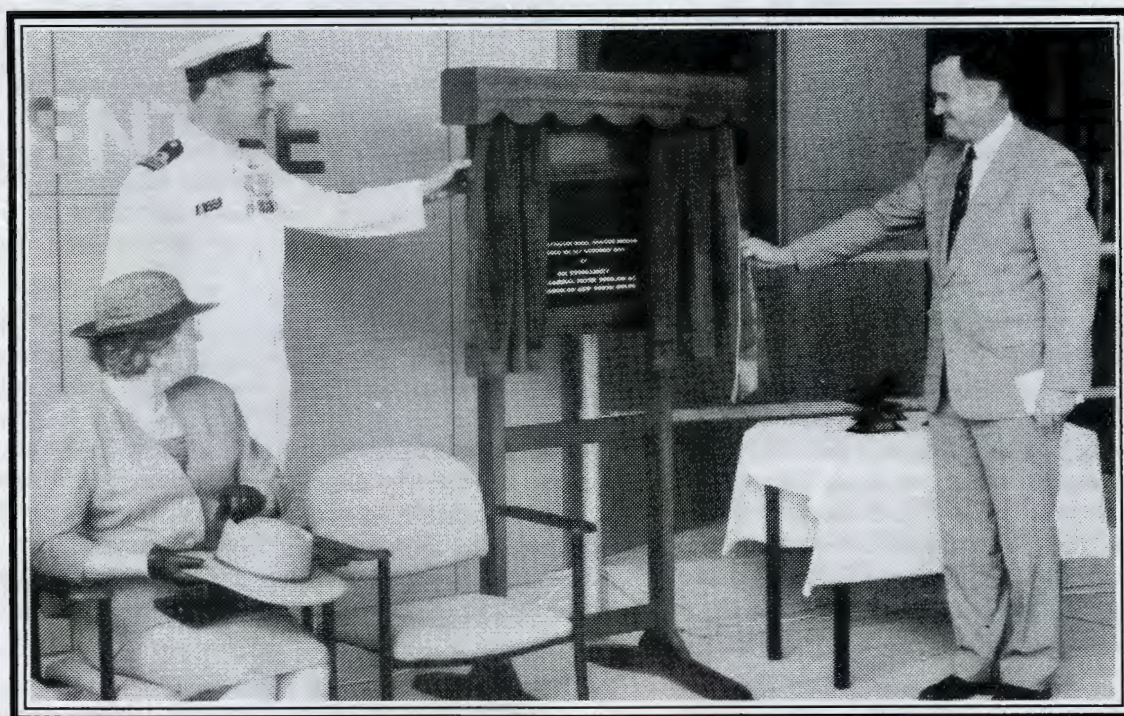


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# SLIPSTREAM



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## FOREWORD

By **COMMODORE ROB PARTINGTON AM RAN**

**Commanding Officer *HMAS Albatross***

The end of 1992 is almost upon us and it's an appropriate time to review some of the activities of the Fleet Air Arm over the last twelve months.

Undoubtedly the most important milestone achieved has been the reforming of 816 Squadron with Seahawk helicopters. The rate of progression of technology in the aviation industry continues to be dramatic and there would be no finer example of the technological leading edge than the S-70B-3 Seahawk. Given our difficult economic times the Navy has done very well and these aircraft are now vital assets at sea with the Fleet.

After almost a decade of persistent hard work by many people, the Naval Aviation Museum was opened by His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair AC RAN Rtd, on 01 November 1992. The Fleet Air Arm can be justifiably proud of this great achievement and the Fleet Air Arm Association has been, and continues to be, a major player in the development of this magnificent facility. Whilst there is still much to do, the development to date gives clear evidence of a top quality Museum in the making. I have yet to meet anyone who has not been highly impressed.

For those who have not visited the Air Station recently there has been a number of changes to the skyline. A new Squadron Administration Building has been completed up near 'A' Hangar and, the Operations Communications and Administration Building on the old Naval Stores site should be finished in January 1993. In addition, the WRAN Officer Quarters near the Wardroom has been converted into a day care centre for children. Predictably, it is known as 'K' Hangar and should be opened in February 1993. Courtesy of the Army and with Navy self help, construction of a new hangar is progressing on the old 'H' Hangar hardstanding. This hangar will provide valuable protection for aircraft, ground equipment and spares.

The Australian community work practices are undergoing great change at present and *HMAS Albatross* is experiencing its fair share. Most people are apprehensive about change, particularly when it heralds a possible modification in lifestyle. We must adapt and change our ways of doing things if we are to survive into the next century. That said, the changes that are implemented must be the best solution and must meet our requirements. The Air Station is developing a number of 'in house' options to conduct Depot Level Maintenance on aircraft and to carry out Base Support activities such as security, cleaning and gardening. These options plan on using our Service and Civilian personnel and are to compete against contract solutions from the private sector. My preferred choices are 'in house' options because the Service retains direct control, but it will mean significant changes in the way we have historically conducted Fleet Air Arm business. Better management and more productivity are key ingredients for the future. If we cannot improve our cost effectiveness a contractor will most likely win the day.

As you may be aware, I must leave *Albatross* in the New Year to take up my new posting as Commanding Officer *HMAS Stirling* / Fleet Base West. I have enjoyed every minute of my three years as Commanding Officer at NAS. During this time I have been in the best position to know the standards achieved and talent available in those who serve the Fleet Air Arm.

We have a magnificent group of people who go down to the sea in ships and aircraft, to those who went before them, please be assured the Fleet Air Arm remains in good hands.

Make I take this opportunity to wish all Slipstream readers a very Happy New Year.

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first fully sponsored issue of 'SLIPSTREAM'.

The National Executive, on behalf of the FAAA membership, wish to thank the President and Members of the Wardroom and Senior Sailors' Mess of *HMAS Albatross*, and the members of the Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association for their generosity in financing this edition. Their support is very much appreciated.

On Sunday 22 November, the annual service to commemorate the loss of *HMAS Sydney* (1941) was held at the Garden Island Naval Chapel. At the invitation of the Reverend Walter Wheeldon, one of the three Chaplains participating, myself and another member attended to represent the Association.

Unfortunately, the general opinion was that the congregation was well below the numbers expected. Someone voiced the opinion that it was because, 'the new generation didn't give a stuff about the Navy or its history any more'. Another suggested that civilianization of the Service was breeding a '9 to 5' attitude. During the sermon, even the Chaplain made comment that what was generally referred to as, 'Squadron Spirit', now appeared to be non-existent.

After church we were all invited to morning tea on *HMAS Melbourne*. As we were leaving the ship, the Duty Officer remarked that they were especially proud of the *Melbourne* - 'because our ship is **Australian** made'!

It would appear that the spark of pride is still there - it only needs the example of those in authority to rekindle it. \* *Peregrine*

## NATIONAL REPORT

The Federal Council of the Association met at *HMAS Albatross* on the 30th and 31st of October last. The Council meeting was officially opened by the Commanding Officer, Commodore Rob Partington. It was a particularly busy period at *Albatross* and we are grateful to him for giving his time. Those members of the Ships Company who assisted in making the meeting a success also have our gratitude.

On Friday the 30th, the Senior Sailors Reunion was

held in the mess, if my memory serves me correctly, this would be the 24th reunion. On the next day, a Fund Raising Ball for the Museum was held in the Wardroom, His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, was the Guest of Honour. On Sunday the 1st of November, the Governor officially opened the Naval Aviation Museum, this event was followed by an Air Display. On top of this, *Albatross* had commitments to the Shoalhaven Spring Festival which was held over the same weekend.

The Queensland Division was admitted to the Association and the Chairman of the meeting and National President, 'Toz' Dadswell, invited Queensland President, Barry Lister, to accept the Charter on behalf of his Division. We wish them well and hope they go from strength to strength. Barry is hoping that they will have in the vicinity of one hundred members. Let us all spread the word that we are active in the Sunshine State. Barry can be contacted at: 2 Wandarri Street, WURTULLA BEACH QLD 4575 - Phone: (074) 932934

The most significant thing to come out of the council meeting was the adoption of a new National Constitution. There were some changes to the original draft, nevertheless it is a great step forward. We owe a great deal to Geoff Vickridge (WA DIV), John Ikin (VIC DIV) and Colin Bushe Jones (ACT DIV), who formed the Sub-Committee and were responsible for producing the draft in a relatively short time.

Should any member wish to read the document, then I suggest that they contact their State Secretary who I am sure will make a copy available to them.

The National Executive have been tasked with examining the cost and design of a new lapel badge since more badges will be required in the not too distant future. The badge will be similar to that on the name tags and about the size of a ten cent piece.

'Pancho' Walter was duly elected Treasurer at the meeting. Unfortunately he was not with us, having been 'turned-in' by the Doctor. His blood pressure was such that he was about to burst a hydraulic line. Glad to report that he is now fit and well but a lot slimmer, his major feature remains the same.

During the course of the meeting it was noted that deceased former members of the RAN are now entitled to have the White Ensign draped over their

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\*\*Photograph front cover: History in the making - 'His Excellency RADM Peter Sinclair AC RAN (Rtd), Governor of New South Wales, and Museum Director, LCDR Staff Lowe, officially open the Naval Aviation Museum at Nowra under the watchful eye of Mrs Shirley Sinclair'. (01NOV92)



casket. Ensigns for this purpose can be obtained from the Commanding Officer of the nearest Naval Establishment.

Although the rain reduced the number of visitors to the Museum opening and Air Day, the Association sold in the vicinity of \$2000 worth of souvenirs left over from the '92 Reunion. The best seller being the Port. Please remember, we still have plenty of items left at reduced prices.

In conclusion, there has been a marked increase in people applying for membership, I have no doubt that this has been due to 'SLIPSTREAM' going national. We still need more members, so stir up old shipmates and get them to join.

\* *Ian Ferguson - Hon. National Secretary*

## WELFARE OFFICER'S REPORT

The Department of Defence, in conjunction with the Australian Government Health Service, is conducting a free service for assessment, counselling and, if necessary, testing for employees and ex-employees (including Veterans), who have been exposed to asbestos at any time during their employment with Defence.

Enquiries should be directed to the Occupational Health and Safety Officer in the Defence Centre or Defence Regional Office in the State Capital. (NOT the Department of Veteran Affairs)

### STEPS TO FOLLOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ACCESS THIS SERVICE:-

1. Obtain a questionnaire from the OH & S Officer in your State.
2. Obtain a copy of your Service Record and attach to the questionnaire. Your Medical Record is not required but may be attached if you have it.
3. Complete the questionnaire and return it with the other documents to the Defence OH & S Officer.
4. You will be contacted in due course for further assessment, testing etc..

### DEFENCE OH & S CONTACTS

NSW OH&S Officer  
Department of Defence  
PO Box 706

**DARLINGHURST NSW 2010 (02) 2662429**

VIC OH&S Officer  
Defence Centre Melbourne  
PO Box 1932R

**MELBOURNE VIC 3001 (03) 2825853**

QLD OH&S Officer  
Defence Centre Brisbane

Locked Bag 4  
Roma St. Post Office

**BRISBANE QLD 4003 (07) 2262857**

ACT OH&S OFFICER  
NCC-B4-04

Department of Defence  
PO Box E33

Queen Victoria Terrace

**CANBERRA ACT 2600 (06) 2668455**

SA Industrial Officer  
Defence Regional Office

Keswick Barracks

**KESWICK SA 5035 (08) 2939488**

WA Staff Relations Section

Defence Centre Perth

Locked Bag 5001

**FREMANTLE WA 6160 (09) 3112400**

TAS OH&S Officer

Defence Centre Hobart

Angelsea Barracks

**HOBART TAS 7000 (002) 212368**

NT OH&S Officer

Department of Defence

PO Box 4746

**DARWIN NT 0801 (089) 801227**

\* *I.G. (Chips) Gray - Welfare Officer NSW Division*

## OLD PILOTS NEVER LOSE THEIR SMOOTH APPROACH

On Sunday, 01 November 1992, a group of delegates to the FAAA Conference, and their wives, were leaving their Nowra motel to attend the opening of the Naval Aviation Museum.

An elderly 'Commander Air', 'Squadron CO' type, approaches the group with the greeting, "Good morning! How come all of you grey-haired sailors have such young, beautiful wives?"

Any comments, and they were many and varied, were quite superfluous.

\* *Alan 'Happy' Clark (VIC.DIV)*

## **HMS OCEAN - PEACETIME WARRIOR**

**PREVIOUS 'OCEANS'** - There have been four ships, apart from the present "OCEAN" bearing the name in the Royal Navy. The first of 1,833 tons, one of the old 'Wooden Walls' that saw extensive service in the Channel Fleet from 1761, when she was built, until the time she paid off in 1783.

The second "Ocean" was likewise made of wood. Launched in 1805, she saw varied service and was finally broken up in 1875.

The next ship to bear the name was an 'iron clad' built in 1860. She spent some time on the China Station before paying off in 1872.

The immediate predecessor to the aircraft carrier was a battleship. Launched in 1898, she had four 12 inch guns and twelve six inch guns with a displacement of 12,950 tons. She was capable of 18 knots and was used to protect convoys in the Persian Gulf before being sunk by a mine in the Dardanelles in 1915.

**THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER** - Not the largest of aircraft carriers, nor one of the best known, but nevertheless HMS OCEAN had enough interesting incidents in her twelve years of life to make an interesting story.

She was laid down in 1942 in Alexander Stephens Yard at Linthouse, Govan, Scotland, and launched on 08 July, 1944, by Lady Willis.

A handsome ship of just over 13,000 tons, her design had been slightly modified during her building to enable her to operate night fighter aircraft for the Fleet, and was fully equipped with the latest in Radar and aircraft direction devices. Her first commission should have been to join the war in Far East, but peace was declared before she reached full complement and VJ Day found her sat outside the Bar at anchor in Liverpool Bay.

Caspar John, the first Captain, was a great man, being on one hand an eccentric bohemian and on the other hand a firm and fair disciplinarian. A hard task master (Oh! How those bushy eyebrows would come together when he was angry), he made a first priority of the morale and welfare of his men and earned their great respect. He set out to - 'make from a metal shell a liveable, happy community with a sense of purpose'. His pep talks to the men were frequent and most appreciated.

**LAST SWORDFISH** - The last Swordfish to make an official flight from a British aircraft carrier departed from HMS Ocean at the end of 1945, carrying as passengers two distinguished officers, Vice-Admiral Sir Denis Boyd and Rear-Admiral M.S.Slatery. This Swordfish was the last of many whose activities resulted in the sinking or damaging of more than a million tons of shipping during World War Two. The most outstanding feat of the Swordfish was at Taranto when, on the night of 10/11 November 1940, a handful of these famous aircraft crippled the Italian Fleet and altered the balance of power in favour of the Royal Navy, for the loss of only two British aircraft.

**FIRST JET LANDING** - On 03 December 1945, off the Isle of Wight, LtCdr Eric Melrose Brown, 'Winkle' to his friends, landed a Vampire jet LZ551 on board. One month earlier an experimental Ryan Fireball XFR-1 piston jet made an emergency landing on USS WAKE ISLAND. However, the record for the first 'true-jet' to land belonged fairly and squarely to OCEAN. A large number of VIP's had gathered on board that day to see this dramatic event, amongst whom were the chief designers of DeHavilland, Hawker and Supermarine, as well as the Fifth Sea Lord and a large team of scientists and senior Naval officers. The landings and take-offs went smoothly and the anxious but highly impressed onlookers applauded this immaculate pilot's expertise. In the ten years that followed, Naval Aviation was to have its most successful and efficient period, during which, OCEAN contributed another 'first', that of night landings in complete darkness on exercise in the

Mediterranean in early 1946, by 1792 Squadron Fireflies.

Later, in 1946, the second commission in the 'Med' was proving uneventful. Life was a round of showing the flag at various ports throughout the Mare Nostrum together with exercises with the Fleet. That is, until that fateful day of 22 October when MAURITIUS, LEANDER, SAUMAREZ and VOLAGE were steaming North through the narrows of the Corfu Channel. Although the Medri Channel was supposedly clear of mines, SAUMAREZ was struck and badly damaged. In her attempt to tow the listing ship stern first, the VOLAGE herself was hit by another mine which wrecked her bows.

Ocean was on passage from Githionto to Argustoli but was soon diverted to the area to give what help she could. She arrived on the scene at dusk to find SAUMAREZ still burning and to hear that there were many serious casualties. Many of them were ferried to OCEAN and treated by her medical staff, together with a Greek doctor and staff sent to help from a Corfu hospital. Two of the injured died on board.

The carrier was able to provide a strong and expert fire-fighting team who had the advantage of having the most up-to-date equipment for fires at sea. The first party ferried over to SAUMAREZ was led by LtCdr Croome, a specially trained engineering officer. The night was spent transporting supplies for the firemen, food and drink for the survivors and bringing back more casualties.

By the next day the hospital ship MAINE had arrived at the scene and the wounded were transferred to her. A total of 12 dead from both SAUMAREZ and VOLAGE were buried in the British Military Cemetery outside Corfu Town at 21 Colcatronis Street, another survivor died from his wounds later and was buried in Malta. Thirty-one crew were never recovered.

On 11 November the Captain, Caspar John, gave a speech to his ship's company telling them, "We are going back to sweep the sea around Corfu whether the Albanians like it or not!"

OCEAN gave air support to the mine-sweepers, and cruisers stood by to shell any guns that might open fire. Fireflies flew off to patrol the airspace over Saranda Bay carrying eighteen, 60lb rockets, which would have packed a devastating punch if it had been necessary. However, the need did not arise and by nightfall of 13 November, the job had been finished and the OCEAN returned to Malta.

When the Jewish Exodus started in 1947, thousands of ships of every size and shape made for Palestine. OCEAN, along with her destroyers patrolled the Eastern Mediterranean with orders to stop and turn back these ships and escort them to Cyprus, where the Jews would be interned until the Mandate of Palestine was over. Later, the carrier became involved in the withdrawal of army and diplomatic personnel. The ship's launch continually circled the ship in Haifa harbour, dropping charges to deter frogmen and their limpet mines. The crane on the flight deck was kept busy loading aboard all army equipment until the whole ship was overflowing. May 14, 1948, was D-Day for the last British High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, the elder brother of the Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Cunningham. His actual departure was timed so that he crossed the three mile territorial line at sea at midnight.

So finished a long period of maintaining law and order and preventing war in a very unruly country. On the previous day the then Captain of OCEAN, W.R.C.Leggatt, gave a memo to the ship's company stating that, "Ships available, including OCEAN, should proceed to sea and be stationed at the last point of His Excellency's jurisdiction - the three mile limit - at 2400 on May 14/15. EURYALUS will pass close to the OCEAN so that we may say a last goodbye in Navy fashion - OCEAN will be floodlit and parade guard and band, destroyers will be illuminated." A signal was also sent to the officer commanding the 1st Irish Guards



thanking him for allowing their pipe band to join the tribute on OCEAN's flight deck.

After several voyages trooping to Cyprus and the Far East in 1950, OCEAN went back to Rosyth for an extensive refit in dry dock. Later, in the summer of '51, refurbished, re-actualled and re-armed, the ship was ready to go back into service with a new Captain, C.L.G. Evans, known as 'Crash'. A Naval combat pilot of WWII, he was credited with shooting down sixteen enemy planes. A stocky, flamboyant character with a fiery red beard, he was generally admired by his crew and was reputed to be able to land a plane on a sixpence. The ship left Portland in late July, first stop Malta, on what was to prove her furthest journey before returning home. It was to Korea!

At 4am on Sunday 25 June, 1950, the Korean People's Army crossed the 38th parallel. By the 28th they were in Seoul and another large force had landed at Kangung and Samchok. At the end of WWII the Japanese surrendered territory to the North of the 38th parallel to the Russians, to the South of that line the Americans. Over the intervening years this had become recognised as a barrier between both governing bodies, who each laid claim to sovereignty over the other. Russia believed that South Korea was outside America's protection and did not believe that the United Nations would interfere in the invasion from the North. However, by 02 July, after United Nations resolutions, a British and American task force was already off the coast of Korea.

HMS TRIUMPH was one of the first on hand, driving home her attacks on Haeju airfield and communication systems in the area. HMS THESEUS joined the fight in October 1951 to be relieved by GLORY in April 1952. Towards the end of January '52, OCEAN had left Malta for Cyprus with a task force to stand-by in case their presence was required in Egypt. Serious trouble had broken out in the Canal Zone and Egyptian terrorists needed quelling. The following day the riots moved to Cairo and many public buildings, including Sheppeards Hotel were burnt down. The Egyptian army had to be called in and fortunately they were able to take the heat out of the situation.

In February and March 1952, the days were spent in working up the new squadrons, 802 Squadron Sea Furies and 825 Squadron Fireflies. By the beginning of April the ship was ready, in good condition and with two well worked-up squadrons.

The morning of 05 April dawned and shortly before 9am the cable was slipped and OCEAN set sail for operational duties in Korea. By 30 April, the ship had reached Hong Kong where HMS GLORY was waiting to turn over her duties. From then on, the ship was on a war footing. The Sea Otter was transferred to GLORY and helicopters were embarked in its stead. On 05 May, OCEAN sailed for Japan escorted by HMAS WARRAMUNGA.

Although the war on land had at that time stabilised except for a certain amount of patrolling and skirmishing, the air and sea war was still very active. Each day the carrier planes strafed enemy communications, destroying gun positions and military installations, giving support to land forces and making photographic reconnaissance. During the summer of '52, OCEAN broke the record for the number of sorties flown off a one catapult carrier in one day by launching 123 sorties, thus beating GLORY's previous record and winning the Boyd Trophy for 1952.

British aircraft had a number of fleeting engagements with Communist MIG's but on 09 August, Lt. Peter Carmichael, in a Sea Fury of 802 Squadron, shot down the first MIG jet fighter by a British aircraft carrier pilot. The jet fighters certainly had the edge over the piston-engined Furies but it did prove the quality of the pilots aboard the ship.

After a respite from active duty from November '52 until April '53 in Malta, OCEAN rejoined the fight for a second term of duty when she sailed into Sasebo harbour on 17 May. There she

found GLORY at the end of her tour and about to sail for England. To speed her on her way, OCEAN sent a special signal, "Ecclesiastes Chapter Nine, Verse Seven", which translated means, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works".

OCEAN's pattern of duties was as before, but after the first patrols, back in Sasebo harbour, the ship and its company were to celebrate the coronation of our new Queen, Elizabeth. Ships were dressed overall and there were many distinguished guests aboard OCEAN including, RADM Clifford, RADM Olsen USN, and the governor of Nagasaki. On this same day, 02 June 1953, Sea Furies of 807 Squadron flew in formation in the shape of the letters ER over the area where the British and Commonwealth troops were fighting. These aircraft, assisted by Rocket Take-Off Gear, had been flown from OCEAN whilst moored to the buoy in Sasebo harbour. This unique and daring display was the talk of the United Nation's Fleet for many days. On 27 July, the long heralded truce became a reality and ships company could look forward to the announcement, 'WE ARE GOING HOME!' The war in Korea had proved the need for an air-striking force with maximum mobility - that of the Fleet Air Arm operating from an aircraft carrier.

The year 1952 saw the abdication of King Farouk in favour of his son. By 1953, General Neguib had deposed the infant king to rule Egypt, with LtCol Gamel Abdel Nasser as Prime Minister, the real power in the government. By 1956 his anti-western policy had antagonised many major nations culminating in his seizure and nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 26 July, 1956. Military action by the French and British governments did not occur until November when all diplomacy had failed. By 30 October, the British and French carriers, EAGLE, ALBION, ARROMANCHE and LAFAYETTE with escorts were in position off Port Said. This action was to be called 'MUSKETEER' - short, sharp and very painful. On 06 November, the Naval Assault Force was joined by two light fleet carriers. Their role in the operation was to land Commandos by helicopter as initial reinforcements to the sea-borne landings. THESEUS was equipped with Whirlwind helicopters of 845 Squadron; OCEAN with six Whirlwinds to carry 5 to 7 men and six Sycamores which held three passengers, both helicopters forming the Joint (Army/RAF) Experimental Helicopter Unit (JEHU).

OCEAN anchored in the swept channel about eight miles from the shore at Port Said and the movement of the troops began about 0715 that day. Within 70 minutes the complete commando unit of 425 men and 23 tons of equipment had been landed close to the De Lesseps statue with no casualties.

Almost immediately the Whirlwinds began to withdraw the wounded. By the end of the day about 35 men were in the sick bay. This swift means of evacuation no doubt saved many lives. In spite of many serious injuries none of the men treated on board OCEAN died.

Meanwhile, the Sycamores were ferrying RAF personnel of 215 Wing to Gamil airfield. From there they flew members of the Parachute Regiment over enemy held territory to a landing site South West of Port Said. During that first 72 hours, JEHU carried out 193 sorties from OCEAN with accuracy and speed.

By 01 December, 1956, OCEAN had fulfilled her duties in this, her last Naval action and returned to England to take up her role as a training ship with the Home Fleet Squadron, these were her last days of useful life in the British Navy. With regret, she was paid off at Plymouth on 20 December, 1957, and put into extended reserve. Although she was put up for disposal, her final fate was to be scrapped at Faslane in the Summer of 1962. From the combined action of OCEAN and THESEUS at Suez in 1956, came forth a new and exciting concept for British Naval Air Power - the Helicopter Carrier. \* *Our thanks to HMS Ocean Association*

## REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

About 150 people gathered in Walsh Park in Bomaderry to commemorate the cessation of World War 1 hostilities in 1918.

Representatives of the Armed Services at the service were Lt Rick Sanders (Engineer Officer, US Navy), LtCol Matt Chambers (CO Parachute Training School), SqnLdr Bill Kirkwood (RAAF), LCdr Tony Keeney (HMAS Albatross) and SqnLdr Steve Moore (RNZ Air Force).

Mr Bob Gilmour (President Nowra RSL), David Halliday (Secretary of Nowra Legacy Club), Mr Ray Spargo and his wife representing the Salvation Army, Neil Gage of the RDFWA and Mr Max Atkins, Mayor of the City of Shoalhaven. CDR Ken Barnett RAN Rtd gave the Commemorative Address.

The first function was the dedication of the propeller which had been donated by HMAS Albatross. The propeller, one of a pair from a Gannet anti-submarine aircraft, was dedicated by Chaplain Walter Wheeldon to "Australian and Allied Air Force and Fleet Air Arm personnel".

Thanks are extended to Commodore Partington for his support of the 'propellor project'. CPO Steve Davies and PO David Hargreaves, both on loan from the Royal Navy who restored the propellor to its present condition. The Engineering Department of HMAS Albatross who designed and fabricated the stand, Mr Bill Kerr who carried out the groundwork, Cleary Brothers who donated the concrete and Alan Purcell who laid it.



## PROPELLER DEDICATION

*Photograph by courtesy South Coast Register*

## BIG DAY FOR NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM

November 1st 1992 saw the culmination of two years hard labour for the many employees and volunteers at the Naval Aviation Museum located at HMAS Albatross.

The occasion marked the completion of Stages 1 and 2 of the museum. Stage 1 placed a large hangar roof over the aircraft displayed on the old 'dummy deck' (for those oldies in the know). Stage 2 allowed the completion of the White Ensign Club Function Centre and the IMB Exhibition Centre. In excess of \$2.5 million has now been expended on these facilities.

On this day, His Excellency, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, AC, RAN, the Governor of New South Wales, officially opened the facility. He was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Shirley Sinclair, and introduced to the assembled dignitaries by Commodore Rob Partington, Commanding Officer of NAS Nowra, and the Hon. Peter Collins, MP, NSW Minister for State Development and the Arts.

The day was also commemorated by an Air Day for the public. A usual, beautiful weather continued on the day before and the day after the Air Day. But on the day.....!

The rain held off until the Governor unveiled the commemorative plaque (see front cover). The Caribou was already airborne with a full team of parachutists onboard but the cloud closed in and the rain came from the southwest.

Because Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong also had heavy rain during the forenoon, a number of aircraft expected for the Air Day did not manage to get into Nowra. Undoubtedly, thousands of spectators had their enthusiasm similarly dampened and did not make the journey for the day.

*\*Museum Press Release*



## ON TIME - ON BUDGET

### REBUILDING AN INDUSTRY AND A DOCKYARD

In 1987, the Commonwealth Government facing losses of \$18 million a year and negligible progress on the two \$600 million FFG frigates, Melbourne and Newcastle, 'pulled the pin' and put the dockyard and the work in progress up for tender.

An Australian firm, then known as AMEC, won the right to take over the dockyard and the completion of the FFG's. They also won the tender to construct 10 ANZAC Class frigates for the Australian and New Zealand navies, a \$4 billion contract.

AMEC was a consortium of EGLO Engineering, Australian Shipbuilding Industries and ICAL Engineering. Transfield, the builders of the Sydney Harbour tunnel, had been one of the unsuccessful bidders for the dockyard. Through a series of takeovers and corporate manoeuvres, Transfield took over AMEC and renamed it AMECON. In the process, the services of Dr. John White, former chief of AMEC, were retained and he took up the position of General Manager with AMECON.

Dr. White, an Adelaide born Civil Engineer with a background in off-shore oil rig and box girder bridge construction, had previously worked in Germany for EGLO Engineering in its failed bid to build the submarines for the Royal Australian Navy.

In February 1988, his task was to increase the dockyards efficiency by a staggering 600-800%, the estimated figure to enable the firm to stay in business. At the time of writing (1992), the output and efficiency has risen by 700% with a further 35% increase expected in the near future.

Four years ago, the dockyard was notorious as the worst worksite in Australia. A high percentage of the workforce had criminal records and certain union leadership disputes had been settled by gun-play. Restrictive work practices were so entrenched, the civilian/naval control so cumbersome that hardly anything was achieved. After four years of construction the hull of the Melbourne was only a quarter finished and it was estimated to be rusting away at the same rate that work was progressing.

Awards at Williamstown covered classifications as narrow as, 'flag-makers', 'tow motor drivers', 'coxs-wains' and 'blacksmith's strikers on double fires'. Demarcations were applied in the finest detail and a ship was declared 'black' because a painter moved a gantry instead of a rigger. At any time half the workforce was on sick-leave, compensation or special leave.

Dr. White, with ACTU approval, introduced an enterprise work agreement designed to radically alter work

practices, reduce the number of unions on site from 23 to 3 and put the dockyard on a sound financial basis, thus guaranteeing its long term viability.

One of the excluded unions, the Storeman and Packers, refused to accept the new conditions and picketed the site.

In response, Dr. White closed the dockyard and handed the workforce back to the Commonwealth who now had no workplace or work for them. As a result, they joined the ranks of the unemployed. Three months later the dockyard reopened with new personnel and new award agreements. Four fifths of the new tradesmen had never worked in the shipbuilding industry. Today there are 850 permanent employees, a 200 strong sub-contracting workforce and no industrial problems.

Melbourne was handed over to the navy a month ahead of schedule. Newcastle will be completed on time in the second half of 1993. The first ANZAC frigate, already well under way, is scheduled for handover in 1995, on time - on budget. The quality of workmanship of Melbourne has been assessed as higher than that of the four US built frigates.

In the next twenty years AMECON intends to play a large part in building for our navy, new mine sweepers, new off-shore patrol boats, hydrographic ships, a helicopter carrier and eventually replacements for our destroyers.....

\* I am indebted to Ms. L. Williment, AMECON's Public Relations Co-ordinator and Mr. Peter Bowler, AMECON's Business Development Manager for their help in producing the AMECON story.

Many readers will remember Peter Bowler, a former Flight Deck Engineering Officer on HMAS Melbourne.

A visit to the dockyard by FAAA Members is being organised by the Victorian Division for March 1993.

\*\* Article by Alan 'Happy' Clark (VIC DIV).

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## HMAS NIRIMBA HISTORY

A project is currently in hand to produce the Nirimba history as a commemorative book for the closure of HMAS Nirimba.

The author, R.K. Robb, is seeking anecdotes, reminiscences, or data. Any photographs or artifacts would be copied or photographed and their safe return guaranteed.

There must be many old hands out there who served at, or flew from RANAS Schofields in the early '50s. If you have material that would assist with this very worthwhile project, please contact: *LCDR R.K. Robb, RAN (Rtd), c/o Naval Post Office, HMAS Nirimba, Quakers Hill, NSW 2764 - or phone (02) 636 7330.*



## SPIN ME A DIT

When the following story was forwarded to the editor of.....it was accompanied by the following:

**Note to the Editor:-** *When Tolstoy handed in his great work 'War and Peace' to his publishers, they said, 'We can't print that crap.' So don't you make the same mistake!!*

### DID WE REALLY WIN THE WAR?

If anyone asked me the abiding memory of my days as a TAG, I would have to say it was the day I helped to put most of the North Atlantic Fleet out of action. It was like this.....

We were on a communication flight in a Sea Otter and were asked to pick up an Admiral and fly him to the Clyde where most of his Fleet lay.

It was a cold, wet and windy day, so we dressed the old boy up in a borrowed helmet and flying jacket, stuck him in a seat and took off. As we flew towards Glasgow, I tried to impress him by twiddling dials and pretending to send messages, but I don't think he noticed as he had a tendency to nod off.

Suddenly the engine started to smoke and splutter before stopping completely. We started to lose height rapidly so I sent out an SOS, or whatever one does on such occasions. I got ready to get out quickly without an 'after you' to the Admiral, who was looking more than a little concerned.

Luckily, however, the Clyde appeared on the port side and the pilot turned, dived and managed to get it down in the middle of the sea lane. It was a near thing. Some of you may recall that landing an Otter on rough water can be likened to landing a dustbin on a gravel path. You feel the bottom is being ripped out and by the look on the Admiral's face he seemed to think the end was nigh.

As we came to a stop and I opened the hatch, he suddenly came to life. Pushing me aside and much like Corporal Jones in Dads Army, he said, "Don't panic - I'll take over."

Well, I wasn't exactly panicking, I had a Mae West and a rubber dinghy and he had nothing. I thought it was wiser not to point this out to him.

Looking out I could see we were drifting amidst a virtual forest of ships - big ones, small ones, some anchored but most coming and going within a few yards of us.

"It's alright", said the Admiral, "they are all my ships, I'll soon get some help."

He struggled to stand up as we pitched and tossed on the wind swept water. Waving his arms he

shouted to passing ships to throw us a line, or take us in tow.

Unfortunately for him, it was impossible for the ship's crews to know he was an Admiral, THEIR Admiral, for he was still wearing the flying jacket and helmet. With the usual RN courtesy to the FAA they just gave us the 'up you' gestures or called out 'get some time in', 'get stuffed', or other naval niceties as they sailed past.

By now, you may have guessed, that the Admiral was not very pleased. In fact he was hopping mad, if a man perched on a rocking plane can be so described. Such were the elements on that day that I had to hold his legs to prevent him falling into the water, as he waved his arms in a primitive form of semaphore.

"Gunner," he bawled, for we were not yet on first name terms. "Get the names of those bloody ships, I'll court martial every bloody Captain in the Clyde," as another frigate swept by hooting and cheering. "I'll have every last seaman on that Bloody boat on a Bloody charge before they eat their Bloody breakfast." Bloody it seems was his favourite adjective.

I started to offer helpful suggestions but he wouldn't listen. I didn't argue, you don't with angry Admirals, and anyway, I was beginning to enjoy myself.

"There goes that idiot Campbell," he howled as a destroyer swept past majestically.

He exploded, "Gunner, get your pad, put his name down. By the time I've finished with him he won't be ranked high enough to command a Bloody tug boat. And that moron Benson", this was the Captain of a frigate whose deck hands were particularly abusive, "he'll never go to sea again, Bloody wavy navy, part timer, put his name down". If he didn't know the Captain's name he called out the name of the ship.

The list steadily grew, Captains, Commanders, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, and even a passing submarine.

Now and again he would shout, "underline that one Gunner, he's a Bloody part timer." By now he was red in the face and his language was what you might call salty in the extreme.

Finally, a small boat manned by civilians came out of the dock area and towed us in. His humiliation was complete, there was murder in his eyes.

"Give me that list, Gunner," he said as he staggered ashore. "I'll hang the whole Bloody lot of them. Think of it", he screamed, "rescued by a boatload of Bloody civvies in the middle of my own fleet. I'll be the laughing stock of the whole sodding Navy."

It's not often that one gets taken into an Admiral's confidence, so with a bit of boot licking I said,

"disgraceful, how dare they, and what is the Navy coming to?" I thought to myself, here comes a gong or at least a mention. But no, he was more interested in taking things away from Captains than giving them to heroic TAG's.

As he took off his flying gear, enough gold braid was exposed to frighten the entire Navy and I began to regret that I hadn't added my CO's name to the list. I had a score to settle with him.

Looking at the Admiral's departing figure, I didn't hold out much hope for the poor devils on that list.

I never did get a medal for that days work and I never did meet another Admiral in the course of duty; but a week later, when back at base, I noticed a disgruntled matelot cleaning out the heads who looked suspiciously like a certain Captain of a passing frigate.

Of course, I may have been mistaken.

\* *Eddie Mortlock*

## THREE OF SAND - ONE OF CEMENT

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

The concrete Aborigine, 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 his owner declined as she felt he had enjoyed naval life, and Neville was last seen living in the Navy's historical collection on Spectacle Island.'

\* *COLUMN 8 - Sydney Morning Herald.*

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

Articles are always needed for 'SPIN US A DIT', send to: 'SLIPSTREAM', PO BOX 662, NOWRA, NSW 2541 or FAX : (044) 232412

## THINGS JUST AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

When talking to old shipmates, it sometimes feels like only a dog-watch since you left the Navy. The illusion begins to fade when your latest copy of Navy News appears in the mail box. Abbreviations, acronyms and categories read like a foreign language. Photographs of serving personnel, even the 'heavy-weights', appear as strangers, young ones at that.

After reading SEATALK, the DofD booklet which covers 'Issues which affect Navy people', the now 'shimmering illusion' takes a further battering when you read that Maternity Uniforms are a standard item in RAN 'slops'.

It suddenly sinks home that you've been out of the Navy for a l-o-n-g time when the decks start to be cleared for the admittance of 'poofs' into the Service.

A par from the Royal Navy *Navy News* tells us that following a select committee recommendation: '*Service personnel who are involved in homosexual activity will, as at present be administratively discharged, whether or not any criminal offence has taken place. However, in future, individuals who engage in this activity that is legal in civilian law will not be prosecuted under service law and will have no criminal record.*'

A retired RNER had this to say on the subject in the FAA Armourer's Association Newsletter:

"Well what can I say? Can this humble ex-Bombhead remind their Lordships, that before Lord Anson reduced the punishment for this nonsense to keel-hauling, it was punishable by death. In the mid eighteen-hundreds, the penalty was reduced further to a flogging. By the outbreak of the Great War it was punishable by imprisonment, and in my day you were booted outside. Now we learn that it isn't even an offence! Where will it end? Once again I am ever so pleased that I got out while the going was good, and long before this sort of thing became compulsory."

Me too, mate! Things just ain't what they used to be.

\* *Peregrine*

PS: With the recent restrictions imposed on ships and establishments relating to Smoking Areas, the sign on the Mess notice board had this to say:

**"NO SMOKING IN THE MESS - BUT FEEL FREE TO HAVE A 'FAG' "**

**NOTE: CHANGE OF POSTAL ADDRESS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION: PO BOX 105, VINCENTIA, NEW SOUTH WALES, 2540**



## CONTACT COLUMN

Dear JA,

Enclosed my treasured book of memories of part of my Fleet Air Arm time in HMS Glory 1951 - 1952.

It may be of some interest to some, but when we were relieved by HMAS Sydney, we went for R & R ??? to Albatross, whilst the Ship's Company went to enjoy the delights of Sydney (and were able to keep up the sacred ritual of 'Up Spirits'), we were, at one fell swoop, deprived of our tot. We also had to try and absorb the fact that when ashore, we were no longer able to drink past 1800 hours. It was hardly surprising that some of us had minor brushes with the law for trying to continue the 'happy hours' getting into the grog in the back streets of the 'roaring metropolis' that was Nowra in those days.

I remember that the first 'social occasion' was the invitation to the Bomaderry Digger's Dance, which was not a tremendous success, used as we were to the more robust activities of Sasebo and Kure.

However, we soon got used to the natives and they to us, we generally had a great time after the 'six o'clock swill' at the Prince of Wales etc., the yearling steaks and the prawns went down a treat at the New York Cafe opposite.

Some of us were lucky enough to get to share the local folks hospitality, and so it was with great regret that we had to leave. It was also a shock to the system to go back to the Korean waters; from high summer to the winter's cold blast in the Yellow Sea.

Kind regards, *George 'Gus' Goddard*

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The Secretary, Fleet Air Arm Association (NSW)

Dear Mr Hetherington,

I was very moved when my old friend, John Arnold, invited me to accept the Chaplaincy to the Fleet Air Arm Association (NSW).

Such an appointment is both an honour and a privilege and I am indeed humbly grateful to be considered to be your Chaplain.

With very much pleasure I accept.

Yours sincerely, *Walter Wheeldon.*

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Dear Sir,

The official opening of the Naval Aviation Museum on 02 November 1992 was an enjoyable and memory stirring day.

In particular, the Fleet Air Arm Association membership brochure listing 'The reason for being' and the 'Basic aims', was indeed thought provoking.

My operational flying experience was gained as a

TAG in the RAN during World War Two. At that time the aircraft (Seagull, and later, Walrus), the Pilot, the Engine and Airframe Fitters were provided by 9 Squadron of the RAAF. Later, an Armourer and Photographer cum Clerk and Parachute Hand were added to the RAAF crew.

The Navigator, who trained with the RN, and the TAG, who had trained with the RAAF BAGS at Evans Head and then Point Cook for radio and electrical, gunnery and armaments, were Navy.

My operational flying time was with Westralia, 9 Squadron and Australia, and extended from 26.10.40 to 28.4.44. It appeared that while Australia was being refitted and repaired at Devonport following extensive damage sustained during the Philippines campaign, HMS Terrible ? was also at Devonport, being constructed as a fleet carrier for the RAN - to be commanded by Captain Armstrong.

The surrender of Japan obviously reduced the urgency and we returned home still aboard the Australia. Somewhere in my 'filing system', a newspaper cutting mentions the distinguished record of Captain Armstrong and the proposal that he should be the next Governor General in early post WW2 years....

And, after all that, my query is on the basic eligibility for membership, which specifies a minimum period of twelve months service in the Fleet Air Arm. The hope is that the Articles of Incorporation are not so rigid as to preclude membership to a former member of the RAN who served in all operational senses in the FAA.

Yours sincerely, *Thomas Edward Parkes*

S/V 10 LTAG RANVR 7.1.40 to 6.4.46

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Dear Sir,

Thank you for receipt of the Quarterly Journal - I can only assume I am on the mailing list due to my attendance at the Reunion this year. I did attend the inaugural meeting of the FAA Association here in Melbourne many years ago; but as I explained to Clem Conlan, I was the Secretary of the 'Sydney Association', and felt I could only do justice to one organisation. This may change in the near future due to the take-over of our Association by the 'Vietnam Logistical Support Veterans Association'.

However, as my service in the FAA spanned 1941 - 55, including two years on loan in the RAN as Aircraft Artificer (Engines/Airframes) 20th Carrier Air Group, 816 Squadron, I feel I could possibly make contributions to 'SLIPSTREAM', with the ulterior motive of regaining contact with opposite numbers in UK.

Being now retired, I would find it an interesting exercise to recall events such as, 'My life as a Naval Air Apprentice', 'The FAA in India and Ceylon during

WW2', or 'How I volunteered for loan in the RAN'.

If you feel such contributions would be of interest, please let me know.

Keep up the good work.

Kind regards, *Gordon Evans - Frankston.*

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter and copies of 'SLIP-STREAM', I will have to thank Taff Evans for his part. (In providing the address.Ed.)

After the Coronation trip in 1953, I left the service, my term finishing before we reached home. I had already applied to re-engage and for some peculiar reason, something upset me and so declined to continue on. I have had many years to think about that decision.

With time on Nizam over the other side, on the corvettes up top and then demobbed, I didn't like the 'outside' bit so rejoined. Whilst serving in the frigate Shoalhaven, the opportunity came up to join this new part of the Navy (FAA). Next thing, in 1948-49, I am in England doing a Skilled Air Mechanics Course, then home and Albatross followed by the 20th CAG and the first tour of duty in Korea; still with all those guys who made the same decision as myself in 1947.

Last year, out of the blue, a letter arrived from an old mate, Maxie Gant. He said he had been trying to find out where I had got to. So this started an exchange of correspondence and addresses of old mates. A good lesson there, never lose touch!

'Arrived in Nowra for the May Coral Sea activities, what a reward to meet all those old mates, and so many memories. So, I am using a lot of pen and ink and loving it, my interest rekindled.

John, my main interests are getting my old mates of '48 together whilst we are still mobile, the other, your great Museum. What better place to contribute a little of the past instead of it being dumped in the bin by those that do not understand.

I have a few photos for the museum and hope that they are acceptable, they will be framed, glassed and documented. One item, not a photo, will be my notes for our Skilled Air Mechanics Course of 1948-49, still in good condition with explanatory note attached.

There is a photograph of 817 Sqdn winning the 'SYDNEY-EMDEN' Cup for the open whaler race at the Hobart Regatta in 1953 before we headed off on the Coronation trip. This is enlarged, framed and glassed with documentation.

Another, my favourite, in a frame 30"x15" that I put a hell of a lot of work into, sanding back and then staining, shows the Sydney in Manus with an extra

squadron on her flight deck, on her way to Korea on her first tour of duty. Sydney 'snowed-in' in Korea, and Sydney heading out of Sasebo, Japan, into Typhoon Ruth, and then the damage caused. Also included on this one photo, is Alan Zammit's article, 'Sydney's night of terror -Typhoon Ruth'.

During the trip to Nowra in May, I naturally visited the Senior Sailors Mess, whilst introducing myself to the Duty Chief, I remarked that the last time I had been in the Chief's Mess was in 1953.

"Bloody hell!", says he, "that was six years before I was born".

A character standing nearby said, "Did I hear Torrens? Righteous Roy?". It was Joe Curry, an Army type who was with us in Korea. I am sure you know him, he never misses a do in Nowra. More Navy than Army, but what a great guy.

VAT Smith was in England with us and visited all of the training stations to listen to all our 'bitches' and was very tolerant.

Keep up the good work,

*'Righteous Roy' Torrens. KIRRA Qld.*

*\*\*Roy has now finished his project for the Naval Aviation Museum, if anyone can assist in bringing the photographs down to Nowra, please contact SLIP-STREAM.*

Dear Ed,

The enclosed photograph of No.24 Class of Aircraft Handler 3's, which qualified at the 'tross' during the latter half of 1951, was forwarded to me by Ron Murphy who has listed the names of his course as best as an ageing memory allows.

Could you please see your way clear to publish the photo in 'SLIPSTREAM' and ask our readers to put names to faces if they can.

I arrived at the 'tross' in November '51 and took over as FAPDO and Bomb Bosun. Some of the guys in the picture were in the Fire Section with me.

The other photo shows some of that class boarding the SS Asturias en route for UK to pick up the Vengeance.

The letter 'Windy' Geale received from Bill Crozer (Oct.'92 edition.Ed) brought back a few memories. It's good to hear that he is alive and well.

Best of luck to you all and here's to the continuing success of 'SLIPSTREAM'.

Yours Aye, *Chuck Churcher - Tweed Heads*

*\* See Class photograph - rear cover. If you can name the people in the photo please write to SLIPSTREAM. A copy will then be placed in the Museum archives.*



## THERE'S NO HOLDING THIS TIGER!

In a recent letter from Leo 'Taff' Evans, he enclosed a copy of the address given by Monsignor Frank 'Tiger' Lyons at the '92 Reunion Commemorative Service held in HMAS Albatross cinema, it read as follows:

' Four years ago, at the last Fleet Air Arm Reunion, I made the remark at the Church service held here in this building where Naval Airman Papadopolis became famous after being called for by the cinema sentry, that perhaps a good way to spoil a very successful Reunion was to include a Church Parade. Well that proved not to be the case on that occasion, for I think many of us agreed it was one of the best Navy Church services we had attended - for two reasons. Firstly the number who came, and secondly the wholehearted way everybody participated.

I don't suppose any of us here will ever be Privy Councillors. That might be a good thing, for at all meetings of the Privy Council everybody, including the Queen, must stand up for the whole meeting. The custom was introduced by Queen Victoria, for she claimed that was the only way she could get some of her Councillors to be brief and shut up. As I see some of you standing there, I am reminded of what Queen Victoria, and all of you would expect of me!

Well, alright, it is a great reunion once again, so why pause for a moment in the midst of it all and gather here?

There was an answer to that question felt in yesterday's march, and in many of the remarks made

afterwards. Yes, there surely was a spirit there, a spirit that was different. Though we are all so much older, there was a spring in the step, an attempt to straighten those shoulders, heads held high. One word described us - PROUD. Proud to have been part of Australia's Fleet Air Arm, Proud to have been such an efficient part of our country's Defence Force, Proud of the standards achieved and maintained in the face of extraordinary and often unnecessary difficulties, Proud of combat performances in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf, and in the commitment to preserve peace in a troubled world.

I am sure everyone here knows exactly what I mean, and we would just like to say thanks for the guiding hand of God's Providence over the years we are today remembering.

It was, of course, not without heavy cost. Instinctively, we remember so many who lost their lives. They were many. We are moved as we recall those to whom we were close. We feel their loss still. We recall some who have died recently: men like George Blondel, Tommy Vance, Keith Kempnich, John Denehy, Paddy O'Donovan, Sam Pitcher, Grantly Lake and many more. They are surely part of us still - we almost expect to see their faces come round any corner of this place. May eternal peace be the lot of them all! They surely have a place in our reunion

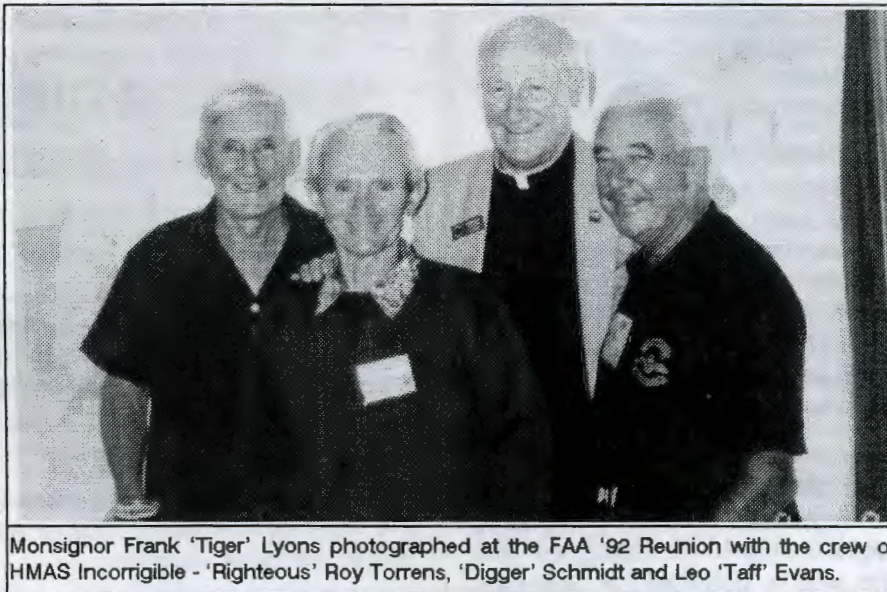
thoughts.

As we think especially of those who lost their lives whilst on Fleet Air Arm duty and as we recall their names, we might find ourselves asking the question - was it all worth while? We can feel some sense of anger as we recall such dedicated, costly effort and see the greatly reduced capabilities of the present time. One is moved to use the words of a certain ex-Prime Minister who suddenly found his capabilities reduced: "Maintain your rage."

We did hear from Admiral Hunt yesterday, that the efficient approach to work and duty of the Fleet Air Arm had certainly had an influence on the whole Navy, and that the effect of that remains. Surely, however, we hope for even more. The celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the Coral Sea Battle remind us, and should remind everybody else, that Australia was saved from real danger at that time by a battle which was won by carriers against carriers. The danger existed because of carriers - it was removed by carriers. We still give thanks to God for the skill and courage of those who fought and died for us in those days 50 years ago this week and most of them, we recall, were men of

the Navy of the United States of America.

But we might look for even more still. The Fleet Air Arm has always been blessed with good strong Naval leadership. Tribute was paid yesterday to Admiral Sir Victor Smith. Under him, we all most certainly knew precisely what was expected of us - from the highest peak of flying and equipment performance right down to the very last blade of grass around our departments. We knew the high standard of character he looked



Monsignor Frank 'Tiger' Lyons photographed at the FAA '92 Reunion with the crew of HMAS Incorrigible - 'Righteous' Roy Torrens, 'Digger' Schmidt and Leo 'Taff' Evans.

for in those under his command. And some of his leadership rubbed off on us all.

Now that is something none of us should ever lose. My prayer for all of us today, is that we will show some of the VAT Smith leadership in the community to which we belong. For there is danger surrounding us today - not from carriers, but from an erosion of values in society, an over-simplification of the things that lead to sick corrupt society. And we will never pull out of this awful dive without good, strong leadership which people with your background can surely give. Your training, your experience, can equip you still to be achievers, in associations like the ones that brings us here today, in the RSL, but especially in your own local community. Truly, then, it would all have been worth while, if we maintain that first class spirit which still fills us with pride. I have never seen the like of it before or since. It was something truly special - is something truly special.

Please God, it always will be something special - then the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Australian Navy was and is very much worth while.

May God bless all those who make it so.



## IN THE BEGINNING *continued...*

The RAN acquired its first helicopter, the Bristol Sycamore in March 1953 for search and rescue work and for training purposes. In the period 1962-65 the Sycamores were gradually replaced by Bell Iroquois helicopters as the RAN basic rotary wing training A/C. In the same period, the Wessex ASW'S were purchased for shipborne operations. Westland Scouts were acquired for service with the RAN survey ship HMAS Moresby. The helicopter arm of Australian Naval aviation has continued to develop steadily. In October 1967 a unit of RAN pilots and supporting personnel formed the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam for service with the US 135th Assault Helicopter Company. The flight was withdrawn from Vietnam in June 1971. In the early 1980's a multinational force of observers was formed to operate in the Sinai Desert.

A small group of helicopter personnel formed the ANZAC Rotary Wing Aviation Unit and joined the multinational force in March 1982. The ANZAC Unit was withdrawn on 31 March 1986.

In September 1967 HMAS Melbourne embarked Skyhawk attack, and Tracker A/S aircraft on the west coast of the US. These were disembarked in Jervis Bay later that year. In January 1968 at Garden Island Dockyard Sydney, the Melbourne commenced modernisation and refit. She came back into service in January 1969 with 817 Wessex, 816 Trackers and 805 Skyhawks designated as Melbourne Air group. In 1975 Sea King helicopters replaced the Wessex in the ASW role.

On September 9th the Australian Government announced that the Melbourne would be replaced with a purpose designed ship to be equipped with ASW helicopters and with a potential for operating short take off and landing (STOVL) aircraft. On September 24th 1981 the Minister stated that the British Invincible class carrier design was to be evaluated, along with other designs already under study. Subsequently it was agreed to purchase HMS Invincible. The unfortunate advent of the Falklands war precluded conclusion of this agreement.

It was decided not to proceed with a further modernisation and refit of HMAS Melbourne: She was decommissioned and placed into contingency reserve on 30 June 1982. She was placed into drydock for stripping on 21 June 1983. She was moved to Athol Bight moorings on 13 October and subsequently paid off and towed from Sydney in April 1985 to be broken up.

The fixed wing element of the FAA was gradually phased out and by June 1984 only two HS748's, retained for fleet electronic warfare (EW) training remained.

The decision to scrap the carrier and fixed wing flying required a major restructuring of the FAA. The emphasis passed to the autonomous operation of helicopters from smaller independent air capable ships. Included are guided missile frigates (FFG's) Sydney, Darwin, Adelaide, Melbourne etc.

The logistic support ship Tobruk, the destroyer tender Stalwart, the survey ships Cook and Morseby and the fleet support ship Success are also air capable ships.

In mid 1984 the RAN took delivery of Aerospatiale Squirrel helicopters which are used primarily for interim FFG ship/aircrew training and communications, and for replacement of the Bell 206 on the survey vessel's.

1988; saw the introduction of Sikorsky Seahawks which operate as the primary first line aircraft from Frigates in the A/S, surveillance, strike and over the horizon targeting roles. *The End*

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## NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

### NEW SOUTH WALES DIVISION

In this Holy and Festive Season, may I pass on greetings to all our members and wishes for a safe and healthy 1993.

This is a busy time for the Secretary as subscriptions are now due and payable before 31 January 1993. Many thanks to all those members who have already renewed, it is pleasing to know of your continued interest in the Association.

All of us can do our bit in spreading the word about the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia, and help to add to the list of members.

By early December, Divisional Membership exceeded 350 members, fifteen of which have taken out Perpetual Membership.

With the formal acceptance of the Queensland Division at the Federal Conference in October last, some of the Queenslanders currently enrolled with NSW may decide to transfer to their new State Division. These members will be contacted shortly to ascertain their wishes in the matter. Those members falling into this category, should still forward their membership renewal subscription to NSW. All administrative changes necessary will be effected from this end should you elect to change divisions.

Please complete the Subscription Renewal Form for 1993 which is included in this edition (NSW Mailing list only), and forward with your cheque to the Secretary. Remember, no reminders will be sent - so do it **NOW!**

\* Terry Hetherington - Secretary



## VICTORIA DIVISION

On behalf of the Victoria Division, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families the Happiest of New Years.

Having been on holidays, I have lost contact with most of the membership so I'm unable to give any progress reports on those that are on the endangered species list. Hopefully, since my last column, they will have recovered to better health.

The Federal Council Meeting was very successful with a Constitution being accepted after a few minor amendments. The National Association is very much alive and well.

The three members who worked so hard to put the Constitution together (see National Secretary's report) in such a short time are to be commended for a magnificent result. Each of these shipmates are to be awarded the Diploma of Merit in appreciation of their contribution.

We are to have our annual outing at the Melbourne Zoo on the 5th of December '92, I am disappointed with the response from members so far. It would appear that interest in Association functions has slowly waned over the past couple of years. Max Farquharson is coming all the way from Colac and Ron Breadon from Somerville, so I fail to see why members from the Metro' area cannot find the time or make the effort. I can only put the blame on myself, I suppose.

During the past year we have lost about five from the membership, reasons unknown, but we have gained a few. The following shipmates have been accepted in the Division, and thus the National Association, a warm welcome is extended to: John Champion, Dennis Colam, John Clifford, Ron Forbes, Larry Penny, Brian O'Dwyer, Bill Martin and Clark Stitz.

*HMAS Lonsdale* has paid off, but there are rumours that when it is sold, it may have one side of Rouse Street leased back to the Navy. But don't quote me on that.

It seems that every new contact I make is an ex-Handler. Guess who's come to my notice? None other than John Goodwin! In a brief phone call, he said he is keen to sign on. I wish a lot more ex-FAA personnel could be located. There must be a few thousand somewhere that haven't surfaced.

Congratulations to the Queenslanders on the formation of their own Division. With Barry Lister as President, Mick Blair as Secretary and good old 'Weed' Smith as the PR Officer, it's in good hands. I hope your membership drive proves successful.

Once again, all the best for 1993.

\* *Clem Conlan - President*

## QUEENSLAND DIVISION

On 25 October 1992, a General Meeting was held at HMAS Moreton with a good roll-up. A Division Committee was elected as follows:

President: Barry Lister

Vice President: Mick Blair

Treasurer: Bob Bryce (in his absence)

Secretary: Paul Woods

PR and Social Director: Alan Smith

Committee Member: Bob Davis

Committee Member: Ian Henderson

After the meeting, a few drinks were on at the local Pub.

Bob Bryce subsequently declined the position of Treasurer and Junior Henderson offered to do the job for the time being.

Some arrangements were discussed to hold a Xmas Barbecue on 06 December 1992 at the Currumbin RSL on the Gold Coast. From that date we will commence taking names for membership.

I attended the Federal Council Meeting held at *HMAS Albatross* on 30 -31 October, at that meeting, we were officially recognised as a Division by the presentation of the Queensland Charter by the National President of the Association, 'Toz' Dadswell. After this historic event, I was invited to participate as a Delegate for the State. The major part of this meeting dealt with the amendment and finalising of the new National Constitution.

Attendance at the Senior Sailors' Annual Reunion on the Friday night was very enjoyable with lots of laughs. 'Colonel' Coombes reminded us of the story of 'Gunnedah' - a Galah owned by Guy Beange, CO of 805 Sea Fury Squadron. All the bird could say was, "Fair go, Gill!" One weekend, someone let it out of it's cage in the hangar and a dog grabbed it and killed it. Some of the blokes - in great panic - 'wire locked' it to its perch inside the cage, hoping that its deceased state would go unnoticed for a while. The Monty Python crew must have heard of the story!

The Air Day and opening of the Naval Aviation Museum went well, although some very low cloud and storms restricted the aerobatics display. Commodore Rob Partington flew the Sea Fury, albeit a bit sedately.

Ray Larson (NSW Division), wife Alice and sister Louise, came to visit with us recently at Caloundra. We all piled into 'ME109', our 4WD, and headed off for a couple of days on Fraser Island. Despite taking the wrong road, we eventually made it. The fish got a bit of a work-out and so did the Euchre at night. The

blokes didn't cheat and beat the ladies fairly easily. The beach was in good nick for driving and the weather hot and perfect.

Contact has been made with the Anzac Day March Committee and we will attend a meeting with them in February '93 to be given the OK and position to march as a Division. The design, costing etc. of a Banner is in progress at the moment.

Secretary, Paul Woods, will soon be in contact with everyone listed on the FAAA records as Queensland members. Paul can be contacted at PO Box 1212, MILTON QLD 4064 or A/H (07) 341 8212.

Trevor Bolitho has sent his membership to us from Darwin. It's great to hear from you, Trevor. Any other ex-FAA types in the Northern Territory are very welcome to join in with us.

Many thanks to the Secretaries of other State Divisions for sending their Minutes of Meetings to me, they'll be passed on to Paul and he will keep in contact with you all.

Wishing you all a great 1993.

\* *Barry Lister - President*

#### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA DIVISION**

Hi Shipmates, once again I put pen to paper and try to bring you all up to date on what has been happening since the last issue of SLIPSTREAM.

You must all agree that the first issue to be circulated nationally was really something. With news from all around the country and people we have not heard of in years being mentioned, it's just the ticket to keep everyone informed. It must get better, so any input from all the 'Sandgropers' will be appreciated. Please call me and we will print it - if it doesn't land us in Court for libel. So call me at home on (09) 5279186.

Ron Tate and I attended the Conference at Nowra over the weekend of 30 October 1992. As mentioned by the National Secretary, the Constitution was finally approved and we also extend our congratulations to the sub-committee who compiled the document.

Ron and I had to fly over by commercial airlines instead of by RAAF transport, they were delayed rounding up the Army types from the North who had been playing war games.

On arrival at Sydney we hired a car at Kings Cross, after much map reading we eventually arrived in Canberra where we had an appointment with Sir Victor Smith. After purchasing a 'you beaut' map of Canberra, we worked out a route to Red Hill - follow the road to the new Parliament House and then chuck a left. Ron, in his wisdom, decided on the second street on the left, so out the window went the directions, but we finally made it - and on time. *(They*

*wouldn't have been game to be late.!* ED)

Sir Victor and Lady Smith made us very welcome and we enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon tea and a chat. Sir Victor does not enjoy the best of health and doesn't leave Canberra. He sends his regards to all and asked about many of you.

The trip to Nowra was quite pleasant, we only got lost once, it's quite hard to navigate when you're travelling at just under sub-sonic speed on the ground.

We visited 'Pancho' Walters who was in hospital at the time. His condition was stable so we stayed and had a good chat. He sends his regards to all. Hope you are better pal, and back on your feet.

We attended the Senior Sailors Reunion and met up with many old friends, it was a real good night. I did associate with the creme de la creme at the usual Armourers place of pride, and I do feel sorry for those of you who couldn't make it as an Armourer and had to take other trades. But as they say - 'they only take the best'.

The opening of the Museum and the Air Day on the Sunday started out real nice, but soon degenerated when the rain came. I don't know how the opening went as none of the Delegates got a 'jumper'.

It had been announced over the radio that some eight thousand cyclists were on the road from Sydney to Wollongong, to miss the rush, Ron and I said our farewells during the downpour.

Our thanks to George Parker who came to our rescue from the 'Gods of Rain' and who checked out that we were on the RAAF flight Monday morning. Thanks again, George. You've been a great help to us over the years. Incidentally, George is about to 'swallow the anchor' and retire in the New Year. We wish him all the best and a happy retirement.

We arrived at Richmond without much worry and booked into a motel, we then had to take the car back to Bayswater Car Hire in Kings Cross. First - check the road map and work out the best way. We agreed that we turn left into Paramatta Road and then an easy run into Sydney. Once again, just under sub-sonic speed, we came to a large sign reading - 'Sydney via Glebe' - you guessed it, a sharp ninety degrees to Port and for no other reason than it said Sydney. After many turns through Sydney to the Cross, guess what? The Kings Cross Carnival is on and all roads go one way only. After many turns and going over the same area many times, we eventually ended up where we wanted to go.

After leaving the car, we boarded a train at the Cross to take us to back to Richmond, and if it hadn't been for a young lady at the station who was able to advise us on the trains, we would still be on the station at Kings Cross.



At last, Richmond and a good nights sleep.

It was a good trip home, but the RAAF advised us of the ETA and forgot to take off the extra hour for daylight saving, so we had to hang around RAAF Pearce for a while.

We arrived home with a dozen bottles of Port without a scratch, but Ron, while trying to open the fly screen door at home, dropped the lot. They didn't all break, just half of them.

The Annual Shoot, Navy v ex-Navy, was held at the Gosnells Pistol Club on the Wednesday after we returned. Joy of joys - the 'oldies' won for the first time. Our top scorer was Jim Caldwell - well done. This year we had to use 9mm pistols as the ammunition for the rifles was unavailable.

A barbecue was held at the completion of the shoot and everyone had a good time. When Lou Burns was asked by the Chief Coxswain for his name, he answered, "AB Sprog". To which the Chief replied, "Don't you mean OD?" To which Lou responded by saying, "I was a three badge kellick before you were born!" It was ascertained during the barbecue that this was indeed true. A great day was had by all and it was good to be able to talk to the young sailors still serving.

Our Annual Dinner was held on 14 November and we had about thirty people sit down to the meal. Our Guest Speakers were well received, the SNO from RAAF Pearce, Mark Jerrett, who spoke on the Air Branch Today, and of course, the Rabbi, who makes us all think about the state of the world and our country. Our oldest member at ninety-two, Lionel Phillips, gave a talk on the importance of the Taranto Raid and how it should be forever kept alive as the first ever victory of carrier borne aircraft over surface ships.

We also had a guest from Nowra, 'Juke' Matterson and his charming wife, Florence. They were over here on holiday and had booked several trips around the place. We didn't get to see a lot of them, but were able to have lunch with them before they returned home.

A large amount of booze was consumed at the dinner by all and sundry. By this time, Lou was feeling no pain as he had consumed some thirty whiskies. After delivering him back to the ranch I kept the lights on so he could find the way, but he still tripped over a beam.

Next day when we went back to building his shed, he wasn't real well but the job got done. We have now formed the 'Burns/Bushe-Jones Bodgy Building Company'. No interest shown by anyone yet, but I'm sure that when the word gets around we will be inundated with jobs.

Ric Hammond has been inspecting houses in the Rockingham area and has decided on a nice home near the beach, so another person is shifting to paradise. Hilton Devereux has also been talking about moving this way when he retires.

It's good to see our Treasurer back from his wanderings in the far North, he's already talking about some more of the same next year. It's great to be of the moneyed people, us poor pensioners have trouble getting to town.

We can no longer use the beach area at *Stirling* for our barbecues as the new wharves are being built there. A new location will have to be found for the barbecues, do you have any suggestions?

Best wishes to all, from the mob in the West who still work on the real time. All the best for the coming year, with the sincere hope that all members of the Association get through the festive season in one piece, and that the year ahead brings to you and your families much happiness.

\* *Theo Bushe-Jones - Secretary*

#### ACT DIVISION

The Yuletide approaches and although this edition may not reach members before the festive season, all members of the ACT Division wish all members throughout Australia a joyous and fulfilling Christmas and every good wish for 1993.

Our Cocktail Party on the 13th November was a resounding success despite the slightly lower attendance than last year. Some 55 members and friends gathered at RSL Headquarters for the function which netted some \$750.00. We were very pleased to see our Patron and Lady Smith join us for the occasion when we were able to meet a number of old shipmates and their wives. We were very appreciative of the wonderful catering done by several wives who provided all of us with very enjoyable tit-bits to augment the occasion. Thank you very much ladies, we couldn't do without you.

A goodly number of our Division journeyed to Nowra for the opening of the Museum and the Ball. It was a great occasion to renew 'old ships' from days of yore.

Despite some thinking otherwise, the correct postal address of the ACT Division is P.O. Box 3652, Weston Creek, 2611.

\* *Brian Treloar - Secretary*

**THE HISTORICAL AIRCRAFT FLIGHT ARE IN URGENT NEED OF DONATIONS OF BA and WHITWORTH SPANNERS AND SOCKETS. COME ON FELLAS - HAND A FEW BACK FOR A GOOD CAUSE.**

## HISTORIC AIRCRAFT UPDATE

### RESTORATION DAKOTA 800 N2-43

Since my last report (2 Slipstreams ago), our restoration progress has been quite rapid. The interior of the aircraft has undertaken a number of changes, some of these depicting its original role and some towards its new found role, that being for use as a cinema.

We have managed to save two thirds of the original VIP vinyl decor but had to compromise for the remainder. Some people have indicated that the interior lining reminds them somewhat of a Nissen hut, since the bulkheads have been lined with plywood wall panelling.

But bear in mind, this aircraft will eventually be used as a cinema where visitors to the museum will be able to view continuous video's of the history of the FAA.

For seating we have acquired the old seats used in the briefing room in *HMAS Melbourne*. I am sure that many readers have spent the odd hour or two asleep in these chairs while awaiting the return of squadron aircraft.

The task we have set ourselves obviously cannot be accomplished overnight. There is still a lot to do. The labour is voluntary, and most work is done on weekends, with the exception of Ray Larder, who has taken up residence in the aircraft.

The largest task ahead is the rubbing back and re-painting of all external surfaces. With a job this size, setting a target date for completion is difficult. It has taken almost 12 months to bring the aircraft to its current stage.

In closing, I would like to thank the weekend warriors for their die-hard enthusiasm. A special thanks to our interstate branches for their donations. The money is being spent wisely, and is very much appreciated.

We are about to hit the Association for another "hand out" for the purchase of lighting to highlight the interior aircraft displays.

*\* Don Parkinson - Project Manager*

### SEA VENOM RESTORATION

The two weeks prior to the opening of the Museum saw a concerted effort put into trying to finish WZ937. The aircraft was booked into the spray bay the Friday morning before the opening and arrangements were made for AB Brown, with the help of the crew, to spend Friday and Saturday spraying the aircraft.

Unfortunately all plans were cancelled when a final

inspection was carried out on the Friday morning and it was decided that the aeroplane wasn't quite up to the standard required for spraying, however, the radome was sprayed a high gloss black and looks terrific.

The aircraft is now housed up at the Museum where work will continue until the aircraft is finished. This is also giving visitors to the Museum an insight as to what restoration work is all about.

Work on WZ895 lapsed for a few weeks, although the greenies and radio people worked on cleaning out all of their equipment from the cockpit. This has enabled the airframe guys to get in and start removing all the pipe lines, control cables and associated equipment.

The port boom has been completely stripped and work has started on getting the control cables and associated parts back to flying condition.

No.1 fuel tank in the port inner wing has been removed and work has started removing the rest. The skin repair on the underside of the port inner mainplane is also well under way.

The metal part of the fire proof bulkhead is only held on by a couple of bolts now and by the time this article goes to print it should have been removed.

Once the cockpit has been stripped, a complete inspection of the floor area can be carried out and if nothing is found, the fun of putting it all back together again starts.

Ninety percent of the aircraft's pipe lines, hydraulic and pneumatic components have now been removed and the job of bay servicing and pressure testing should start in the near future. This in itself will be a huge task especially as we don't have all the necessary books.

Most of the control cables look in pretty good condition and if they pass all tests it will save us a lot of worry as to where we would have new ones manufactured.

*\* Tony Penno - Team Manager*

### SEA FURY RESTORATION

Work on the Fury is progressing well. Ken Lee has been very busy in his garage forming moulds and manufacturing lenses for the navigation lights. After a lot of heartache and some failures, he has met with success. Well done, Ken!

We also thank the anonymous ex-FAA donor who presented us with a complete tail wheel assembly.

QANTAS has recently used an environmentally friendly paint stripper on a Boeing 747. This product could possibly be the answer to our current project as well as other historic aircraft and museum projects. If



you have any information regarding this stripper, please forward details via SLIPSTREAM.

The Sea Fury Team send their Best Wishes for 1993 to all the readers.

\* *Oscar Harper - Team Manager*

### FAIREY FIREFLY RESTORATION

In preparation for the recent official opening of the Naval Aviation Museum, a major effort was put into the Firefly to get her running and taxiing for public display.

Keith Boundy and I had finished off all the minor jobs on the engine since the camshafts were replaced, and arranged to pre-oil the engine on the day prior to the Open Day.

During ground running it was discovered that the engine was not performing as expected and a decision was made not to proceed with the plan to taxi the aircraft. As a result, we spent a pleasant day talking to members of the public about the Firefly - and continually explaining why it was not able to fly.

It is surprising to learn just how many people have had experiences in Firefly aircraft. One such gentleman spoke with me at the Air Day. He said that he had spent a short time flying in them as a young Observer, whilst waiting to start a conversion course on the newly arrived Gannets. These days he limited his aviation activity to recreational parachuting with the Army Club at Albatross, and he was not even aware that the Historic Flight existed, or that it operated a Firefly!

Some months ago, Keith Boundy, Ray Moller and myself, went on a trek to the Newcastle area in an

attempt to locate the remains of a Sea Otter. The nose section of the aircraft (JN200), has been on display for many years at the Naval Aviation Museum after being obtained from the Royal Newcastle Aero Club.

It was common knowledge that the rest of the aircraft had been buried at a garbage tip near Lake Macquarie. A relative of mine, who lives in the area, informed me that the tip was being excavated for a new industrial development. Discussion with the bulldozer operator produced no results, but he promised to be on the look-out for anything vaguely aeronautical.

We have since learned that the area where the Sea Otter is buried has not been disturbed. So - it will be some time before the engine, rear fuselage and wings rejoin the forlorn nose section at the Museum.



In the next issue of SLIPSTREAM I hope to bring to you a feature article about the Historic Flight's Fairey Firefly with some details of its known history.

Meanwhile, I trust that your Christmas was peaceful and enjoyable, and that the New Year brings success and happiness.

\* *Terry Hetherington*

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No.24 Class of Aircraft Handler 3s - RANAS Nowra.  
Can YOU remember their names?