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Slipstream



Sea Otter - HMAS Sydney

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Foreword by

Admiral of the Fleet

**His Royal Highness, The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh,
KG, KT, PC, OM, GBE, AC (Mil), FRS, FAA**

I first came to Australia as a Midshipman in the battleship HMS 'Ramillies' in 1940. There were some enemy raiders about in the Indian Ocean, but otherwise everything was peaceful around Australia and no-one was concerned about such things as air raids. We all enjoyed a bit of leave 'up-country' and I remember having some wonderful days on a sheep and cattle station in western New South Wales. All the mustering work was done on horse-back in those days and, apart from copious quantities of beer, the diet seemed to be mutton three times a day and tea at least seven times between breakfast and falling exhausted into bed. I also had the chance to visit Canberra which, in those days, looked rather like a housing estate in the middle of a sheep station.

'Ramillies' had come to Australia to escort the second Australian Expeditionary Force to the Middle East and, I am glad to say, nothing of any consequence happened between Perth and Port Suez. My first introduction to naval air warfare came the following year during a routine run by the Mediterranean Fleet to replenish Malta. German 'Stuka' dive-bombers attacked the Fleet and made a particular effort to sink the Fleet Carrier HMS 'Illustrious'. She was hit and sufficiently badly damaged for her to be withdrawn from the Mediterranean and sent to the USA for repairs.

Carriers did not enter my life again until I arrived in Trincomalee as First Lieutenant of the Fleet Destroyer HMS 'Whelp' to join the British Pacific Fleet on its way to Australia and the Pacific war. By this time aviation had become the naval striking power and the whole surface fleet was there to give the carriers as much protection as possible against enemy aerial and submarine attack. The Japanese suicide, or Kamikaze, pilots were to become a particular problem. A number of strikes by Fleet Air Arm aircraft of the BPF were carried out against strategic targets in Indonesia and, after the raid on Palembang, we successfully rescued several aircrew who had had to 'ditch' on their way back to their carriers.

When it reached the Pacific, the BPF became Task Force 57 within the US Third Fleet (or Fifth depending on whether it was being commanded by Admirals Halsey or Spruance) and operated over 200 aircraft against targets in the Sakishima Gunto and in support of the Marine and Army forces invading Okinawa. It later became Task Force 38 and its aircraft flew many successful sorties against targets on the Japanese mainland until the enemy finally decided to cease hostilities.

It required a tremendous effort and very many casualties before the Japanese were forced to surrender on Okinawa and no-one was under any illusions about the cost in human lives that would have to be paid for an invasion of the Japanese home islands. Whatever may be thought of nuclear weapons today, the fact remains that the two atom bombs not only shortened the war, they saved the lives of untold thousands of Allied and almost certainly Japanese lives as well.

The Japanese government eventually decided to end hostilities on 16 August 1945, but it took some time for the orders to filter through, and there were a number of fanatics who simply ignored them. This created quite a problem for the naval commanders. When the Commander in Chief of the BPF, Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, was asked how the Combat Air Patrols over the Fleet should react to the presence of Japanese aircraft, his reply was that they should be shot down '...in a friendly fashion'.

The naval war in the Pacific was, for the first time in naval history, an airman's war. It was the pilots from the carriers who defeated the Imperial Japanese Navy and who were uniquely able to give the ground forces the vital air cover necessary for their success. It was the carrier-borne aircraft that were in the front-line, whether attacking enemy ships or targets ashore or providing the Fleet's first line of defence against enemy aircraft, and they did a superb and very courageous job.

I am very pleased to know that the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia is committed to caring for former members of the British and Australian Fleet Air Arm and to keeping alive the record of their achievements.



Admiral of the Fleet
His Royal Highness, The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh
KG, KT, OM, GBE

EDITORIAL

My sincere thanks to all those readers, both here and overseas, who have sent me Christmas Greetings; the cards I intended to send are still sitting on the desk, another victim of the 'lack of time' syndrome.

1996 brings in my fifth year of involvement with *Slipstream*, it has, on the whole, been a rewarding task in the friends I have made, many of whom I have never met. Not all the correspondents have been amicable, however, I have found that the office shredder has been a boon in this regard.

Many people imagine that the Journal is produced by myself and a staff, the truth of the matter, is that the only staff I have is used to belt the black snakes that visit occasionally.

After printing is completed, the volunteers descend and, defying the odds, sort out the 'ins and outs' of the Postal Act and prepare *Slipstream* for its journey to your door.

To these people I am eternally grateful, I still have memories of Tony Penno and I in the early days, folding the copies by hand and sticking them down with glue sticks and adhesive tape.

I think the time has now arrived for me to pack my bag and hammock and let someone else assemble what they think may be of interest to the membership.

So...if there are any volunteers out there who would like to take on the challenge of *Slipstream* Editor, please let me know.

In this edition you will find the first instalment of a memoir entitled, 'A Tiffy's Odyssey'. It is written by ex CAA Colin Price, I hope that you enjoy it. I remember Colin as a most fastidious person and an excellent tradesman. Samples of his work are on display in the Australian Naval Aviation Museum.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Greetings to all members and I hope that 1996 will be everything that you wish it to be. The annual Federal Council meeting held in Orford, Tasmania, last October was very successful and I thank the Tasmanian Division for their organising skills and warm hospitality. The week-end after the council meeting a number of interstate FAAA visitors joined with the Tasmanian members in the unveiling of a FAA memorial plaque in SHROPSHIRE PARK at Ulverstone. For those who have not had the pleasure of visiting Ulverstone, may I recommend that you put it on your "places to see" for future travels. You will be very impressed.

The Federal Council considered a motion put forward by the NSW Division concerning the writing of the 'History of the RAN Fleet Air Arm'. It was agreed that the NSW Division should establish a sub-committee to examine the feasibility of having the history written, printed and published. The chairman of the sub-committee is Barry Roberts, we look forward to the results of their study.

However, in the final analysis, whether or not our history is written will depend upon the support given to the project by the members. In the past, I have appealed to members to subscribe to the FAA History Fund and we acknowledge those who have donated by printing their names in *Slipstream* as our way of saying thank you, but so far, the support has been a bit thin on the ground. Up to the end of 1995 only 75 individual members and two Divisions have sent in contributions.

When one considers that we have nearly 1000 members on the books, the support so far received is not all that encouraging. The size of the donation is not the most important thing. Before we can go much further we need to know how much support the project can expect from the members and your donation is seen as an expression of that support. It is our history, our story. If we want it written then we must be prepared to get behind the project team and give it moral and material support.

As they say in the classics - **PLEASE CONSIDER!**

Thank you.

'Toz' Dadswell

DONORS TO THE 'HISTORY OF NAVAL AVIATION IN AUSTRALIA'

Charles Baldwin	Mike Heneghan	R. 'Stalky' Maley
John Buchanan	Matt Jacobs	Brian Terry
Graham Falkiner	Doug Jago	William Wilson
Rose and Jim Fletcher	Norman Lee	

Christmas and New Year Greetings are extended to the members from:
 UK Fleet Air Arm Association of Greater Manchester
 HMS Ocean Association
 The Ponam Association (*HMS Nabaron*)

Dedication of Fleet Air Arm Memorial Plaque Shropshire Naval Memorial Park - Ulverstone - Tasmania

The official photographer for the Tasmanian Branch of the Naval Association, Ken Alexander (brother of Roy), has a comprehensive set of photographs taken on 4-5 November, 1995. FAAA members who participated at the event, can purchase copies of these photos for 75 cents each. Division Secretaries can obtain the samples on request to the Editor.

A LAST FAREWELL

†

MARR Alexander - September 1995
 KING Geoffrey J. - Auckland NZ - 07 October 1995
 PERCIVAL 'Percy' - Late 1995
 SEED Peter - LtCdr RAN (Rtd) - 30 November 1995
 LACY 'Jock' Alex - 17 December 1995
 MOSSMAN Ronald - 08 January 1996

ATTENTION ALL KOREAN WAR VETERANS

In 1994, the Prime Minister announced that the Australian Government had approved a Korean War Memorial to be erected in Canberra. Although the official announcement of the site and the symbol of remembrance has yet to be announced, the committee overseeing the project has advised that the memorial will be unveiled at 1100 on Wednesday 24th April 1996.

The form of the ceremony will be largely dependent on the numbers who attend. If the response indicates that only a small number will be involved, the ceremony will be limited to a dedication service at the memorial site. Larger numbers will warrant a parade with fuller participation by contingents of the Australian Defence Force. FAAA members who are Korean War Veterans and intend to participate in the service on 24th April should advise the National Secretary, FAAA of Australia PO Box 105, VINCENTIA, NSW, 2540 ASAP so he can pass the numbers on to the organising committee.

Interstate members attending the ceremony are invited to join with the FAAA (ACT) members in the Anzac Day march on the following day.

AIRCREW REUNION

A reunion of aircrew members of the Sydney Carrier Air Group who flew on operations during *Sydney's* first tour, between October 1951 and February 1952, is planned to take place after the ceremony. This will be in the form of a barbecue at Norman Lee's home (25 Rubbo Crescent, WESTON, ACT - Phone/Fax 06-288-2285).

As this will most likely be the last chance for such a get-together, all are urged to make the effort to get to Canberra for the dedication and the reunion. Spouses are most welcome.

Names to Norman Lee ASAP but no later than 10 March please.

Yellow, red and lilac cards will all be replaced by the new gold card. Yellow card holders will not notice much change as their eligibility will continue at the same level. However the previous red and lilac card holders will gain extra benefits from their new gold cards. On top of the benefits they have received in the past, the gold card gives wider access to pharmaceutical items available through the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS). Those who were previous red card holders will also receive travel assistance for treatment at community based medical facilities.

The new cards are to be used from January 1st, and the old cards should be destroyed - even if they have not reached their expiry date.

Regular Defence Force Welfare Association.

After a decade of intense activity the Shoalhaven & District RDFWA Contact Group has been wound up, mainly due to a lack of volunteers for the executive positions of Chairman and Secretary. The Contact Group achieved many successes for local veterans and widows in claims on Department of Veterans Affairs. It was in the area of compensation, however, that the Contact Group became sought out. DFRB & DFRDB were also problem areas for RSL welfare officers, these cases also coming the way of the Contact Group.

Whilst the Contact Group no longer exists as an official body, contact can be made with a trained advocate by written request to: Shoalhaven & District Contact Officer, RDFWA, PO Box 662, Nowra 2541, or alternatively a phone call to 044 232014 and John Arnold will put you in touch with the advocate nearest to you. In Sydney the RDFWA is located at 122 Moore Park Road, Paddington, 2021, The office is manned most business hours by volunteers and can be reached on 02 339 3447.

As training courses for advocates conducted jointly by the RSL and Veterans Affairs now include reference to the various compensation acts, including the new Military Compensation Act 1994, assistance should progressively become more available in these matters from RSL Sub Branch Welfare Officers.



WELFARE OFFICER'S REPORT

By Ivan 'Chips' Gray JP - NSW Division



In the last edition of *Slipstream*, this column listed a broad summary of entitlements under the Veterans Entitlement Act and the Compensation Act certainly resulted in a host of enquiries. Whilst the summary cleared up questions in some minds it also raised others.

One of the most common was, "*Does the awarding of the Australian Service Medal 1945 - 1975 give any entitlement under the VE Act*". The answer is NO. There is also a lot of confusion as to who qualifies for the issue of this new medals with both the Government and Opposition releasing statements regarding the issue of the ASM 1945-75. As the Coalition policy is for a more generous issue of the medal, if you haven't yet enquired regarding possible entitlement it may be an idea to wait until after the Federal Elections.

Enquiries to:- Staff Officer (Medals), Directorate of Naval Personnel Services, D-3-14, Russell Offices, CANBERRA ACT 2600.

For those that thought the extension of the issue of the ASM, and certain variations in the qualifying periods for other decorations, may also give rise to benefits under the Veterans Entitlement Act, I would draw your attention to a Press Release from Wilson Tuckey MP, Federal Member for O'Connor, and Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs; "*Receiving medals does not entitle veterans to automatic service pensions. The eligibility for medals and benefits are considered entirely separately and will remain so under a Coalition Government.*"

Department of Veterans Affairs have introduced a new card system effective from 1 January, with two cards replacing the previous four.

By having just two levels of eligibility instead of four, it will be easier and faster for doctors, pharmacists and other health professionals to work out what people are entitled to under the new system.

From January 1st, existing yellow, red, lilac and white cards will be replaced with gold and white cards. Previous yellow, red and lilac cards will be replaced with a gold card (for all conditions), and white card holders will be given a new white card (for specific conditions).

The new white card will work the same way as previously and people will continue to receive treatment for the specified condition/s for which DVA has accepted financial responsibility.

THE AUSTRALIAN SERVICE MEDAL

1939 - 1975

by Fred Kirkland OAM

Due to some erroneous Media Reports exacerbated by typographical errors, considerable confusion exists as to who are and who are not eligible for the Australian Service Medal 1945 - 1975.

As a service to veterans we supply the following information which we believe to be accurate at December 1995.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

As a result of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry Into Defence & Defence Related Awards (CIDA) the Government has authorized the issue of the Australian Service Medal 1945 - 1975 for a range of service in the post 1945 era. The service to be recognized is only for non warlike, peace keeping, garrison and training roles. Combatants are specifically EXCLUDED as are many others including those with service in the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) and Atomic/Nuclear veterans.

Originally, six (6) Clasps were authorized but after aggressive lobbying by veterans the Government has now approved a further four (4) Clasps.

The EXCLUSION of the combatants has caused widespread anger and bitterness among veterans. If veterans have qualified for a British/Imperial service medal in the post 1945 era they are NOT eligible for the new Australian service medal for that service. We refer to the British Naval General Service Medal 1915 - 1962, the British Korea Medal, the British General Service Medal 1918 -1962 and the British (Campaign) Service Medal 1962. Most veterans regard this as discriminatory as all Australian combatants of WW2 had their British/Imperial medals complimented by the Australia Service Medal 1939 - 1945.

Qualifying periods of the ASM 1945 - 1975 varies from 30 days, 90 days and 180 days depending on when and where, you served.

For full details of current eligibility veterans should write to The Hon. Gary Punch, MP, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT, 2600 and ask for a copy of his (a) letter to his Caucus Colleagues of 19 October 1995 (b) Media Release (110/95) of 24 October 1995 (c) the CIDA Report. These three documents, read in concert, fully explains the Government's Policy. Complaints and protests should also be directed to the Minister

COALITION (LIBERAL / NATIONAL) POLICY

On being elected to Government, the Coalition, as part of Policy, will rectify the anomalies of the CIDA Report and has committed itself to make major amendments to the current Government's Policy.

honour and continue to issue the ASM 1945 -1975 to those veterans currently eligible under the present Government's Policy.

allow all veterans with service in the following to qualify for the ASM 1945 - 1975:

Berlin Air Lift 26 June 1948 to 30 September 1949

BCOF 3 September 1945 to 28 April 1952

Korean War 29 June 1950 to 27 July 1953

Malaya Emergency 31 May 1950 to 31 July 1960

Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) 2 July 1955 to 30 October 1966

Indonesian Confrontation 24 December 1962 to 11 August 1966

The medal will be issued with appropriate Clasps

One (1) medal will be issued to a veteran but they may qualify for multiple Clasps

the medal will be issued for both operational and non operational service

standardize the qualifying period at 30 days for all three branches of the Australian Defence Force. (RAN ARMY RAAF)

VIETNAM

the addition of Bars to Vietnam medals (Vietnam Service Medal & Vietnam Logistic Support Medal) will be introduced for those who have participated in additional tours of duty.

investigate the extension of eligibility for the Vietnam Logistic Support Medal.

WORLD WAR 2

reduce the qualifying period for the Australia Service Medal 1939 -1945 to 30 days, more in line with British War Medal

eligible service in the Volunteer Defence Corps for the ASM 1939 - 1945 will be reduced from three (3) years to 6 months

WW2 CIVILIAN SERVICE MEDAL 1939 -1945

Although yet to be confirmed, there is a distinct possibility that those who served in the National Emergency Service (NES) during WW2 will be allowed to qualify for the Civilian Service Medal 1939 - 1945, along with their peers who are currently eligible, namely those of the Civil Construction Corps, the employees of the Northern Queensland Railways, the Land Army and VADS.

As part of their Policy, the Coalition has undertaken to continually monitor the system and address anomalies and problems brought to their attention by veterans and their Associations. For full details of the Coalition's Policy veterans should write to Mr C. Wilson Tuckey., MP., Commonwealth Parliament Offices, Level 39, Exchange Plaza, 2 The Esplanade, Perth, WA, 6000 and ask for a copy of his Media Release of 27 September 1995.

ELECTION PROMISES

A candidate was addressing an election meeting: "When my party comes to power, worker's wages will be doubled."

A woman shouted from the crowd, "And what about all the tarts and prostitutes who defile our streets?"

The candidate replied: "When my party comes to power, they will be driven underground."

And a voice from the back shouted, "There you go again, favouring the bloody miners!"

FROM THE ARCHIVES



No 1 RATING PILOTS COURSE - Commenced training at HMAS Cerberus 09 December 1947

L-R Back Row: M.T.Streeter - H.J.Hurley - W.J.Sweeting - C.F. Van Der Lelie - F.T.Lane - C.E.Champ
- N.J. Creavy - A.J.Roland

L-R Front Row: R.R.Sinclair - J.L.Herrick - G.K.Eldring - Lt. J. Bullen RN (NLO) - E.I.Webster - I. MacDonald
- J.McG. Horwood

Photograph taken in February 1948 after arrival at RAAF Point Cook. *Photograph courtesy Ian MacDonald*



NAVAL AIRMAN RECRUIT CLASS No.69 - KANAS NOWRA

Here's the faces - you provide the name tags.

Photo courtesy R. Murrell



ELECTRICAL
RUGBY UNION

UNDEFEATED
PREMIERS
1958

Full list of names
required please.

*Photograph courtesy
Nev Hall*



TOP
PHOTO

There are
plenty of our
members
stashed in this
little lot

*Photograph
courtesy Kevin
Foot*



Dated 1954 -
what is the story
behind this
moment
captured in time?
Some of those
pictured are
Lex Drake,
Laurie Dixon,
Ted Wilson,
Errol Dreher...
over to you,
readers!

A NAVY WIFE'S STORY -

ABERDEEN TO THE ANTIPODES

A young bride's introduction to the bush in the Land of Oz

In the early days of the RAN FAA, Rusty Marquis decided to change over from General Service, as a result of this decision he was sent to the UK for training.

One day in 1950, whilst dancing the light fantastic in the NAAFI at HMS Ariel, he encountered the love of his life, Marg.

On completion of his cross-training, Rusty returned to Australia. Although they corresponded with each other, it was 1953 before they were to meet again, due entirely to Rusty being on the Coronation Cruise. They married in Scotland on 16 May 1953 - two weeks later he bid her a fond farewell at Aberdeen Station as he left for Glasgow to pick up HMAS Sydney.

Despite asking Australia House to send Marg over to Australia at a date requested, they sent her over six months early, unfortunately, Rusty was serving in Korea and she had to stay with friends of his. It was June 1954, before they met up again in Western Australia.

After leave in WA, they travelled by train to Moss Vale in NSW. Rusty organised a taxi-truck, they loaded all their bits and pieces on it and headed off for a house that had been rented for them at Huskisson, a place that even Rusty hadn't visited at that time. Marg recalls the culture shock she experienced.....

• *'Here was 'Husky', just dirt tracks and this little cottage surrounded by black sands and trees at Moona Moona Creek.*

I went into the room designated as a kitchen and asked where I was supposed to do the cooking, I was shown this fuel stove - the first one I had ever seen. The washing-up facilities consisted of a tap protruding from the wall with a dish underneath it, another item known as an 'ice chest' was quite a surprise.

I went into the lounge room and sat on the sofa, promptly disappearing through a hole so large that I landed on the floor. The single bedroom had

a double bed with three legs and a brick substituting for the fourth, the mattress was kapok filled. The dressing table blended into the decor by being propped up with a piece of wood. I thought this was pretty grim until Rusty showed me the laundry, a tin shed out the back with a wood fueled copper and a 'bucket shower' operated by a rope.

In retrospect, I think the biggest shock was opening the door of the shed which I had been told was the toilet. All I could see was a large metal container with a hole in it, perched on top of this structure was a rough wooden seat seat! The only thing I could say was, "Is that where you? Is that where you?... " I was lost for words. Imagine my thoughts when they told me we had to KEEP IT.... for a whole WEEK!

It was awful at first, but it didn't take long to get the hang of the fuel stove, wood copper, bucket shower and the great Australian 'dunny'.



L-R: 'Rusty' Marquis and long time friend, Nev Russell, pictured aboard HMAS Melbourne in 1973, following the presentation of a bar to 'Rusty's' Long Service Medal.

THE HAND OF FATE

by John Edward

He'd been at sea for several days,
In tropic weather, heat and haze,
With nought a beer to quench his thirst,
And felt as though his life were cursed.

Then dawned the day of promised cheer,
A day enhanced by thought of beer,
A day of hope and troubles few,
That heralded the beer issue.

As he worked he thought with pleasure,
Of relaxation without measure,
While sipping beer and spinning dits,
That racked his mates with laughing fits.

Secure came, and thereupon,
The words 'Up Beer' were piped anon,
The time has come, our hero said,
To face the future without dread.

A bottle each, of sparkling beer,
All chilled and cooled, and golden clear,
Was served to end the working day,
The price - a 'deener' and a 'trey'.

Anxiety possessed his face,
As patiently he kept his place,
And when his name was called at last,
He thought his troubles, all were past.

But, as he grasped with consternation,
His bottle, wet with condensation,
He felt it slip beneath his grip,
And could not halt its one way trip.

He gazed, with shock, upon the mess,
His face a picture of distress,
And stood in awe, a mental wreck,
His eyes transfixed upon the deck.

And then he gave a frightful groan,
"There aint no justice", was his moan,
"The way I feel I'll soon be dead,
I think I'm goin' orf me head."

He staggered off, a fearful sight,
With eyes, unseeing as the night,
A man, on whom the hand of fate,
Had fallen heavy, as a weight.

He fell exhausted on a stool,
A living proof that fate is cruel,
To count the drawn out days anew,
Before another beer issue.

* From:
HMAS Sydney
Coronation Cruise
Magazine

MALTA CONVOY

Operation 'Substance' - July 1941

by W. Germon - Canberra 1995

To the TAG's on *Ark Royal* at Gibraltar in July 1941, the signs were all too ominous - particularly to the TAG's of 808 and 807 Fulmar Squadrons. In previous convoys the losses in Fulmar Squadrons were of the order of 45%, although some of the aircrew were saved.

Audacity had arrived from the UK with new aircraft and spares to bring the squadrons up to strength, there were also relief pilots and observers. No relief TAG's though, we were still smarting at a recent signal... 'There are no relief TAG's, only replacements.'

The TAG's of 808 were PO Cuttriss, Tommy Goodman, Prothero, Mansell, O'Nion, Orme, Rigny and Alfie Pizer'. In 807 we had 'Betty' Nuttall, self (Gerry Germon), Barlow, Steve Holroyd, Shave and Tudge.

There were two rating pilots in each squadron: Dubber and Taylor in 808 and Johnson and Leggett in 807. There were also two rating O's: Buckett and Howard.

When you work it out, in Fulmar squadrons there were sometimes more rating aircrew than there were officer aircrew. 'Biff' Barlow, Steve Holroyd and myself had a foot in both camps.

We formed up 808 Squadron at Worthy Down on 2 July 1940, took part in Battle of Britain patrols but no action as far as I am aware. Prior to 808 embarking on the *Ark Royal*, the three of us were transferred (to our great delight) back to Worthy Down to form up 807 Squadron.

Several additions to 'Force H' (*Ark Royal*, *Renown*, *Sheffield*) had also appeared at Gibraltar. Cruisers *Arethusa* and *Manchester* and three Tribal Class destroyers.

The bulk of the convoy destined for Malta consisted of six fast ships, *City of Pretoria*, *Deucalion*, *Durham*, *Melbourne Star*, *Port Chalmers* and *Sydney Star*, plus *Leicester*, a personnel ship carrying 1,000 troops for Malta. Distributed throughout the warships were 4,000 more troops to go all the way to the island.

It was thought that the losses would be heavy, but Admiral Somerville made his now famous

signal...' *The convoy must go through.*'

The convoy, escorted by *Nelson*, *Edinburgh*, *Manxman*, *Nestor*, *Lightning* and *Eridge*, with two oilers *Ferndale* and *Avondale* sailed direct from UK, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar in thick fog just before midnight on 20 July. Unhappily, *Leicester* ran aground and had to be left behind.

At 0426 on 21 July, 1941, 'Force H' consisting of *Renown*, *Ark Royal*, *Hermione*, 'F' flotilla' and *Duncan*, sailed from Gibraltar in very squally weather and by dawn we were well clear of land.

We joined the convoy on 22 July and familiar routines for squadron TAG's followed.

Swordfish provided AS patrols all around the convoy and extended patrols to the North and ahead. Fulmar TAG's checked their 'tommy' guns, radios and their rear seat defence.

All destroyers refuelled from one of the oilers which then returned to Gibraltar.

'Force H' detached from the convoy and moved to a position 30 miles to the NE to place itself between the convoy and the expected enemy attacks. In this position it was reported by an Italian Shadower, but the convoy itself escaped detection. It was later attacked by an Italian submarine which fired four torpedoes, all of which exploded harmlessly after missing *Renown* and *Nelson*.

'Force H', plus additional escorts, returned to the convoy on 23 July as it approached Cape Bon.

At 0900 on the 24th, the first group of enemy aircraft were detected coming from the NW. One flight of 808 Squadron were already airborne - an 'A' flight of 807 Squadron went off to join them. We formed up at 10,000 feet. The leader of 'A' flight was our CO, LtCdr Sholto-Douglas, with his observer, Lt. V.A.T. Smith. His No.2 was PO Johnson and myself, PO W. Germon, and No.3 was PO 'Crash' Leggett with PO 'Biff' Barlow.

'Johnny' Johnson DSM, was a veteran Skua pilot and the only pilot

I have ever flown with who was assessed as 'exemplary', a fact of which I was eternally thankful.

The day was very clear with enormous visibility. The ships looked like small toys on a sheet of reflective glass. We engaged nine SM79s [Savoia-Marchetti three engined bomber] at 10,000 feet, shooting down three of them. The remainder jettisoned their bombs with no damage done and skeddaddled.

However, whilst we were occupied, seven torpedo bombers came in low against a terrific barrage from the fleet and dropped their torpedoes. The convoy escorts swung to meet them. *Fearless* was hit in the fuel tanks and went up. *Manchester* stopped three in the stern and with troops crowded between the after decks there was a terrific loss of life. The ship had a tough time making it back to Gibraltar, but three old V&W boats came out to her and she finally made it.

Four Fulmars regrouped at 10,000 feet and we had a fantastic view of the action from that altitude. Then Johnno said, "Here we go again", and we dived on twelve SM79s which were coming in for another attack.

I had a confused vision of diving through a group of aircraft, all guns blazing, clutching my 'tommy' gun and waiting for anything which might come into my restricted view. We went through and down to sea level and Johnno said, "We're going in!" I belatedly thought of sending a W/T ditching signal, our R/T was out, but I was saved the trouble, the W/T set had been taken care of either by a cannon shell or several bullets.

The sea was like a mill pond and we made a perfect landing. I unbuckled, ditched my SYKO (who remembers them?), and stood on the wing stub to help Johnno unbuckle. I had only got my legs wet! For once the dinghy had worked as intended, I swam a couple of strokes to retrieve it, we both climbed in, drifted off and watched the plane sink.

We had gone in some 30 miles ahead and to the North of the convoy, after floating around for a couple of hours, it was seen approaching from the SW. As luck would have it, we had ditched almost smack in the path of *HMS Firedrake*, a mine-sweeping destroyer which was on the outside

of an extended screen. It was unusual for a ship in action to stop or slow for anything, but the *Firedrake* did just that, slowing, firing a line and dragging us aboard, dinghy and all, then speeding up again.

A couple of weeks earlier, all aircrew had to have fluorescent sea markers sewn to their Mae Wests. I had mine done, Johnno hadn't. They were to have been lightly stitched so that a pull on a canvas tab would release them. The sailmaker who put mine on must have thought he was repairing a quarter-deck awning, triple stitched with double thread and impossible to release without the application of a razor blade. When these markers were wet, they gave off a deep blood-red dye which gradually diluted to orange, deep yellow then pale yellow.

When we came alongside the destroyer I was somewhat surprised at the solicitous reception. A couple of sailors came down the scrambling net to help me onboard, closely followed by a doctor, first-aid party - the lot! It appeared that with this deep red dye oozing out of me, they had assumed I had sustained a horrific wound.

In dry, borrowed overalls, Johnno and I, for the first time in our lives, were invited to the Wardroom for a drink with several Army officers taking passage. Afterwards we adjourned to the PO's Mess for a tot and a meal.

A number of attacks developed during the afternoon and action alarm bells seemed to be constantly sounding, but there was no observed damage to the convoy.

At 1615, part of the escort, including 'Force H', swung around and left us with destroyers and cruisers of the close escort (including *Firedrake*) and carried on to Malta with the convoy. *Firedrake* was now detailed as a mine-sweeper ahead of the column of the convoy as we entered the 'Narrows'.

At 1900, the convoy was once again attacked in strength. We had no air cover as the supposed fighter cover from Malta failed to make contact. At 1945 another attack from high level bombers. *Firedrake* copped what was officially described as a 'near miss'. It blew a hole in our starboard side about 12' x 10', which flooded the engine room and resulted in us stopping dead in the water with a considerable list. *Eridge*, a Hunt

Class destroyer was detailed to take us in tow, and so began the long haul back to Gibraltar.

Just before dark we were attacked by a lone Cant 506 [seaplane] which dropped two torpedoes, one passed between the tow, the other astern of us. A very close thing.

The night passed quietly and next day, apart from a few half-hearted attacks from pairs of aircraft, we plodded our way westward. Apparently the concentration of attacks were still being made on the convoy. During these attacks, Johnno was on the bridge as adviser to the Captain on aircraft tactics. I organised 10 -20 soldiers on the iron deck firing their rifles - 'Aim 80 yards ahead and slightly above. Fire!' It kept me and them occupied. As we were later to find out in Korea, more than one aircraft was damaged by ground fire.

The convoy got through with severe losses, the escorts refuelled and made the run back from Malta to 'Force H'.

The *Ark's* Fulmars had been in action during our enforced absence and another four enemy aircraft had been destroyed. Rating Observer Howard was wounded and Steve Holroyd crashed over the side but was picked up.

On 24 July the *Avondale* joined *Eridge* and *Firedrake* to provide further assistance and on the evening of the 26th, 'Force H' rendezvoused with us.

Then came an episode which I will always remember. Admiral Somerville formed the whole of 'Force H' and additional escorts into two columns and steamed past our little group, each ship clearing lower decks and cheering as they passed.

We arrived at Gibraltar and tied up astern the *Ark Royal*.

Each day at dawn, Admiral Somerville used to pull a small boat around the harbour to keep fit. Apparently he pulled over to the *Firedrake* to inspect the damage. The *Firedrake's* Duty PO Stoker, on hearing a noise, emanating from the holed engine room, went to investigate. "Who are you?" he demanded of the stout man in the small boat. "I'm Admiral Somerville", came the reply. "I don't give a stuff who you are", replied the PO, "Get that bloody boat out of my engine room!"

ooooOoooo

[With the Grand Harbour at Malta packed with merchant ships from the newly arrived convoy - Operation Substance - high speed Italian motor boats with their bows packed with explosives made an attack on the shipping.

Apparently this attack had been planned for months, frogmen would blow up a hindrance net suspended from a bridge to allow the motor boats access to the harbour. The boats would then be directed towards the ships, the crewman throwing himself over the stern of the boat before contact was made.

This plan almost succeeded, except that one of the Italians accidentally blew up the bridge and himself, blocking access to the harbour for the motor boats. Ed]

IN RETROSPECT

by J.W.Moodie

In years to come when day is done and I sit down to rest,
I'll think of wars and distant shores and decide which was the best.

Of lands I've seen and spots I've been, their folks both black and white,

A Greek mule train and Alamein and Chink attack at night.

The night our flanks were ringed with tanks, the Kiwi's bayonet charge,

The airborne fleet raining down on Crete and our getaway on a barge.

Of Egypt's sands and Yankee Bands, a striptease in Japan,
And a round or two for a pound or two with GI's in Pusan.

The smelly wog to whom you'd flog a can of bully beef,
And Tobruk's rats with turned up hats and plonk that stained their teeth.

The frightened Wops and Greek wineshops, an Athens cabaret,
It makes it seem 'twere but a dream and oh, so far away.

In troopers, trains and aeroplanes, the big ones and the small,

But a four months trip on an Aussie ship, goddamn, that beats them all.

* From *HMAS Sydney Coronation Cruise Mag.*



Dear Ed,

I was saddened to hear the news of Peter Seed's death in the UK. Peter was an original of the Australian component in 805 Squadron - now sadly depleted.

Although I left the squadron shortly before Korea and was not able to document his career during and after the conflict I, nevertheless, was a very close friend up until that time and have put together an article for the magazine.

I have also included a photo of both the original 805 English and Australian pilots which I know you will find interesting. It was taken just after we joined the squadron at NAS Eglinton in Northern Ireland.

All photos are from my photo album, hence the cut-outs and bits and pieces superimposed. With best regards, *Henry Young*

Lt Cdr Peter W. SEED, 1924 - 1995

On 30th November one of 805 Squadrons first Australian FAA pilots passed away at his home 'Kingfishers', Lymington, Hampshire England. Peter Seed would be well remembered by all who flew with him and knew him during his Navy days.

I served with Peter during the war, from the time we went together from New Zealand to *HMS St. Vincent*, Portsmouth, then through all our flying training at St. Louis, Pensacola, Corpus Christie, Beeville, and on operational training in Corsairs from Jacksonville. Back to the UK and eventually to our discharge in NZ.

It was Peter who approached me with the news that Australia was to start a Fleet Air Arm and what about we go over?

There would be no trouble with me, I was Australian born, but politically, recruitment was to be confined to nationals or 'new permanent residents' - the proof of which was to be gainfully employed in Australia.

So it was, that after shearing, I joined Peter Seed and Johnie Howden in Melbourne where we established, what was accepted by our Company, as the fastest business promotion in their history. In Gilbey's gin factory you start in the basement washing bottles. Still sober, you then, some months later, graduate to the first floor where the gin is actually bottled. Some years later, a select few make it to the holy of holies, the top floor, where bulk whiskey from Scotland is bottled. The FAA. selection committee was enthralled to know we worked our way up in only three weeks - an all time record!

The first two cruises of the *Sydney* were halcyon days. The great majority of 20th CAG were bachelors. We flew, wined and dined round Australia showing the flag. To the Islands, New Zealand, the Air Shows, with our formation aerobatic team, and enough memories to last a lifetime. Inevitably, I met my match and with Peter by my side, married Madge, swallowed the hook, and returned to the land.

In June, last year, Madge and I stayed with Peter at his lovely home in England, fought the old battles and were invincible again together.

To Mary, Caroline and Michael, all those who were privileged to fly and serve with Peter share your loss.



AUSTRALIAN PILOTS AT RNAS EGLINTON, NORTHERN IRELAND, NOVEMBER 1948
L-R: Henry Young - Tony Robinson - Jimmy Bowles - Peter Seed - Freddie Sherbourne
- Dickie Dyke - (Absent - George Jude)



THE IRISH PROBLEM

- 1949 -

by John Buchanan

The night is dark. A cold north wind deals with faint wisps of smoke from the chimney of an old hut, three miles north of the border.

Inside the hut, a group of uniformed men crouch around a pot-bellied stove. They converse in low and earnest tones and their accents are not of the North. It could well be assumed that whatever the outcome of their clandestine plans 'twill not be to the benefit of the Establishment.

Look now! A hat is being circulated and each is taking from it a folded slip of paper. It's a ballot, an allotment of individual tasks.

I.R.A. infiltrators, do you think, bent on an act of terror? Nothing so dramatic; they are Aussie Naval Airmen based at RNAS, Eglinton, N.Ireland for squadron experience. That old hut, a 1942 igloo with a coal heater (but little coal) is their communal mess. And what are they up to? They are planning one of their highly illicit "in-mess" barbecues.

An intrinsic part of the ANZAC culture is reserved for those situations wherein some statutory regulation must be temporarily waived in the interests of human survival. After eighteen months abroad, living in places where the staple diet consisted of semalina porridge, offal meats, over-ripe fish, beans and a duff they called spotted dick!...Time for action. "Let them eat steak". Naturally we'd put a case through proper channels. We had always referred our problems to the RAN Liaison Officer, a LtCdr V.A.T. Smith. He always noted them in a little black book, his constant companion. But then, alas! Perusing the "Times", we read he is holidaying in Switzerland with his family and, no doubt, with that little book!

So... back to those gluttonous illicit dinners. An epic event doesn't just happen; nor an epicurean one. There was detailed planning ahead and the assigning of tasks through a ballot.

(1) One "Agent" would, at twilight, ride the mess bike over country tracks southward to cross the border. In a village of the Republic, where there was no

rationing, he'd purchase the menu items; rump steak, country ham, eggs and butter.

(2) Two "Nocturnal Agriculturalists", equipped with spade and bucket would slip into some nearby farmer's field to liberate a potato or two. If caught, they would have had their chips. Lucky for them, and us, we always had our chips crisp and hot.

(3) Two "Night Owls" would wisely study camp security before scaling the challenging fence surrounding the "Harem" (WRNS compound). The ladies had unlimited coal. Yes sir, coalwise those girls were well stacked! Our lads, if apprehended, would be on bread, water and oakum instead of steak, ham and eggs. Who would believe, "I was just looking for some coal, sir."

The other tasks involved the domestic side of things, not least of which was the clean-up. The best defence...No evidence!

Even 46 years down the track, I can still recapture the spirit of those "mess dinner" nights. Not too difficult to recall the gastronomical joy of juicy steak wrapped in grilled

country ham enthroned on hot buttered bread and surrounded by golden chips. The spirit though was in the warmth of the company of good mates. In those days we didn't recognise another feeling now called the adrenalin rush. We'd out-foxed Authority!

One pang of regret. By the time the camp cinema programme was finished, a rich aroma would have permeated the freezing air for fifty yards around our hut. How it must have tortured those poor pommy sailors returning to their quarters! We would see their beady eyes, flattened white noses and fog producing mouths pressed against the window glass. But we were few and they were too many to feed. Perhaps we aided immigration.....

Oh yes; I have just remembered one other detrimental situation. I wouldn't go so far as to say my mates let me down but I have enclosed a photo of eleven of them that I took outside the hut. Should you meet one, just be a little careful.

December '49 our group went on draft to *HMS Heron*. We had to commence a course there in the New Year. As I was spending my leave in Ireland, it was arranged I should leave my kit at Eglinton, go on leave two days before the mob left and then return two days early to pack and get to *HMS Heron* on the same day as the others returned



PUSSER'S POTEEN PACKED POTATO PILFERERS POSING

L-R Back Row: Ernie Maud - Bruce Schmidt - Warwick Robinson
 L-R Centre Row: Ray 'Dogs' Homer - Keith 'Kit' Potts - Tom 'Wog' Howarth
 - Noel 'Blue' Peacock - Jack Shortland
 L-R Front Row: Abby Tedford - Micky Mack - Trevor Bycroft

Photo courtesy John Buchanan

after their leave in England.

Returning from my Xmas leave, the Quartermaster told me that the Buffer wished my company A.S.A.P. The Buffer was an ancient Chief whom, I can attest, possessed an enviable vocabulary of English, Irish and Arabic profanities. He suggested to me in his way, that the British, having sent their criminals to the antipodes had considered that "that was that". But now, he was convinced that the dregs of that scum had returned; in uniform! I did venture to enquire of the reasoning behind his opinion.

It then became apparent that, on the eve of their departure, my countrymen had enjoyed one final granddaddy of a barbecue. The problem was, that they forgot to do the essential clean-up!

The Buffer escorted me to the hut. I could only agree that it wasn't ready for Admiral's Inspection. The Buffer suggested I "make it so".

He loaned me his best scrubber and beaut soft soap and indicated that his motto was the same as the one at Belsen; "Liberty through Labour". I worked hard all day and the result pleased him to the point that he even said I might have a drop of Irish blood! He even gave me a packet of Sweet Afton cigarettes.

The next morning I departed for England and the Buffer came to shake my hand and say good bye. In return for such unexpected friendliness, I gave him the mess bike. Cripes! I hope we owned the bloody thing!

ooooOOoooo

Dear Ed,

Congratulations on producing a first class publication. I, like many others, now look forward to each issue in eager anticipation of a good read.

One of the tasks of an editor, I guess, is to ensure each issue carries a balance of topics; current news about the Navy's Air Arm, museum news, State branch reports, old photos of people, aircraft, ships and those dits from ex sailors who have difficulty in remembering where they left their glasses, but who remember every detail of a happening in 1951. Many similar club journals become boring with lengthy verbiage on matters of little immediate interest to the readers. Yours is a happy balance. Long may it reign.

John Buchanan -(Snodgrass 35696)

Dear Ed,

thank you for sending me a copy of Slipstream Vol. 6 No1 which I have found to be very interesting and nostalgic as well as informative.

The Fleet Air Arm was the basis of my life for thirty years, so naturally I am extremely pleased to see that some people are making an effort to keep the memories alive, with a well deserved MUSEUM.

Regretfully, our memories are only in the head and hearts of human beings so there are no pictures to help revive memories, mores the pity. However, what pictures there are are well worth the looking at as an aid to our memories.

A case in point is the photo on Page 8 of the April 95 issue and the Conversion Course 1947/1949, which revived my memory a bit as half of them were allocated to me on T.T.S when they arrived back from England. I was instructing on the Firefly (airframe) at that time and I don't think anyone knew what to do with them, so we got them for a refresher course. The other half went on to the Sea Fury with 'Bungy' Williams, another two year loan man from the R.N.

The Firefly that was allocated for their instruction was one that the R.A.N. had decided to recondition instead of sending it to Sydney. It seemed to develop into a part time job, so much so, that when it eventually left the hangar, lower deck was cleared to watch it. I cannot remember whether it flew or not.

Yours sincerely

W. Middleton - ex CPO

Dear Ed,

With reference to Slipstream, July 1995, Page 9, and the photograph showing the 1957 Eastern Area Interservice Sports Tug-of-War Team (110 stone) Albatross.

I'd meant to write earlier, but had forgotten until receipt of the next edition which prompted me to make an effort.

In the Rear Row: The 'unknown' (4) is REM(A) Peter Higgs.

In the Front Row: The 'unknown' is EM(A) Pat Hickey.

The other three 'unknowns' in the photograph all look familiar, but after 38 years I'd only be guessing if I tried to name them.

Peter Higgs was a good bloke

and a fine all-round sportsman. He was one of the many RN Air Radio 'bods' who came out for a two year stint on loan to the RAN during the late fifties and early sixties; filling the gap caused by the droves of local Air Radio personnel leaving the service to work for H.G.Palmer and such companies (this was in the early days of television in Australia).

Pat Hickey served from 1956 to 1962 (I think), he came from the Brisbane suburb of Bulimba. The last I heard, a few years ago now, was that he was a publican at Bulimba or nearby Balmoral. He may still be there.

Regards,

Arthur Rowe -ex REM(A)

Dear Ed,

For very personal reasons I enjoyed your Vol. 6 Number 3 October 1995 edition of Slipstream.

My enjoyment commenced with the forward by Sir Benjamin Bathurst GCB, Admiral of the Fleet, a foreword which sent me scurrying to my memorabilia trunk from which I extracted a copy of a photograph from the June 1st 1966 Nowra Leader (copy enclosed). A youthful Ben Bathurst RN in at least one of the roles he referred to, ie. Senior Pilot, Duty QHI, Duty SAR! I dips me lid, Sir Benjamin.

The same issue features some input from FAA notables of similar vintage including photographs of 'Bish' Wheeldon, Barry Roberts, Don McLean, Gordon Turner, Admiral Neil Ralph etc.

Being located in the far flung tropics of Townsville, one inevitably loses regular contact, so Slipstream and the most recent issue in particular, does have a very personal impact.

Keep up the good work,

Regards,

Barrie (Luigi) Lovett

[Unfortunately, the photocopy wasn't sharp enough for good reproduction and I couldn't find an original at the Museum.

The photograph depicted Barrie Lovett (Iroquois pilot), Pat Vickers (Wessex pilot), Denis 'Chuck' Churcher (ATC), Joe Smith (Dakota pilot), Bob McNeil (Dakota observer), Graham King (Dakota pilot) and Ben Bathurst (Wessex observer). They were some of the team which carried out search and rescue operations for survivors of the dredge W.D. Atlas.

If anyone has an original, I would like to copy it for further use. Ed]

Dear Ed,

I enjoyed 'Dooley' Lord's story of his career, however, I would like to point out that Barry Thompson and Keith Potts were lost in Moreton Bay off Caloundra, not Hervey Bay.

We had just spent four days in Brisbane and after departure, flying commenced as we entered Moreton Bay.

I was in the Ordnance Workshop, situated on the starboard side near the Quarter Deck, when the crash occurred. There was a sudden explosion, the whole ship shook and as I looked through the scuttle I could see bits of aircraft float by.

We spent some time searching for survivors and wreckage, but all that we recovered were parts of the Radome and two flying helmets.

Lower deck was cleared. A memorial service was held for the aircrew and two wreaths were thrown over the side and, I am afraid, that was that. I remember being quite upset at the time, they were both well liked by their fellow aviators as well as the ground crew.

Each time I visit my parents at Caloundra, I look out over Moreton Bay and think about Barry and Keith.

In regard to the Gannet prang at Cudrose in Cornwall [This occurred on 10 November 1955, those killed were, Lt David Padgett RAN, SubLt James Patrick Van Gelder RAN and Leading Telegraphist Norman John Self RAN. Ed.] - I had become friends with N.J. Self, the Telegraphist Air Gunner whilst on the way to UK on the *Vengeance*. He was billeted in our mess as a Leading Hand Aircrew. When he and others were lost, I was still embarked on *Vengeance* as 'clean-up party'. A large number of us travelled down from Plymouth for their memorial service which was held in the chapel on the air station. It was a very cold day with snow on the air strip. Prior to the service, in company with Les 'Horse' Pascoe, we visited some of our shipmates who were carrying out a rocket arming programme. Whilst there, I observed one of our mob who, despite the extreme cold, was laying in the snow sweating like hell! I think he is still around, maybe he would like to explain the reason for his behaviour through the pages of *Slipstream*.

Now, to the item about the

glider. Geoff Strickland told me that Harold Kent had his glider built in UK whilst he was in charge of an Apprentice School. He shipped the aircraft to Australia himself. Harold was the owner of the 'Tudor', this was not the aircraft that he pranged, that one was the one built by the Gliding Club at *Albatross*.

Regards,
'Mirrinni Mafia'

Dear Ed,

With reference to the photograph that appeared on Page 9 of the July edition of *Slipstream* headed 'HMAS *Albatross* 1954'.

I have listed all the bods I can put a name to, my apologies to the ones I have forgotten, although I can remember their faces.

Back Row L-R: George Sawyers, John Jeffery, John Cleaver, *Unknown*, Maurie Tiffen, Max Kerr, 'Lugs' Carter, *Unknown*

Middle Row: Ned Nevin, Noel Cox, *Unknown*, Cliff Eaton, *Unknown*, 'Shady' Lane, Pat Martin, Len Wiltshire, *Unknown*

Front Row : Jim Greenup, *Unknown*

Regards,
John Jeffery

Dear Ed,

With reference to previous editions of *Slipstream* -

1. The pilot who lost the wheel was Lt. Doug Baker.
2. The pilot who bailed out near Nowra was Cdr W.G.Bowles on 22 November 1950. The aircraft was 117 (the old 110)
3. The same pilot bailed out in Korea on 13 December 1951 after being hit by ground fire.
4. It was SubLt E.I.Webster who hit the power cables at Sussex Inlet (not the Shoalhaven river) on 7 July 1950.

Regards,
Ian MacDonald

Dear Ed,

I am writing in response to two letters in the October issue of *Slipstream*.

Firstly to Roy Allman's letter; the glider referred to was probably the Grunau Baby whilst the RNER was certainly Commander Goodheart, one of two brothers (Nick and John). The Goodheart brothers were both commanders in the Royal Navy. One was captain of the UK Gliding Team at the World Championships

(1950?), the other was also a keen gliding enthusiast, it was the latter who served with the RAN as the Engineer Commander.

The *Albatross* Gliding Club, if not already formed in 1951, was certainly in an embryo stage with lots of glue and dope being applied by numerous would-be gliding pupils to the trainer glider from '51 onwards. At that time I was instructing Basic Electrics in Harold Kent's college situated in 'A' hangar. The training glider was mostly housed in 'B' hangar along with a Tiger Moth.

Secondly, a thank you to Eric Manuel for the correction regarding Peter Bunn's precise whereabouts on the morning of the Nowra to Sydney relay run. From 1953 till 1955, I had much fun serving at *HMAS Nirimba* with Peter, Wilf Heard, 'Pincher' Martin, Laurie Jago, 'Bunger' Hotchkiss and so many others. It was perhaps my most enjoyable posting in the RAN. However, the point that Eric's letter makes in humour is most pertinent in a more serious fashion. We all have long memories(?) - but most memories differ in the recounting from person to person. I have in my possession the book entitled 'HMAS Melbourne' - which contains more than a few errors and many omissions which should have been included. In the writing of the FAA history, I do hope the authors have the greatest possible assistance in arriving at fact. It is a long time, nearly half a century, since Lieutenant Commander Chubb, First Lieutenant of *HMAS Albatross*, greeted the 20th CAG at the guardhouse in July 1949.

As I said, memories are long, but recollections are oft times erroneous.

Yours sincerely,
Charles Morris

Dear Ed,

May I congratulate you and those responsible for producing such a wonderful journal as *Slipstream*.

Each issue rekindles memories of old friends, times and events that are worth more than money can buy. Perhaps a face in a photo or a name in print, sparks the old brain tissues with the thought that, yes, I should get in touch and see how they are going. What we had is without doubt something unique in today's society. It is your efforts

which are serving to regenerate the memories of the old and bold. We are the fortunate ones to have had the opportunity to experience the pride of being part of the Fleet Air Arm. In my present employment I am in daily contact with the youth of today. Most will never know, nor would they understand the bond that can bring together men from all walks of life for a lifetime of shared experiences and comradeship. I believe that nothing is forever, but we should make the most of it while we can.

Some time ago, as a highly tuned athlete, or should I say an oldie suffering from mid-life crisis, I joined the Ulysses Club. This is a Motorcycle club for the over 50's which is Australia wide. The organisers produce a register of club members in booklet form with names, addresses and phone numbers, so that touring members may contact other members during their travels. The result is a networking of members throughout Australia.

As a suggestion, I believe a publication such as this, of our members, would rapidly bring together lifelong buddies from all over the nation. It could also result in spreading the word and bringing some of the lost souls back to the fold increasing our membership. If produced in booklet form, perhaps it could be made available at a reasonable cost to cover production. I would be more than willing to offer my services in any capacity if you feel this would be worth a try.

Should you find this worthy of publication may I send my best wishes to all my old mates over the years and I hope they are enjoying good health and happiness.

I may be contacted on 044-216979 or 80 Yurunga Drive, North Nowra, 2541.

Regards

Col Poulton - ex CPOATA

[The National Secretary once again states that the privacy of our members must be assured. The sale of Mailing Lists is big business, especially to a target group with specific interests. Should you wish to contact old shipmates, I will only be too happy to publish your request. If you know that the person you are seeking is already a member, you can forward a letter to that person in a stamped envelope for forwarding by the secretary. Ed.]

Dear Ed,

Further to Dick Lea's contribution on Page 15 of *Slipstream* Volume 6 Number 3 (October 1995) regarding the photograph of officers (Pg 8 of July 1995 issue).

I confirm that the officer first on the left front row, identified by 'Curley' Fahey as Jack Birch, is not me, although I have to admit there is a resemblance. In 1955 I was a third-year Cadet Midshipman at the Royal Australian Naval College, then at Flinders Naval Depot, and I still had almost two years to go before my 'Aviation Familiarisation' visit to ALBATROSS, as a Midshipman in January 1957. That was the start of another story.

I came across this little aphorism in my scrap book and you may consider including it in a future issue of *Slipstream*. Most, if not all, of your readers would understand the term 'artificers'!

DESCRIPTION OF NAVAL ARTIFICER SKILL LEVELS

- * Aircraft artificers work to the nearest "thou" (-sandth of an inch).
- * Engine room artificers work to the nearest "inch".
- * Shipwrights work to the nearest ship.

Regards

John Selby

Dear Ed,

Reference the letter by Kevin (Chick) Hawkins in the October 1995 edition of *Slipstream* page 13.

The photograph of the crashed glider is of a Kranich 11, which was sent to Australia by Lt Cmdr Tony Goodhart RN, prior to his arrival in Australia.

The Kranich 11 was a well known pre-war 2 sailplane designed by Hans Jacob of Germany, for advanced training. It was of all wood construction with a fabric covered, one piece wing.

The Kranich 11 shown in the photograph was being flown by Harold Kent. At the time of the crash he was making a landing approach and crashed short of the threshold of 08 runway. Harold received severe leg injuries and spent some considerable time in the Balmoral Naval Hospital, before returning to duty.

There were four official photographs taken of the crash the

negative numbers being G582 A, B, C, and D. The photograph shown was from negative G582 C.

To the best of my knowledge the wreckage was sold to a New Zealand gliding club.

The other gliding incident that Kevin referred to was that of a Grunau Baby 2. At the time of the crash it was being flown by Lt Cmdr Tony Goodhart RN of AJASS, who was practicing a series of loops for an air display, which as far as I can remember was sometime in 1955.

The Grunau Baby 2 had been built at RANAS under the supervision of Harold Kent.

The cause of the crash was metal fatigue of a light alloy aileron push-pull rod which ran from a bellcrank at the base of the fuselage to a bellcrank in the centre wing.

The failure of the control rod caused loss of aileron control resulting in severe wing flutter. The aircraft spiralled in a low speed spin into trees on the Nowra side of Braidwood Road adjacent to the 03 runway in line with the ERS building.

Tony Goodhart was not injured and the aircraft was subsequently repaired and returned to service with the RANGA.

Reference Charlie Morris's photograph of the Albatross Athletic Club in the October edition of *Slipstream* page 10. The person to the right of Ron Hay in the front row is David Carr not Kevin Foot and on his left hand side is John Stalker.

David Carr retired as a High School Principal and currently lives in a suburb of Perth.

John Stalker worked for the Weather Bureau in Western Australia for a number of years. He then spent two periods of duty at an Australian Antarctic Station as Officer in Charge, for which he was awarded the Polar Medal.

Unfortunately, John died following a motor accident in a suburb of Perth in 1993 when a truck ran into the back of his stationary vehicle at a set of traffic lights.

Best regards,

Charles Grose - ex-Leading Pilot's Mate and Foundation Member of the RANGA.

Dear Ed,

I obtained your name from my friend, Reg Torrington.

I have just had two books published as per the attached

release.

Reg, as a Sub Lieutenant, features in Volume 2 in a segment entitled 'The Last of the Convoy', this being his story of flying Swordfish on the Arctic Convoys - it is illustrated with photographs of himself, a Swordfish in flight and a Swordfish taking off from *HMS Fencer*.

Perhaps some of the FAA Association members may be interested in the books.

Yours sincerely,
Ross Pearson

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\$29.95 each volume

In 1989 Ross Pearson began to attend reunions of the Halifax Branch of the Air Force Association and was struck by the number of amazing experiences recounted that these gatherings by ordinary blokes. He started to tape some of these and gradually became more and more involved. The result of this involvement is these two books.

The war in the skies from 1939-45 is one of the most remarkable stories to have emerged from the Second World War. Thousands of men, few of whom had flown before, pushed themselves and their aircraft to the limits in a hazardous and entirely new type of warfare.

Now for the first time Australians tell this story as they experienced it. Former wireless operator/air gunner Ross Pearson has assembled a collection of first hand accounts of wartime aviation over sea, desert and jungle. He includes a comprehensive account of the experiences and role of ground staff and the Tactical Air Force following the invasion of Normandy.

This collection is both a richly detailed historical document and an immediate and personal story of 'ordinary blokes' caught up in truly extraordinary circumstances.

Ross Pearson lives in Lindfield, Sydney and is available for interviews on (02) 4161445

For further information please contact Scilla Rosenberg at Kangaroo Press (02) 654 1502

Dear Ed,

Your excellent magazine is circulated in our Naval Association Sub-Section by one of our members-in-common, Tom Allwood, and those of us with an affinity with the FAA read it with interest.

We enjoyed very much having members of the Queensland Division as our guests at a barbecue back in September, but once again it appears I have been misquoted. In his letter, President Barry Lister quotes me as saying I should have been a Birdie: not so - as an air controller, I was quite happy telling Birdies where to go!

What I might have said is that I should have been a member of the FAA Association having been a "d" from 1967 to 1971 and a "D" from 1972 to 1980. I might also qualify by having flown in more types of RAN, RAAF, RN and USN aircraft probably than many of our ex-aircrew: TA-4 Skyhawk, S-2 Tracker, Wessex, Iroquois, F-III, Hercules, Caribou, F-4K Phantom, Buccaneer, AEW Gannet, Hunter T-8 and E-2C Hawkeye.

I passed on my regards to Toz Dadswell as that esteemed gentleman was the rather daunting introduction to the RAN for me and 31 other cadet Midshipmen 'way back on 26 January 1960. As Training Officer of the RAN College at Jervis Bay, Toz was there to get us on the bus at Sydney's Central Station - and the first cadet not to answer "Sir!" when his name was called was the first to feel the lash of Toz' tongue! In the following 12 months Toz might not have instilled the fear of God into us, but he sure made us fear Toz Dadswell!

We went on to become the "Jinx Year" - the 1963 graduates who lost 4 of our members off Hayman Island in October 1963 and a further 4 in "Voyager" the following February. I cannot confirm this, but I believe that during the former incident, Toz virtually hijacked a Gannet to fly north and join in the search for the whaler and the missing midshipmen - as we were "his boys."

I also remember - I think it was 1964 - Toz performing the last free take-off in a Gannet from "Melbourne". The old girl had worked up to her full 21 knots, giving about 40 knots over the deck, while Toz held the Gannet just forward of the round-down at full

throttle until it was almost internally haemorrhaging. When he eventually released the brakes, he was airborne as he passed the island!

Next, I must comment on the (reprinted) letter from ex-Lieutenant S. Eadon, RNVR, concerning the news of the German surrender reaching Task Force 57 (the British Pacific Fleet). Mr. Eadon opens by saying, "Due to the International Date Line we, in the BPF, were 24 hours ahead of the U.K., so we learned of V-E Day on 9 May." The BPF never crossed the Date Line, which is in mid-Pacific, and in his second paragraph Mr. Eadon gives the fleet's longitude as 125 degrees 49 minutes East; the full position given is southwest of Okinawa, and Zone Time for that longitude should have been 8 hours (not 24) ahead of GMT.

In talking about the surrender in Europe, three separate times/dates are involved: General Jodl signed the unconditional surrender of all German forces at 2.41am on May 7; Churchill and Roosevelt designated May 8 as a day for celebrations (V-E Day) and the German surrender was to take effect from one minute past midnight, German time on May 9 - or 7.01am on May 9 in TF57's operating area. So what the men of the BPF would have received on May 9 was news that the fighting in Europe had ceased; V-E itself would have ended at 8am on May 9 - or 7am if the UK were on Summer Time.

To finish on a lighter note, the following is one of my many recollections from my days as both a student and an instructor at the Air Direction School, RNAS Yeovilton.

Practice emergencies were naturally part of the training, and while the two students "on the tube" each had two aircraft under control it was not unusual for a fifth aircraft to get in on the game - even if it was only sitting on the tarmac outside Airworks' hangar!

One particular student correctly interpreted the succession of "dits" over the control net as an aircraft reporting:

"I am speechless and require assistance."

Student: "79, this is Yeovil - are you speechless?"

79: "I don't think so. Am I?"

Student: "82, are you speechless?"

82: "No - why? What's happened?"

Student: "79 and 82 - roger, you are not speechless".

Break

"Speechless aircraft, what is your callsign?"

?????

Bruce T. Swain
President
Hervey Bay-Maryborough
Sub-Section
Naval Association of Australia

Dear Ed,

Well here we are in 1996 and the National Debt continues to rise inexorably towards \$200 billion and the Minister for Defence, Science and Personnel, Gary Punch, appears to still hold the view that the SEATO deployment of HMA ships to the FESR was a series of government subsidised pleasure cruises and that those involved should be damned thankful that the 'user pays' concept was not in vogue at the time.

Certainly he is not about to be confused, let alone swayed, by documents like the ACNB directive to C-in-C, Far East Station, detailing '...the conditions under which HMA ships allocated to the Far East Fleet for service with the Strategic Reserve are placed under his operational control.'

This document, dated 18th December, 1956, contains things like:

'3. HMA ships under your operational control may be used, as are ships of the Royal Navy, for anti-terrorist operations in Malayan waters, and to prevent infiltration by sea of Communist agents or armed bands.' and

'5. HMA ships of the Strategic Reserve may, at the discretion of the British Defence Co-ordination Committee (Far East) be employed in defence of the Federation of Malaya and Singapore and of the sea communications in the Malayan area against external aggression,' and

'10. It is emphasised that..... it is the desire of the Naval Board that ships of the Royal Australian Navy should form an integral part of the Far East Fleet and be treated in the same manner as their counterparts in the Royal Navy.'

Attached to the directive was an Appendix laying down Rules of Engagement for HMA ships intercepting Chinese Communist or

National warships to protect merchant vessels. Now I will bet Mr Punch anything that he likes that shipping lines at the time were not issuing similar directives to the Masters of the 'Orcades' and the like.

Since my last letter to Slipstream, Mr Punch has extended the award of the Australian Service Medal (ASM) 1945-75 to cover service in BCOF from 30 June 1947 to 28 April 1952, the Thai-Malay border from 1 t 1960 to 16 August 1964 and the Berlin Airlift. Virtually everyone from the AWLA to Uncle Tom Cobbley is to receive an award for service rendered. Everyone except RAN personnel serving in HMA ships in the FESR.

Australian Army and RAAF personnel serving in Malaya and Singapore between 31 May 1950 and 31 July 1960 received the British General Service Medal (GSM) clasp Malaya for one (count it) one days service and they also received the RAS badge. RAN personnel serving in the FESR in the same area between 2 July 1955 and 31 July 1960 received, not to put too fine a point on it, 'stuff-all'!

In fact, Mr Punch and the Federal Government have basically and unequivocally said to us, "Up yours" Personally, I do not like that terribly much, so between now and election day I intend to do everything possible to ensure that the compliment is returned at the polls, in spades. I can only hope that the rest of you, especially those in marginal seats like Gilmore, will do likewise and perhaps we will get some long overdue sanity and justice in this matter.

Regards, *Barry Roberts*

Dear Ed,

Maybe you can be of assistance.

I still have a compensation case running, it seems to go on forever. I have to appear before the Appeals Tribunal shortly, I seem to have everything covered, except for one stumbling block. I am covered by the 'old' Act, therefore I have to prove that - 'A significant number of people (Sailors) were ill due to the nature of our employment, more so than a significant number of the population at large'. In a nut-shell, the proportion of sailors (FAA) having heart disease has to be higher than the proportion of the national average 'having the same

disease'.

I have been given a list of names and have added some of my own. I did a rough calculation on complement and the figure was about 38% - 40% for Senior Sailors! This threw the cat amongst the pigeons as the national average is about 16% - 20%. The Attorney General's Department threw it out as it was not a 'proper survey'. When I asked how many ex-sailors were in the 'national figures', they had no answer for that either.

At one time Fred Goodfellow tried to do a survey but found it impossible and received no help from the Navy.

If the figures are correct, then it opens the doors for ex-FAA personnel who have suffered from heart and related circulatory diseases to claim.

I would like to survey through *Slipstream* to find out how many FAA Personnel who were serving between 1956 - 1976 and are suffering, or have died, from heart disease or related circulatory problems.

The Department of Defence (Navy) will have to provide statistics on numbers borne in that time and over this period the percentage must prove something!

I have attached a draft proposal for inclusion.

Best regards, *Jock Collins*

Dear reader - I am trying to establish a data base relating to FAA personnel who served between 1956 -1976 and have suffered or died from heart attack and related diseases. If you, or anyone you know, falls into any of the following categories, please let me know:

- a. Coronary artery disease
- b. Had by-pass surgery
- c. Has died as a result of a heart attack
- d. Peripheral artery disease

In your reply please include:

1. Name, Rank/Rate
2. Approximate time in the Service
3. Details of a,b,c and d
4. If you spent time aboard *HMAS Melbourne*

All details will remain confidential, but statistics will be forwarded on request.

Please write, even if you are not affected. Try and get a group together and produce a list. It could help you or your family in the future.
Jock Collins, PO Box 490, Buderim, Qld 4536 - (074) 451 539

Dear Ed,

I was more than a little embarrassed to be reminded by 'Nobby' Clarke's letter in the October 1995 edition of *Slipstream*, of the events of 4 March 1961 (ditching of Sycamore XD 654).

It must surely, however, be seen as some sort of an achievement for a junior Lieutenant to have been able to totally immerse four Lieutenant Commanders while still having his hands full of cyclic and collective levers (the latter tucked under one armpit).

In the unseemly haste of his departure from the sinking aircraft, one of those senior officers (as yet to be identified), showed scant concern for the plight of the hapless pilot, who was by then, deeper under the Indian Ocean than any of the other occupants; this was achieved by leaving a still faintly discernible imprint of a left shoe in the centre of his back!

Yours sincerely,
John Da Costa

[The passengers probably thought it was a promotion exercise! Ed]

RAN GLIDING ASSOCIATION REUNION 1996

Saturday 6 April - Informal Dinner at the Australian Naval Aviation Museum Function Centre at a cost of \$27 per head

Sunday / Monday 7 - 8 April - Gliding at *HMAS Albatross* for reunion participants at Club Rates.

All past Members and Associates of the RANGA are most welcome. Please, don't forget to bring along any photographs you may have relating to the Association. Some budget accommodation is available.

Bookings for the dinner and / or accommodation must be made before Friday, 22 March.

All enquiries are to be made to John Currie, (044) 233 744.

With the Festive Season behind us, we can now look forward to a safe and healthy 1996.

The Federal Council meeting was hosted by the Tasmanian Division, and was held at Orford on Saturday the 28th October 1995. The most significant item to be decided at the meeting concerned the writing of the History of the RAN Fleet Air Arm. The Council formally decided the History should be written, the NSW Division was tasked to form a sub-committee to investigate the cost, layout, format, etc. A unanimous recommendation from this sub-committee would be required for the writing to go ahead. Then, of course, money is needed to get the job under way.

The Council agreed to a proposal that a Reunion be organised to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the RAN Fleet Air Arm in 1998. The NSW Division again was asked to form another sub-committee to organise the Reunion. Some suggestions were made on the type and locality of events. Much would depend on the timing of visits by ships (Aircraft Carriers) from other Navies. So start saving your pennies, this could be a big one!!!

The South Australian Division say they have problems with the National Constitution and Incorporation. This was foreshadowed by their correspondent in the last issue of *Slipstream*. They have promised to set out their problems on paper so that they may be resolved. The delegates to the Council meeting are still unsure what these problems are.

The election of the National Executive was conducted with all candidates being elected unopposed. The National Executive for the coming three years is;

President : Toz Dadswell
Vice-President: John Arnold
Treasurer: Gordon Walter
Secretary: Ian Ferguson.

Many of the delegates stayed over for the 'All Ships Reunion' in Ulverstone the following week-end. A Fleet Air Arm plaque has been put in place in the Naval Memorial Park in Ulverstone. The plaque was dedicated on Saturday 4th November by Rev Neville Newett, Rector, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Ulverstone. The week-end at Ulverstone was very enjoyable.

It was very pleasant to catch up with the TWO 'Swampy's', Lawrence & Leon O'Donnell, during our stay. I'm pleased that they have given up belting in to each other at long last; it may have something to do with young Leon becoming a lot larger.

Peter Clarke, of Premier Coast Furniture, has come to my rescue with repairs to my office chair. Peter originally donated the chair, large desk, and filing cabinet for use by the National Secretary some years ago. Once again, thank you, Peter.

The following members have joined the FAAA since the last issue of *Slipstream*;

- TAS: Ray Dellar and Brian Mitchell.
- WA: Graham Stevens and Barry Cooper.
- NSW: Fred Husband, Terry O'Grady, Bill Middleton and Ian Gibson.
- QLD: Gregory Rogers, Chris Robson, Ron Walkden, John Baker, Jeffrey Haywood, John Hunter, Kevin Simonsen and Ken Slack.
- ACT: Digby Johns, Bill Mulholland, Russell Dowrick, Alan Earle, Frank McMillan and Philip Machin.
- VIC: John B. McAlister and Richard 'Sonny' Sundstrom.
- SA: Kevin Evans.

Ian Ferguson - Hon. National Secretary.

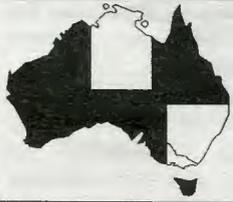
NATIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT



Robyn and Lawrence O'Donnell



Carol and Leon O'Donnell Photos PPS



NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Hi, Shipmates!

Well, I hope that 1996 is a better year for all those who have troubles in 1995.

First off - your subs for 1996 are NOW DUE! The sum of \$25 will now be accepted in any form so please get with it and send in your money.

The AGM and election of office bearers is to take place on 14 February 1996. All positions are vacant, so come along and fill these places and take charge of the Division.

Lou Burns is still on the sick list, he feels better in himself but is waiting for another operation. Rob Pattenden has had another holiday in hospital for further surgery and Ron Tate has been told that he has asbestosis, but only slight. To all you people out there who have not been tested for asbestosis by the Commonwealth, please do so and contact your local Commonwealth Health Centre.

Geoff Vickridge has undergone an operation to stop him snoring, he recommends it to all who are troubled by this problem. All it takes is local anaesthetic and laser treatment, you are out of hospital in a couple of hours. His wife, Kath, thoroughly recommends it too. [I've been told that Geoff's snoring was the only way they could find him on the squadron. Ed.]

Geoff also seems to be much better since he quit law for the fertiliser business (whatever the difference is), he is now flying all over the country and is looking forward to a lot of overseas trips.

Harry Webster recently arranged for a group of us to go out for a Chinese meal in South Perth. There was Harry and Maureen Webster, Tom and Margaret Bennett, Rob and Sadie Pattenden, Ron and Aileen Tate, Colin and Judy Bushe-Jones and yours truly and Amy. Rob and Sadie hope to be off on a six months tour around the country in Bob can arrange for his medical treatment in the Eastern States - we hope they have a great trip.

It is with sadness that I heard of

the death of Jock Lacy. Our thoughts and well wishes go out to his wife and family. Gone but not forgotten.

Welcome two new members, Mick Horne, Ex- CPOATWL4 (whatever that is) from Safety Bay and John Gorin who runs the Post Office at Quairading. I hope you both have a long and fruitful time with the Association.

It's good to hear that 'Pancho' Walter's new knee is working so well he's trying out for the local footy team. It's nice to hear some good news for a change.

To the Queenslanders who have the task of hosting the reunion later this year, the very best of luck and hope to see you there.

To all the Sand Gropers, get off your butts and come along to a few meetings and let everyone know what you require for the Division to make it 'get up and go'. Us older members have been in office too long and we need some new blood to show us the way.

To everyone out there, all best wishes for 1996, may it bring you good health and happiness.

** Theo Bushe-Jones -Hon. Secretary*

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A Happy New Year to one and all!

As we stumble into 1996 wondering what Christmas was all about, some of us have already

been hard at work thinking of interesting subject matter to include in this excellent journal. For myself I have failed, you be the judge.

Since our last contribution we have completed several successful projects mentioned in the last *Slipstream*. These being the ever popular Scottish Night, which I hasten to add, went off very well, apart from a haggis which went feral when John Godson (ex-RAN) started playing the bagpipes for the presentation of the haggis, which Joan Berry was holding above her head at the time. John Godson swears that his pipes had been professionally tuned just for the night, I would suggest that his expert is tone deaf.

The visit to RAAF Edinburgh on Sunday 05 November was well attended. Andrew McCabe was the perfect host for this exchange of views between the 'Brylcream Boys' versus the ladies and gents of the 'Senior Service'. The three course meal in the Sergeant/WOs Mess was cheap at around \$6 per head. I think I'll move in!

The Federal Council meeting held in Tasmania was a success I believe, although the start of proceedings was somewhat shaky, no thanks to the SA Division delegates, Mary Rayner and John Saywell. The State Division was about to test the so-called National Constitution. After much gnashing of teeth, a compromise was reached. Putting aside all of the misquotes and what would happen to the SA Division etc.. I feel that the air has been cleared to move on to review the constitution totally. I hope so!

December saw our final social gathering for the year. Held at the



SA Delegates, Mary Rayner and John Saywell, at Orford.

Photo G.Walter

popular Hampstead Hotel, North Adelaide, it promised to be full of Christmas cheer - and it was. Reports received indicate that the staff have got to know the FAA group as they had left their best silver out on the tables.

The Division AGM will be held 16 February at 2000, all members are invited to attend. Please make an effort and show some support on how your Association is being managed. Nominations for positions are now open - refer to your local FAA newsletter.

This year we are running a major raffle, mostly organised by Dinsley and Junice Cooper. The first prize is a return trip for two plus vehicle, to Kangaroo Island, valued at over \$240. The second prize is a return trip for two to Kangaroo Island on the new 'Superlite' valued at over \$130. Some lucky member or friend of the Association will win. Tickets will be drawn on 13 March 1996. Can you just imagine ...clinging to the guard-rail out on the weather deck - salt spray slowly forming a crust on those craggy features - memories flooding back on past adventures aboard one of Her Majesties 'Grey Funnel Line' vessels. Some may even wish to substitute 'Her Majesty' for 'His Majesty'. Six prizes in total and all good value for \$1 each. So lets help this Association and our Naval Aviation Museum by selling those tickets you have already received.

A sign of the times is the recent vandalism of the mast at the SA Naval Memorial Gardens. Repairs have been carried out, but with the loss of one metre of mast height. If I was ever offered one wish, I would clearly express just where I would jam that damaged one metre length of mast if those morons were ever caught!

I haven't heard if all our members survived the 'silly season', but I'm sure I'll catch up with the news at our next meeting. This is a hint for all SA members to write me a line and keep me informed of illness, deaths, lottery winnings, scandal or whatever for inclusion in this national journal.

If I can locate my book on 'Naval Blunders', I'll include another segment for your amusement. I'm told that it has been put safely away, the only problem is that nobody knows where. Hopefully I'll find it in time for the following edition.

Special New Years wishes to our

patron, Sir Victor and Lady Smith. Also to 'Toz' and his committee of stalwarts. Trust you all find the New Year to be a good one.

* Roger Harrison - Hon. Whipping Boy

VICTORIA

A Healthy, Happy and Prosperous New Year to all.

In the last edition of *Slipstream*, a mention was made of the intended invasion of the 'Apple Isle' by a contingent from the Division. I am happy to report that it did happen. On behalf of our little band of nomads, thank you to the Tasmanian Division for their hospitality and company.

On arrival at Devonport, we attended a luncheon in our honour at the home of our Treasurer's son and daughter in-law, Lee and Dennis. It was greatly appreciated, thank you very much.

From Devonport it was on to Orford and the Federal Council Meeting, I shan't dwell on the meeting as such as I feel this occasion will be covered elsewhere in this edition.

We covered approximately 2000 Kms in Tasmania, side to side, top to bottom, all very interesting and enjoyable, in fact our self appointed navigator took us all through a little place named 'Campbelltown' at least four times all from different directions, it seemed to draw us back like a magnet!

On a personal note, prior to going to Tasmania, I was invited to attend a medal presentation ceremony in Melbourne, this was being held on the 6th November 1995, I was going to be down in Tasmania at that time so, to cut a long story short, the invitation was extended for me to attend in Tasmania. Consequently, the award of the Australian Service Medal 1945-75 was presented to me by the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon Gary Punch MP, at a special ceremony in the Officers Mess,

Patterson Barracks, Launceston the 30th October. It was a most memorable occasion.

All of our contingent, twelve in all, attended the 'All Ships Reunion' the following weekend at Ulverstone, as did our National President and National Secretary accompanied by their good ladies. It was during this event that the RAN FAA Memorial Plaque was unveiled and dedicated at Shropshire Park.

Congratulations to Jean and Bob Boyd, the convenors of the reunion, it was an excellent achievement and I am sure that all who attended would agree. Even after taking into consideration that Toz was given the wrong 'rating'. Summing up, a great fortnight of good company, good food and drink and a lot of laughs.

Our Division will be convening its 1996 AGM on Sunday 11th February at the Melbourne Naval Centre, 146 Toorak Road (west) South Yarra, commencing at 1200. On completion, a BYO Lunch will be held, Bar-B-Q and full bar facilities available (drinks at club prices). Holding our meetings on Sundays appears to be a good move, in fact, so successful I believe it will become the done thing.

Sadly, since the last report, we have unfortunately lost two members of the Victoria Division.

VALE: Alex Marr. Alexander (Jock) Lacy.

LEST WE FORGET.

* Ron Christie. - Hon. Secretary.



L-R: Ron Christie being awarded the Australian Service Medal 1945-75 by The Hon. Gary Punch MP.

ACT

At a special ceremony held at Parliament House on Wednesday, 18 October, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Honourable Con Sciacca, presented Australia's three remaining Victoria Cross winners with life-time Gold Travel Passes. A representative of the ACT Branch of the Fleet Air Arm Association attended the ceremony which was described as very moving but extremely enjoyable. The Minister called these men 'national treasures', which is very fitting for those to whom we owe so much.

The Branch has held two social events since the last report. The first was a Mess Dinner at the Joint Services Staff College on Friday, 20 October. The evening was a great success with about 40 serving and ex-serving members and their wives attending. The JSSC Dining Room is a superb venue and the food and service was first class. As the evening progressed, a few tall stories were shared and many friendships renewed. The evening brought back memories of one of the many enjoyable activities experienced in the Navy. It makes you wonder why you ever left the service. The evening obviously struck the right note because the Branch picked up three new members.

The second event was the Christmas Cocktail Party which was held at the RSL Headquarters on Friday, 17 November. The evening was once again a great success with about 50 serving and ex-serving members and their wives in attendance. It was a great way to finish off the year especially with another three new members signing on the dotted line after the event.

The Branch has grown strongly during the year. With an influx of ten new members, the membership now stands at 84. 1995 has been a good year for the Branch and we hope the growth continues in the New Year.

The ACT Branch wishes all members of the Association health, wealth and happiness in 1996.

* Peter Schilling - Honorary Secretary

NEW SOUTH WALES

Hello and greetings to all readers of this great journal.

The Federal Council Meeting IN Tasmania is now over and, by the reports coming in, it was a success. Our hosts, the Tasmanian Division, did a great job with all the arrangements and we thank them for their hospitality. Congratulations too, to National President 'Toz' and his office bearers who have been elected to take us (Federally) through the next three years.

One item of discussion at the Federal Council Meeting was the writing of the history of the FAA in Australia. One of our delegates moved that: *'Be it resolved that the NSW Division set up a sub-committee to fully investigate the format, time scale, financial and commercial feasibility with regard to the writing of the history of the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm.'* This motion was seconded by WA and carried unanimously.

The second part of the motion read: *'Be it resolved that the endorsement of and involvement in the project by the Association will require a unanimous recommendation from the sub-committee.'* This motion was seconded by the ACT and carried unanimously.

As a result of the above motions, the National President formally requested that the NSW Division set up a sub-committee to carry out the functions as detailed. Subsequently, NSW Vice President, Barry Roberts, who has put in considerable time and effort into researching the project, has been elected as Chairman of that sub-committee.

Another important item on the agenda is the proposed FAA 50th Anniversary and Reunion in 1998. A committee will be formed after preliminary enquiries have been made.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the NSW Members who have given their staunch support to our recent raffle to provide funding for the writing of the history. Bruce 'Kanga' Bounds took out the first prize, the second went to Clive Smithers and the third to Jim Hill.

The Family Air Days at the Naval Aviation Museum provide a good source of income to the Division and I am grateful to all those stalwarts who assist us with our most popular food stalls and various other tasks on these extremely busy days. If you can

assist on these days, please ring me on (044) 216042.

Our membership is on the increase with several applications being processed at each meeting. Please encourage FAA non-members to join the fraternity and don't forget, non-FAA people with an interest can join as an Associate Member. Membership application forms are available from the Secretary, Mike Heneghan (044) 412901 or the *Slipstream* Editor (details on front cover).

The FAA Diary and refills which were brought in as a fund raising item some time ago have been discontinued through lack of support, however, the Museum Gift Shop have obtained a number of 1996 diary refills from Mutual Aid, these can be obtained by sending a cheque for \$4 plus a self addressed envelope to: The Museum Gift Shop, PO Box A15 Naval Post Office, Nowra 2540. The Gift Shop has a large range of items and the friendly volunteer staff will be happy to help you.

If you are visiting the area, our Committee Meetings are held at 1900 at the Bomaderry RSL (Director's Room) on the third Monday of the month, we would be delighted to see old shipmates.

DON'T FORGET! Our AGM and election of office bearers for 1996 will be held on Sunday 10 March at the Australian Naval Aviation Museum, please make every effort to attend. Members are requested to return their recently mailed out form relating to the AGM.

That's it for this edition of *Slipstream*, to all members, good health and a happy and prosperous new year.

* Max Altham - NSW President

**** HANG ON....** He forgot to remind you that your subs are due **NOW! No reminders will be sent!**
Denis Mulvihill - Treasurer

HOSPITALISATIONS - DEATH
NSW members who learn of the hospitalisation or death of a fellow member, are asked to contact one of those listed below so that arrangements can be made for hospital visits and representation at funerals etc.. In the Shoalhaven/Illawarra areas contact John Arnold (044) 232014 (Fax 232412). In Sydney and metropolitan areas contact John Da Costa (02) 357 1775 or Charles Grose (02) 759 6494. * Ivan 'Chips' Gray

TASMANIA

Peter Barnes, our State Secretary, has told me to smarten up on the pen and get cracking with the news from the Division. Here goes....

Quite a few things have occurred since my last report, first and foremost the Federal Conference and get-together at Orford. I'm told that it was a memorable weekend, unfortunately I couldn't attend due to another commitment, I would have loved to have seen some of the old faces again. The ones who were fortunate to participate say that it will be remembered for a long time to come and were very taken by the event.

The next major event was the All Ships Reunion at Ulverstone over the November long weekend. The highlight for us being the dedication of the Tasmanian Division FAA plaque in the beautiful grounds of Shropshire Park. There was a good roll-up of Tasmanian members and many 'old faces' from the mainland

who had been attending the Federal Conference. How good it was to see them - they were welcomed by one and all.

Age is certainly catching up with us all, but when the band started playing for the march we all moved off in step (that's on the left foot). Obviously the memories of the long days spent under the tutelage of Chief GI's like Alan A'Church, George Blackwell, Neil Belbin, and no doubt many others, came flooding back. So really, the march from *TS Emu* to the Cenotaph wasn't that far after all. I must hasten to add that the applause from the crowd of spectators was a great help as well. Thank you, ladies.

If any of the readers should be holidaying in Tasmania, a visit to Shropshire Park at



Bob and Jean Boyd - Shropshire Park
 Convenors of the annual All-Ships Reunion. Bob (*HMAS Shropshire* veteran) still manages to wear his old uniform.
 Photo courtesy Ken Alexander



FAA Memorial plaque - Shropshire Park
 Photo courtesy Ken Alexander

Ulverstone in Northern Tasmania is well worth a visit. What ex-matlot, Bob Boyd, and his band of helpers have achieved is nothing short of marvellous.

Then of course we had the Christmas festivities, I trust that everyone had a good time with family and friends. That's what it's really all about now, watching sons, daughters and grandchildren with presents and good wishes being exchanged. It makes it worthwhile being alive.

Whilst reading the last edition of our journal, I was saddened to read of the passing of my old mate from South Australia, Gerald 'Bluey' James. Gerry and I were crew mates on 724 Squadron for about two years, first on *Sea Furies* and then *Gannets*, he was a

rigger and I was on engines, Ted Heaven was our SU Chief. I hadn't seen Gerry since paying off in 1959, but from time to time I heard his name mentioned along the grapevine but could never get a contact address or telephone number. Ted Heaven always maintained that 'Bluey' was the best rigger he had for fixing the temperamental brakes on the *Gannets* - he sure had enough practice!

Our next Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon is on Saturday, 10 February at Somerset. Tasmanian members will receive a mail-out.

My regards to you all,
 * 'Jake' Jacobs

QUEENSLAND

A happy New Year to all. May 1996 be much better than 1995.

I enjoyed the quick trip to Hobart for the annual Federal Council Meeting. The chilly weather was a bit of a shock to my Queensland acclimatised system. It was great to meet up with everyone again and to see Barry Simpson handling his new leg pretty well (he wouldn't let

me kick it though!). It was good to meet up with Len Ackerley again, since his throat operation he has some difficulty in speaking. I told him that it was the quietest I'd ever known him to be.

Geoff Ledger and David Ramsay arrived at the local air strip in a Senneca twin, with a slight down hill run. They reckoned that someone had moved the fence up from the end of the runway. Both presented a good case of goosebumps during the meeting - one would imagine that after Canberra they would find Tassie warm. I'm sure the Taswegians tell lies about their weather, Geoff.

Darcy Doyle has donated an artist's proof of the *HMS Endeavour* as a prize for our National Art Union which will be drawn on the night of 9 November at the Gold Coast Reunion. I took it to Hobart to show everyone at the meeting, all expressed their appreciation to Darcy and Jenny. I've had it framed and it looks a million dollars. I'm hoping to place it in the ANZ Bank vault in Caboolture for safe keeping. Tickets will be \$1 each in books of five, they will be available from the beginning of July '96. We may only be able to produce 5,000 tickets, so if anyone wants to place orders, contact Mick Blair, 5 York Court, Albany Creek, Qld 4035. Don't send any money yet! All proceeds are to go to the writing of the RAN FAA History.

Marian, my wife, didn't come to Hobart, mainly because there aren't any trains across the gap yet. However, we did fly to Sydney for a few days and from there we took a trip to Canberra on the XPT. This means I might get her to do a bit more flying. I recently flew a Tiger Moth and a Belgian Stampe SV4 (similar to a Tiger), she wouldn't come with me so I was able to do an aerobatic run. "No wonder I don't fly with you," was her response to that little effort. The Stampe used to belong to Neil Williams in UK (now sadly deceased), he used it in the Rothman's Aero Team and offered it to me in exchange for a 1939

Stinson I had at the time. That is now at Caloundra or the Gold Coast.

Bob Christie has joined us at last - I'm sure that many will be looking forward to some more 'ripping yarns' from him. [Ask him about the ten thousand sheep dogs! Ed.]

Our Christmas Dinner was held at the Caloundra Power Boat Club - 117 attended and we had a great night. The golf course didn't treat us too kindly - Des Kelly had a sore foot and required two lots of cold medicine. Alan Barlow was left stranded at the club until he realised he was phoning his wife on the wrong mobile number. Some of the caravaners had a good BBQ at the Dicky Beach Caravan Park. Next morning a few people remarked that they must have been having fun.

Probably envious! Florence Henderson arranged a ladies lunch at her unit - gourmet delights and drinks by the pool - everyone enjoyed the day. Ian, Shorty and I were very tempted to give the golf a miss after seeing the food. In hindsight, we would probably have been better off.

Twenty-six of us went on a bus trip to the Sunshine Plaza (Myers Centre) at Maroochydore, I think the blokes bought more than the girls did. 'Macka' McClelland bought a couple of Tee shirts and Reta



L-R: Alan Barlow, Dave Randall and Des Kelly, 'found the bottle-shop'.

reckons she won't let him wear them when they're together.

We lunched at Montville on the Range - Des, Alan and Dave Randall found the bottle shop and the owner didn't mind us having a beer outside - very pleasant. Ian and I joined then fairly quickly. We had a twenty minute breather at Mary Cairncross Park where we enjoyed the views of the Glasshouse Mountains and the coast. A very pleasant day out. Florence, Ray Bucholz and Frank Nielson provided three prizes for a raffle at the dinner, a Christmas Hamper, wine and container and a cuddly bear. After the dinner some enjoyed a punt on the poker machines with varying results. A good night and very rewarding to have such tremendous support of our members. We do have fun!

This year we haven't arranged functions, other than Anzac Day and our AGM, this is due to Reunion '96 in November and the Gliding Club Reunion at RANAS Nowra at Easter. We will be holding our AGM at the Eastern Suburbs



Leagues Club in Coorparoo on 2 March from 1000 to 1200 and then dinner there in the evening. Just a reminder to members to send chits and money to 'Junior' Henderson as per the last Division Newsletter by 16 February - PLEASE!

Darcy Doyle had a hernia operation in November. I phoned the hospital to see how he was and the girl said that she would put me through. The phone rang for some time. I'm just thinking to myself that the Ward Sister must be very busy, when a croaky voice said, "hello". It was Darcy. He'd just come out of four hours surgery. He reckoned it was OK provided I didn't make him laugh. So we had a laugh and I got off the blower.

On 11 November there was a Naval Reunion at the Toowoomba RSL and the FAA was very well represented. I didn't get there but everyone who did attend enjoyed the day/night. There was the usual rivalry twixt 'Birdies' and 'Fish heads' but all on a friendly note.

I've been speaking to Arthur Johnson in Townsville over the holidays. He has a 'Series' Ag. Plane which requires major renovation, he's getting on quite well with it. It should be a nice machine when it is finished.

Whilst in Hobart I tracked down Russ Ames, he and I joined up

together and I last saw him in 1962 at Jervis Bay. Russ is the Chief Advisor to the Minister of Police and several other portfolios. Top job. Russ became a Police Inspector, Army Captain (Reserves) etc. He was a cook in the Navy. When I asked him why, he told me that as his brothers left home when they turned seventeen, he thought that this was the normal routine, so on reaching that age he told his Dad he was off to join the Navy. His Dad advised him to join as an electrician

The Recruiting Chief at Rushcutter said, "No slots for L's but you can join as a Cook." Russ replied, "Not for me." So Chiefy says, "It's dead easy to change over once you're in. You just go to the Reg. Office and tell them you want to be an electrician." So - full of the joys of Spring, Russ fronts up to the Reg.Chief at FND. "I'm Russ Ames and I don't want to be a cook. I want to be an electrician" Chiefie goes red in the face and blasts seven bells of out of Russ. "Stand to attention and don't speak - about turn - double march - **Recruit Cook Ames**". Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

It's about time to close off - the Editor sent me a BIG fax saying 'DEADLINE IS NOW!'

Congratulations to the National Committee on their re-election.

* Barry Lister - State President

FACTS AROUND A PHOTO

From the Editor's 'Dead Sea Scrolls'

I recently came across a 1949 vintage photograph which probably originated from 'Navy Office'. It showed a rather concerned looking young man completing a Vocational Guidance questionnaire prior to joining the FAA as an aircraft mechanic.

If that person doesn't know of the existence of this photograph, he's in for shock, although not quite as big as the one he received when he won the bike seat at the NSW FAAA Dinner last year.

The following is a brief résumé of his RAN career since the photo was taken.

Over Sea and Sand and Cricket Fields

Date of Entry - 04 February 1949
Discharge - 19 December 1971
Chief Mechanician A/E

Medals: Malay Peninsula, GSM, LSM, Vietnam Logistic and Support
04 Feb 1949 - *HMAS Cerberus* -

This not only meant a new career, but a friendship with Ted Silsby which remains to this day. Why, one would wonder, does this friendship remain; when after only a few weeks of knowing him, he was responsible for them running around with a rifle for fourteen days after being caught playing a game of chance.

07 June 1949 - *HMAS Albatross*, just in time to disembark the 20th CAG and experience the Air Station 'coming alive'!

04 August 1949 - Commenced first Airframe Course in Australia. Qualified 13 April 1950 and recommended as Pilots Mate.

23 April 1950 - Joined *HMAS Sydney's* Headquarters Staff. Montebello patrol for the atomic bomb testing.

09 March 1953 - *HMAS Albatross* and 808 Squadron 05
September 1953 - Joined *HMAS Nimba* for Leading Hands Course, then Ships Company. Played his first Inter-Service Cricket under the Captaincy of Lt. Frederick Mozart Murray (who he considered to be the 'best bat' he encountered in Interservice Cricket).

14 November 1953 - Married



816 Squadron Battle Honours Board (found in Hervey Bay), being paraded with Queensland Division ex-816 Squadron members

L-R Rear: Jock Collins - ? - Barry Lister - Don Herman - Ted Winning - Ray Murrell
- Brian Sargeson - Ernie Maud - Ian Henderson and Don Vincent
Front: John Stewart - Eric Rayner (the finder) - 'Shorty' Neilson - Tom Christopher and 'Macka' McClelland

Edna Smith, they eventually raised three children.

10 February 1955 - Returned to *HMAS Albatross* for 724 Squadron.

01 July 1955 - Rated Leading, this was back dated 3½ years with pay. This was big money in those days.

January 1957 - Commenced POAM Course and rated A/POAM on 27 September 1957 on commencement of Aircraft Mechanician Course. Qualified 12 December 1959.

04 January 1960 - Joined 816 Squadron at RANAS.

Embarked with CAG aboard *HMAS Melbourne* for two tours.

22 September 1961 - Rejoined *HMAS Albatross*, Rated A/Mech1 and spent the next three years in charge of of the Engine Repair Section.

During this period, he and his crews sometimes changed Double Mambas more times than they did their underwear, but they were great times and he had a great crew.

22 February 1965 - Returned to *HMAS Melbourne* with 817 Squadron (Wessex). The Wessex were grounded due to fuel problems and he found himself back on Gannets under the command of Toz 'never out' Dadswell, AEO John Selby and his old friend, David Farthing. They remain good friends

to this day.

During this cruise, under the captaincy of David Farthing, the Fleet side defeated the Hong Kong Cricket Club (on the old ground) outright in a day, the only time in the club's history.

22 June 1965 Returned to *HMAS Albatross* preparing Wessex for return to UK for 31B conversion.

March 1967 - After playing Army Inter-Service Cricket and watching Doug Walters scoring 180 not out from Army's 255, he was hospitalised and categorised 'Y'.

02 August 1968 - Rated C.Mech A/E and joined 815 Squadron.

10 November 1969 - Joined *HMAS Melbourne* Headquarters.

19 March 1970 - Returned to *HMAS Albatross* for AMAFU.

28 June 1971 - Joined *HMAS Melbourne* as Headquarters Chief - RIMPAC 1.

December 1971 - Paid off from *HMAS Melbourne*.

The twenty-odd years of service provided good times, hard times, great friendships and the opportunity to play cricket in seven different countries. All experiences that will stay with him.

As a final word, he has always maintained that - 'TOZ WOZ OUT!'

W.C. (Bill) KERR,
this is your life!

THE CLASS OF 1948

BY ALAN ZAMMIT

Late in 1947, about six hundred 13 - year old applicants went before an Australian naval selection committee that was seeking aspirants who possessed the potential qualities of leadership, intelligence, initiative and responsibility.

A few months later, in January 1948, 30 excited young cadet midshipmen arrived at Flinders Naval Depot, *HMAS Cerberus*, on Western Port Bay, Victoria. Cadet captains introduced the newcomers to college life, rules and regulations, and uniforms were issued.

The cadet's day began at 7:00am. After a hot splash from filled washbasins and a cold shower, summer and winter, they went on a smart double-march of about half a mile to warm up before breakfast.

After breakfast, sundry chores followed - sweeping, boot-cleaning, etc., then studies, with sport in the late afternoon. After supper, 'prep' (evening study) lasted until 8:30pm. [A junior cadet midshipman had to clean the boots of the more senior cadet midshipmen.]

Rear Admiral Sinclair, AO, RAN (Rtd), whose nickname was 'Poss' - after a pet possum he used to feed - remembers the days when, "for punishment you were hit on the backside with gym shoes". However, memory has eased the pain. "I knew it was going to be stark," he said. "It was a bit of a culture shock. We were very young. Our time as midshipmen was particularly significant. They were very happy times. We are an extended family with all the friendships we made in those days."

Retired truant officer, Ian Bartholomew recalled: "It was a bit of an adventure, I loved it. It was mind-boggling for a kid of my age from Western Australia, the other side of the country."

Rear Admiral Tony Horton, AO, RANEM, retired from the RAN in 1991. He was doubly qualified as a navigator and observer.

Nicknamed 'Hoppy', the retired admiral recalled the build-up of a great camaraderie in a demanding environment. "Some of the cadets were so small that their ears held up



'Bill Kerr, who seeks entry to the Fleet Air Arm as an Aero Mechanic, checks his test with Commonwealth Vocational Guidance Officer, Mr. E.P.Milliken.'

Photo RAN

their caps", he said. Travelling on leave in naval uniform, he had a feeling of pride (or was it embarrassment?) when an even younger boy near his home at Dee Why, Sydney, asked whether he was the captain of the Manly Ferry.

"We were always on the move," he said. "We ran doubled everywhere, which test the 13-year old legs when you're in a squad of 17-year olds. There was plenty of sport - at least six days a week. Even though we were located in Victoria, rugby was the main game because of its international profile, of particular relevance to Navy life. My highlight was scoring a try (against Scotch College Old Boys, I believe) on the Melbourne Cricket Ground." [Because they all came from State Schools]

"For most, arriving at the college was akin to joining a boarding school, but with the significant uncertainty of the unknown. We meet for periodic reunions; that same closeness of the bond forged in those early years, but cemented in the ensuing years in the fleet and elsewhere, is evident and unifying. Most of us served in *HMAS Australia* after graduating as midshipmen and during our specialist sea training."

Bob Machin cheerfully admitted that in 1948 he was 'petrified', but said that the discipline had stayed with him. "I found in later life that it has made the difference between failure and success. I learnt never to give up, keep working."

Dr. Peter Hoare said: "It was very hard. We ran everywhere. You would run to the dentist, have a tooth removed and run back. In the context of what the world was like then, it was considered correct training for officers."

Admiral Alan Beaumont, AC, RAN (Rtd), recalled that his pay at the RANC in 1948 was 1/6 (15 cents) a week. Like many of his term mates, he saw service in Vietnamese waters. In the 85 year history of the RAN, he is only the fifth RAN officer to be promoted to full admiral (four-star rank).

The earlier four-star RAN admirals are Admiral Sir Francis Hyde, KCB, CVO, CBE, who joined the Royal navy and transferred to the RAN; Admiral Sir Victor Smith, AC, KBE, CB, DSC; Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot, KBE, AC; and Admiral Michael Hudson, AC.

Two of the 1948 Jervis Year cadet midshipmen, Richard Baird

and Tony Horton, became commanding officers of the RANC. They had therefore done the complete circle from acceptance as RAN cadets to commanding officer of the college.

Admiral Horton recalled: "We graduated from RANC at the end of 1951 and, as was the custom, passaged to England by ship (P&O *Stratheden* in our case). We joined *HMS Devonshire*, a County class cruiser famous for bringing the King out of Norway when that country was invaded by Germany in World War 2. We undertook two cruises over the subsequent seven months, the first to the West Indies and the second to Norway. A great thrill at 17-years of age.

"With the exception of the would-be engineers, who remained at the Royal Naval Engineering College in Plymouth, and the would-be supply officers, who remained with the Royal Navy for training, we all joined *HMAS Vengeance* at Plymouth in late 1952 to return to Australia. On arrival we were posted to *HMAS Australia* as midshipmen. We remained in Australia until the Fleet Board (examination) in December 1953 when we were posted variously to fleet units as acting sub-lieutenants.

"We came together again some four months later on board *SS Orcades* for the return to the UK for an eight-month junior officer's war course at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, followed by about ten months of sub-specialist courses at Portsmouth before returning to Australia.

"At the end of all this training time, the real world appeared. Bridge watchkeeping tickets followed and, in time, all the seamen officers in the year returned to UK to qualify as specialists in such fields as navigation, gunnery, or communications. Most then completed a two-year exchange posting in a Royal Navy ship. After that, it all went the Navy's way. Most of those who reached senior rank held ship and/or shore commands."

[Rear Admiral Sinclair recently retired as Governor of New South Wales, he and his wife Shirley have returned to their property at Tea Gardens to breed cattle - each of which will be named after a RAN warship. Their son, Commander Sinclair, is Commanding Officer of the new submarine, *HMAS Collins*.]

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AUSTRALIAN NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM UPDATE

It has been a very busy period for the Museum since I last wrote an article for *Slipstream*. We are just recovering from a very successful Family Air Day held on Australia Day. It wasn't our most busiest crowd but they certainly were the most tidiest and the family atmosphere was just superb.

The flying itself was low key with the Warbirds largely staying away. I think this was mainly due to the Red Arrows putting on the flying display over Sydney Harbour. Incidentally, in that regard, I took the opportunity of writing to the Airforce and the British High Commission to investigate the feasibility of the Red Arrows overflying ALBATROSS and, if at all possible, participating in our Family Air Day. This was not to be, the reason given was that it was too expensive. This was probably quite true because for 10 aircraft the fuel would have been quite expensive.

Never-the-less, the day was very successful and we made our normal amount of money with fantastic support from the Fleet Air Arm Association, from Sydney and the local branch. Ben Link did a superb job of car park attending and the army of volunteers helping us with various activities was an absolute god send. The food stall run by Max Altham proved to be, once again, a very successful venture.

The Air Day was slightly marred by two incidents, one between a car and a motorbike at the main gate, the other one involving the Apex Train in our car park. These are the first incidents we have had at our Family Air Days.

Displays

We have given a great deal of emphasis on our 'hands-on' interactive displays. The DC3 cut-away engine is now fully operational with a time switch for the visitors to view how the internal mechanism works. The Double Mamba is again operational with a safety barrier to ensure that children do not get their fingers

caught. The Mirror Landing System is now one of the major attractions in the Museum with its datum lights and wave off lights all controlled remotely. We have British Aerospace and George Parker to thank for getting the Mirror to this very interesting stage as a display in the Museum.

The 'Budgie' (the Tracker cockpit module), continues to be the most popular 'hands-on' display in the Museum, especially for children and our oriental visitors.

The DC3 cabin has become a very popular mini-cinema with the video running continually throughout the day, showing the Museum video that has just been sponsored by WIN TV and St George Bank.

'The Sea King Simulator', so called because of the nose of the crashed Sea King (the front of the module), is now fully operational with a laser disk showing eight segments of aircraft incidents, approaches etc. and carrier operations. It is extremely successful and we have Computer Sciences Australia to thank for this very notable inclusion in our displays.

Aircraft Restoration

The Vampire - Don, Ray and Ron, our team of restorers have completed the Sea Vampire and it is now proudly on display in the centre of the hangar. If anybody has any tales to accompany this display we would welcome them in the Museum and we can work on it from there. Well done Don and team.

The Scout - Johnno has been working on the Scout over the Christmas break, it is now stripped and ready for cleaning up before reassembling. Hopefully we will see the Scout on display in the near future.

Bell 47 - Don and his team are quite keen to commence work on the Bell 47 as their next project and hopefully that will commence within the next month or so.

Whirlwind S55 - Kevin has been working on the Whirlwind with Job Search students over the past six months and hopefully we will see renewed interest in 1996.

Firefly - The Firefly in the Korean colours (side No 207), is



about to undergo a full restoration which includes partial airworthy elements and restoration to a static display in the hangar; more about that later.

The RAN Historic Flight Firefly - this aircraft is on display in the hangar at the moment and is in need of a new engine. The historic flight are continuing to look for sponsorship and are fundraising to raise the necessary finances (\$200,000) to fit this aircraft with the appropriate Griffon engine.

New Work Opportunities

The Government have come up with a scheme to persuade organisations to engage long term unemployed on the New Work Opportunities programme.

We have been successful in a proposal to employ eight long term unemployed, with an engineering background, under the Australia Remembers programme to restore to a static condition the Firefly in the Korean colours owned by the Museum (207). This project will commence at the end of February 1996, Don Parkinson has been taken on as their supervisor and funded by this programme. The programme will last 12 months and the object is to have a first class Firefly display in the hangar in the Museum at completion in February / March 1997.

The Old Museum

We have closed the Old Museum and transferred the display, almost in its entirety, into a new display area in the hangar. The display is attached to the 'Sea King Simulator' and will be called 'Memories of the Old Museum'.

It is hoped that we can replicate the theme of the display of the old Museum, replacing and updating some of the photo's, but generally retaining the atmosphere for this new display area. It is hoped that members of the Fleet Air Arm Association will appreciate this as a temporary display until such time as we can afford a theme capsule which will display our history in more detail.

The Old Museum will be used as a classroom for the New Work Opportunities team during 1996. After that period it will be demolished to make way for 'H' Hangar which will eventually be transferred to the Museum. The plan for 'H' Hangar is to have 50% space allocated to the Museum and 50% allocated to the RAN Historic Flight.

Stores

Les Matterson and Peter Penny, ably assisted by WO Peter Dickinson, have been tirelessly working to clear the mountain of stores from Zetland, Randwick and

various stores hideouts on the Base. These have been accumulating in 'H' and 'G' Hangars and gradually transferred to the Museum.

This has been a gigantic task and there has been daily activity at the Museum to have it completed in the shortest possible time. I commend these hard working members of the Fleet Air Arm Association.

Stage 4

Fundraising has continued unabated. Admiral Robertson and I have been to Westfield Holdings and we are about to go to Westpac and other major corporations in the Sydney area to continue to raise the money for the theatre and administration complex.

All the plans have been approved and everything is ready to go once we have raised sufficient funds. You may be aware that C E Heath Insurance has pledged one million dollars over five years and we have already received the first \$200,000.

One aspect in this particular stage in our development is that we do not wish to go into debt, therefore we are going to raise the money before we commence construction.

The Museum Shop

Mr 'Tassie' Mason has recently left us and has been replaced by Kaylene Connor, who was his assistant.

We are producing a mail order catalogue and hopefully we will get that out to members of the Fleet Air Arm Association soon. Members may be aware that we take all acceptable credit cards.

Stop Press

A heads up to all our readers: the USS INDEPENDENCE will be berthing alongside in Sydney on 23 May and the Ship will be open to visitors, I think on the 27 and 28 May, (the dates are yet to be finalised). We hope to put the Museum Van and Shop alongside the main brow to sell our produce, not only to the American sailors, but also to the public while the ship is open to visitors.

If it is anything like the last ship open to visitors, they were attracting 60,000 people a day. We will need help in the Museum shop in Sydney. If there are volunteers out there to help us during this period, your assistance would be very much appreciated.

To all members of the Fleet Air Arm Association from all staff at the Museum we wish you a very happy and prosperous 1996.

Best wishes,
Mike Lehan - Director



THE SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW



IF - you have always wanted to go to the Sydney Royal Easter Show without being an active participant in the Royal Guard - NOW is your chance!

The Museum is looking for volunteers to man the Museum Display Unit at the show. You will be able to chat up the public, spin a few 'warries' and generally behave yourself.

The dates are 3 to 10 April, 1996. For further information, please contact John Goble on (02) 450 1537

REMINDER

ACT and NSW members have been given details of coach travel available to Reunion '96 by **Wales Coaches**. It was proposed that coaches leave Nowra and Canberra on 5 November, Port Macquarie overnight and arriving at Coolangatta the next day.

Motel accommodation at Port Macquarie is at the El Paso Motor Inn - bookings are made for 5 November and 13 November(Return).

Accommodation at Tweed Heads is at the Jack Hi Motel and Cooks Endeavour Motor Inn - bookings are made for 6 to 13 November. Both motels are in close proximity to the centre of activity.

The total cost of \$573 per person includes all coach travel including transfers to conference if required, a one day tour to Movie World and accommodation as above. Please contact the company direct ASAP.

(069) 421461



HMAS SYDNEY 30 APRIL 1953 - Is the artist anyone we know?

Photo courtesy Bert Dickson

A TIFFY'S ODYSSEY

by C.C. Price
December 1995

Being the recollections of a
Royal Australian Naval Artificer
1941 - 1961

I was born in 1918 in a miner's cottage in Eureka St., Ballarat East, not far from the famed Eureka Stockade.

At the time my father was a baker, however, shortly after my birth he went bankrupt and lost his business. This resulted in the family being forced to live in conditions of extreme poverty, my father was unable to obtain permanent employment and we survived from his earnings as a wood-cutter, potato-digger and shearer's cook.

Government assistance was available, but my mother who was a proud, strict Presbyterian refused to accept any help. In consequence, we lived well below the level of others in similar circumstances. The depression hit the family of three particularly hard, because one brother of the original four children was brought up by our grandparents.

On completion of two years at Ballarat Junior Technical School, I joined my father as "off sider" to him as a shearer's cook. Later I was able to obtain a position with a firm who were painters-paper-hangers and glaziers as the messenger-boy in their shop. With a few 'bob' in my pocket, I decided to go to night school at the Ballarat School of Mines and learn turning & fitting.

After a few months, the Chief Instructor informed me that an apprenticeship was being arranged for me. In 1935, for a country kid such as me, the offer was akin to winning the lottery and I never looked back after that. On pay-days, I would hand over my pay packet to my mother who handed me back my pocket-money.

During my apprenticeship, to augment my income, I joined the 8th Battalion as a Senior Cadet, my age precluding me from adult membership. Training included the use of the Vickers and Lewis machine guns as well as the old .303 rifle. I attended three Brigade camps of 14 days each. What impressed me was the number of

t r o o p s participating in a route march of a full brigade. There were about four thousand men

with horse drawn transport, we marched day after day, over hill and dale, mile after mile, and I will never forget the excruciating leg pains which resulted from puttees wound too tight.

During the final weeks of my five year apprenticeship, I applied to join the RAN as an Engine Room Artificer. I was requested to present myself at Olderfleet House in Collins St. Melbourne for a medical examination, preparatory to a trade-test of 40 hours duration. On the successful completion of the practical test at *HMAS Cerberus*, I was accepted by the RAN as an ERA Acting 4th Class with the rank of Petty Officer on the 19th of January 1941, with the Official No. PM 3279.

My previous grounding in military training with the 8th Battalion was to stand me in good stead during my new-entry parade ground training, indeed, all through my career in the RAN. I did, however, have one problem during gymnasium training, due to my short stature, I was convinced I had changed my sex on a number of occasions when trying to leap over the padded trestles.

On completion of the Marine Engineering Course I was placed on Outside Departments Maintenance, my daily patrol would include sick-bay, dentist, galleys, refrigeration and sewerage pumps. One day, when working in the machine shop a young Engineer LTCDR requested me to make a lead screw and half-nut for a small lathe he was making. I succeeded in producing a good job and he was so pleased that the next day he presented me with a pint bottle of Johnnie Walker Whisky. I have never forgotten his name or the gesture. As a former Engineer of the Merchant Navy he may have been wearing the 'diamond rings' of the RANR at that time, if I remember correctly. It was not until about 1954 that I was to meet up with him again, this time at *HMAS Nirimba* at Quakers Hill, NSW. He was then Engineer Commander F.Purves, RAN.

On 11th July 1941, I was drafted to *HMAS Penguin* as Advance Party of a newly launched

corvette at Poole & Steele's dockyard at Balmain. As accommodation was unavailable at *Penguin*, I searched around and obtained board and lodgings in Macleay Street, Potts Point. I commuted daily to Balmain by tram, down William St. and King St. to Erskine St. ferry terminal, then by ferry across to Balmain. My bedroom overlooked Woolloomooloo Bay where I had a very good view of the old trans-Atlantic liner the *RMS Aquitania*, then berthed at No. 6-7 berth.

On my arrival at the dockyard, I found that the main engines and boilers had been fitted but all auxiliary machinery was lying on the dockside awaiting fitment. On completion she would be commissioned as *HMAS Katoomba* and commanded by CDR A.P.Cousin DSO RANR. The Engineer Officer, ERA's and a sprinkling of the ships' company had taken up residence in an old mansion used by the dockyard as a drawing office and store-house.

My days were spent in the company of dockyard workmen, many of whom had emigrated from the Clydeside, installing the auxiliaries in the engine-room. About this time I was informed by the Engineering Officer that my future harbour day-work duty would be the maintenance of main engines, engine room auxiliaries and ships' refrigeration.

The ship was fitted with a 2-ton cold-room and a cold water drinking fountain, so it was decided that I should undergo a short period of training in refrigeration with a commercial firm named 'Genalex'. This involved accompanying the firm's service mechanics in the field for a few days. I was thus able to gain sufficient knowledge to recharge these machines with gas at sea. In the tropics this later proved to be necessary, and the task was not a difficult one as they were of the open compressor type.

The ship was still in dockyard hands at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th Dec 1941, however, by the 17th December she had completed basin, sea and acceptance trials and was commissioned as *HMAS Katoomba*, J204.

On the day the Navy accepted the ship, Poole & Steele anticipating acceptance, filled the cold room with alcoholic drinks and had a party planned at sea. To the

consternation of all, when the cold room door was opened every bottle was cracked and the contents frozen, as some fool had set the thermostat too low! ! On-reflection that was the nearest I came to seeing dockyard matey's weeping.

My departure from Poole & Steele was an emotional experience when Miss Poole took me into her arms and hugged and kissed me. I guess she thought I was an innocent young man, with the emphasis on the innocent, heading off into the unknown. After some months living in the Potts Point-Kings Cross area, this was only partially true.

With the gift to the ship of an excellent library from all employed at Poole & Steele, we steamed north to Broken Bay for a ten day 'work up' period. A not so funny incident occurred during our stay in Broken Bay. Liberty men were being brought back to the ship from Patonga, the ship's motor boat towing the whaler. One of the passengers in the whaler was urinating into the water from the stern when he overbalanced and fell in, immediately the dorsal fin of a large shark broke the surface a few feet from him. The whaler was released and his recovery was accomplished using the motor-boat. He was in shock when we pulled him inboard and promised vehemently to keep his legs crossed when in ships' boats in future.

On 27th December 1941, in company with *HMAS Lithgow* we cleared Port Jackson and headed north, Darwin bound, to form part of the 24th Minesweeping Flotilla. On reaching Townsville we refuelled, topped up our fresh water tanks, purchased fruit and vegetables and continued on to Thursday Island. Here we formed our first convoy comprising *Katoomba* the senior ship, *Lithgow* and the cargo ships, *Meigs* USA 7358 tons, *Mauna Loa* USA 5346 tons, *Portmar* USA 5551 tons and set out across the Gulf towards Darwin.

Two incidents are worthy of mention during this leg of the journey. I was on watch in the engine-room when a steam joint blew out flooding the engine room with steam and making a great deal of noise. The steam line was quickly isolated and a new joint fitted and we proceeded on our journey. This was my first lesson in damage control, keep spare steam joints cut and readily available. Damage

control was not taught as part of the Marine Engineering course in those days.

Our next little heart stopper occurred when one of the lookouts reported a submarine on the surface ahead. The ship's company were eager to go to action stations to blow the bastard out of the water and failed to understand the reluctance of the Captain in not doing so. However, he proved the better lookout because our submarine, on closer examination, proved to be a large floating tree.

We arrived in Darwin with our convoy intact on 19th January 1942. *Katoomba* immediately anchored, shut down her boilers and changed to diesel auxiliary power. The corvette spares, which included a spare propeller shaft that we had brought from Sydney, were still on board.

A day or so before arrival in Darwin, the US cruiser *Houston* reported two Japanese submarines about 180 miles (288 km) north west of Darwin. She left one of her destroyers the *US Edsall* to search the area, this proved unsuccessful, however, the next day the *Edsall* and another US destroyer, the *Alden*, in company with a tanker, the *Trinity* 5375 tons, sighted a submarine about 60 miles (96 km) west of Darwin and attacked. NOIC Darwin, CAPT E.P. Thomas RN, ordered the corvettes *HMAS Deloraine*, *Lithgow* and *Katoomba* to proceed to the area.

Around 1200, *Deloraine* ceased sweeping and proceeded to the scene. At approximately 1330 she dodged a torpedo and commenced the attack. *Lithgow* and *Katoomba* were to reach the area later in the afternoon, *Lithgow* at approx. 1630 and *Katoomba* at 1800. When *Katoomba* arrived, CDR Cousin, as the senior officer, ordered *Deloraine* to replenish her depth charges and return to the area. *Katoomba* and *Lithgow* both attacked this submarine, admittedly belatedly, but why?

This puzzled me for years and I finally arrived at an answer that satisfies me. When *Katoomba* arrived, a tri-motor Dornier flying boat, similar to a Catalina of the NEI Air-Force, was patrolling above the submarine. Following an exchange of signals between the aircraft and *Katoomba*, both ships attacked. As replacement stocks of depth charges were almost unavailable,

Deloraine was only able to get fifteen (15) when resupplied, why was the apparent wastage permitted, unless, of course, the submarine was still underway. *Katoomba's* first attack was with a pattern of five (5) charges; immediately the surrounding area became a sea of oil, unless they were pumping oil out through the toilet heads, this submarine was badly damaged.

Our ASDIC operators stated that this was a very large submarine, her position was 12 degrees 24 minutes South, 129 degrees 49 minutes East. One historian states she lies in 27 fathoms, another 9 fathoms.

That evening *Katoomba* lowered a grapnel hook having tines attached to a 2 inch (50mm) manila line and had no difficulty in hooking the submarine. Examination of the grapnel when retrieved found one tine partially straightened and damaged, indicating that it had caught in a cutting head. CDR Cousin gave the credit for the sinking to the *Deloraine*. It was later identified as the *I-124*, a Kirai-SensuiKan mine layer, one of a class of 4 that were developed from the German *U-125*. She displaced 1768 tons and carried 42 mines held in racks on the upper deck.

Later, USN and RAN divers were to examine her and to remove her code books and no doubt the log as well. I spoke to one of the divers from *HMAS Platypus* and he told me that a number of mines were still in the racks. Had the *I-124* decided to surface and attempt to escape she might have succeeded as her top speed of 14.5 knots was comparable to that of a corvette; her gun was of 5.5 inch calibre, ours a 12 pounder.

Initially, all credit for the sinking was given to the *Deloraine*, in the final assessment it was shared along with the *Edsall*, *Katoomba* and *Lithgow*.

In 1941, RADM Withers USN, established that under some circumstances a submarine was clearly visible from the air when cruising at a depth of 125 feet, so maybe that Dornier pilot could see the *I-124*.

In the meantime, *Deloraine*, having received fifteen (15) depth charges from *HMAS Vigilant*, was returning to rejoin the other corvettes when she made contact with another submarine at about 1500 on the 21st, she immediately

attacked and continued attacking along with *Katoomba* after her arrival at 0400, this action continued until her stocks of charges were expended. Oil rose to the surface and the ASDIC operators reported the submarine stationary. Samples of the oil were taken for laboratory testing.

On the night of the 22nd, *Katoomba* was hunting a submarine. I was the Chief of the First Watch in the engine room when fluctuating RPM was experienced on one of our 25kW Allen steam generators. Diagnosing a sticking RPM governor, I advised the bridge then started up the diesel auxiliary and changed over generators on the switchboard. I finished my watch, showered and turned in to my hammock that was slung over the 4 inch magazine hatch.

At about 0200 on the 23rd, I was awakened by a great crash. My first reaction was that the hunter had become the hunted and we had been torpedoed. The pipe, "Ship's Company abandon ship", was made.

When I arrived at my station, which was the whaler, normally secured to davits on the starboard side, I found it had been cut in two by the bows of a large American tanker, the *US Pecos*. It had struck the *Katoomba* at No.5 oil tank and was embedded in the boiler-room, flooding it to the level of the top drums of our two boilers. The sudden loss of steam pressure immediately disengaged the port generator switchboard circuit-breaker. Our trusty diesel kept chugging away, providing lighting throughout the ship, thus enabling the ship's company to clear lower decks in an orderly manner. Our emergency lighting at that time consisted of triangular brass wick-type kerosene or whale-oil lamps.

The tanker was able to disengage herself by going astern and immediately sailed off into the intense darkness. Radar was still in its infancy and was yet to be fitted to corvettes.

As *Katoomba* remained afloat, it was decided to call the roll, which revealed our two boiler-room watch-keepers were missing. It was found necessary to use crow-bars to force open the airlock doors leading to the boiler-room before Stoker Petty Officer Mills and Stoker J.N Martyn could be rescued. Both were in a state of shock, bleeding and

bruised.

On our arrival in Darwin, Mills was transferred to the hospital ship *Manunda* but failed to recover. Martyn was one of my best friends until he died in 1994. Both our injured had been placed in a Carley float and given treatment by the SBA. (Sick Berth Attendant).

Successful damage control procedures were put into effect and *Lithgow* secured a tow-line, the slow tow back to Darwin commenced. Later the ex-Adelaide Steamship Co. tug *HMAS Wato* took over and at 2300 on the 23rd January we were secured in a floating dock.

Due to the lack of civilian dock personnel, most civilians having been evacuated, the task of docking the ship was carried out by *Katoomba* ships company, along with help from *Platypus*. Our Captain wisely decided not to de-ammunition the ship prior to docking.

A survey of the ship revealed the starboard boiler to be in need of major repairs and a check of Naval stores at *HMAS Melville* revealed that no ships plating was available. A search of the waterfront unearthed a quantity of very thin plate and, in desperation, it was decided to use it.

At about this time, one of the crew deserted, taking our only remaining boat plus a rifle and ammunition.

With assistance from the ships companies of *Platypus* and *US Blackhawk*, plus a small group of boilermaker ERA's flown up from *Cerberus*, repairs were commenced.

Within a few days I was admitted to the Darwin hospital suffering from dengue fever. The ward was staffed solely by USN medics. I remember very little about it other than the fact that my diet was mainly tinned fruit. I was discharged about the 12th February and returned to the floating dock and *Katoomba*.

At this time there were forty-five ships in the harbour and I couldn't understand why it was, in what appeared to be such a large anchorage, that they were anchored so close together. The hospital ship *Manunda* at least should have been in a more isolated area. Little or no effort was being made to unload these ships. So many questions remain unanswered relative to the events which were about to occur.

On the 19th February, I was doing a top-overhaul on the ships diesel and talking to a visitor from *Platypus*, LTCDR (Eng) Butcher. At 0955 we heard the sound of explosions close by and the dock began to rock violently. The officer decided to go to the upper deck to see what was going on. He returned to the engine-room and his exact words to me were "Those little yellow bastards are here at last".

Within seconds the ship had closed up at 'action stations', our 12 pounder was barking and the Vickers guns began hammering away. The issue of rifles and ammunition had begun. The first air raid of 188 Japanese aircraft on Darwin had started and the ship was high and dry in a floating dock. Our spirited defence is graphically illustrated in Keith Swains painting entitled, 'Japanese air attack on Darwin Harbour, 19th February 1942', which is now part of the art collection in the Australian War Memorial. During a return visit to Darwin in 1992, I was told by the crews of the town AA Batteries, that they could see the aircraft commence their attacks on the *Katoomba*, but having to veer off due to our intense return fire.

After the raid was over, the ships company were able to obtain a boat to ferry the crew ashore where we took up positions in trenches and weapon pits on the waterfront escarpment. The waterfront was littered with boats, abandoned by the crews of merchant ships, most of *Katoomba's* crew were soon wearing new Board of Trade pattern cork life jackets. Along with my new life jacket I also wanted to keep a light machine gun and ammunition that had been left lying in one of the boats, but this was vetoed by CDR Cousin.

It was later decided to return to the ship and take our chances on reaching Brisbane. On the 19th-20th-21st of February, dozens of bodies were floating in the harbour. *Manunda* lowered one of her boats and went from corpse to corpse attaching them together with ropes and dragging them to the beach where they were buried. These bodies were not lifted into the boat. They called at the ship asking for bodies, but we had been lucky. With the outgoing tide dozens of corpses went out with it.

When *Katoomba* was freed from the dock, an oil-lighter was placed alongside and the transfer of fuel

commenced, we were later able to obtain water.

At 0455 on the 22nd February, we passed through the boom-gate at the harbour entrance to the open sea with a list of 15 degrees and a maximum speed of four knots; we had begun the long, dangerous, unescorted haul to Brisbane. The ships list was caused by the necessity to carry all the fuel possible to enable us to reach the east coast, bearing in mind that the ships No.5 oil tank had not been replaced during repairs. Our speed was governed by three factors, namely the condition of the hull, our starboard boiler was damaged and not in use, and the necessity to achieve maximum range.

Off Maryborough in Queensland, we encountered a storm and fearing the ship would break up, we sailed up the Mary River to Walker's Engineering Company who welded railway lines into her hull to enable us to reach Brisbane. *Katoomba's* excellent main engines had been made by the same company.

As we proceeded up the Brisbane River in a very battered, rusted condition, I noticed the Australian flag being lowered at a large meatworks as we passed by, *Katoomba* did not respond, I realised the significance of the action and it filled me with a sense of pride.

We eventually reached our destination, which was the graving dock in South Brisbane near a flour mill. The *Katoomba* was to spend four months undergoing repairs before resuming her many duties.

On completion of repairs in late June 1942, we left Brisbane and headed north to Townsville to begin escorting convoys across to Port Moresby.

On the 14th August, we were ordered to leave a convoy and respond to the SOS transmitted by the US Submarine, S39, which had run aground: it was subsequently abandoned on Rossel Island reef in the Louisiade Archipelago. Rossel Island and the adjacent island, called Adele, are located about 210 miles (4336 km) east of Milne Bay. We were able to rescue the entire crew of 27 and land them at Townsville on 19th August. As Japanese submarines, aircraft and surface vessels were active in the area, we were fortunate to complete that mission without further incident.

On our arrival at Townsville

both ships companies had planned a party, but *Katoomba* was ordered to refuel immediately and join a north bound convoy the same day.

On the 26th August 1942, the Japanese Special Naval Landing Force landed at Milne Bay.

On our next visit to Milne Bay with the second convoy since the Allied victory, we found the SS *Anshan* lying on her side at Gilli-Gilli and isolated Japs were reported to be in the area. Local natives were in the water swimming and pushing 44 gal drums of fuel ashore, as wharf facilities were unavailable.

Leave ashore was permitted, liberty men carried a loaded .303 rifle and wore tin-hats; I saw a number of Japanese dead and large stocks of ammunition lying about. The sickly sweet smell of death permeated the whole area.

When we left Milne Bay to return to Australia, we were carrying a large quantity of 'war souvenirs', including a Type 96 Jap machine gun.

We continued running convoys across to Port Moresby throughout September-October until mid-November when it was decided to commence the Lilliput convoys. The "Lilliput" referred to the size of the convoy and not the ships that we conveyed.

On the 15th November, HMAS *Arunta*, *Ballarat* and *Katoomba* with the ships *Maatsuyker*, *Cremer*, *Bontekoe*, *Japara*, *Bantom*, *Balikpapan*, *Both*, *J.B.Ashe* and *Jesse Applegate*, left Townsville and headed out through Grafton Passage bound for New Guinea.

Approx 130 miles (208 km) from Port Moresby on the 17th November, the convoy split up, *Arunta* taking five ships to Moresby, the corvettes taking the remainder to Milne Bay.

Our arrival at Milne Bay didn't always mean a rest, one corvette would maintain an anti-submarine patrol across the entrance of the bay. Every day it rained for hours; unlike Port Moresby there was nothing to go ashore for, the sticky tropical humidity sapped our vitality and we were always pleased to be homeward bound.

Due to the lack of up to date charts of the coasts north of Milne Bay, it was planned to use corvettes as escorts for these convoys, taking one ship at a time beyond Milne Bay. With our sister ship *Ballarat* we had arrived at Milne

Bay on the 19th Nov. With our four ships intact, *Katoomba* immediately began the monotonous anti-submarine sweeps across the bay entrance that continued until the 27th of November when the "pipe" was made, "clear lower deck- every body aft". The captain then addressed the ships company telling us that we were to escort SS *Mulima* to Porlock Harbour, then to continue to Holnicote Bay and carry out an anti-submarine patrol throughout the night. As a consequence, *Katoomba* and *Ballarat*, in company with *Mulima*, proceeded north to Porlock Harbour where we arrived at about 1400 on the 28th of November.

Soon after passing Veale Reef on the passage up we had challenged an aircraft but received no reply, it was without doubt a Jap reconnaissance aircraft. It was to arrange a most unpleasant welcome for us later in the day, but we had been assured that air cover would be provided for our operation.

Katoomba and *Ballarat* left Porlock Harbour with the intention of carrying out our orders to undertake an antisubmarine patrol off Buna throughout the night. A few minutes after 1800 we were attacked by 10 Jap aircraft; from the little I did see of the action, *Katoomba* seemed to be receiving the worst of it.

As I was not on watch, my action station was in charge of the 'Forward Fire and Repair Party', located on the Seaman's mess deck. The ship was twisting and turning with bombs going off all around us. I did leave my post for a few seconds to look up at the bridge, one aircraft was pulling out of a dive at what appeared to me to be less than 100 ft (30 m) above us; our Oerlikon gunners were pouring tracers into its engines.

Both corvettes continued this duel for at least an hour. At the height of the action a near miss dislodged some inner brickwork in one of the boilers. The front of the boiler casing began to glow red but it was not the time to be shutting down the boiler.

At the end of the action, the corvettes had shot down two aircraft and badly damaged another. During the night the two corvettes returned to Porlock Harbour, arriving there shortly after dawn. In the morning a number of the Naval Survey Party came aboard including

Cmdr. Tancred. I believe that a special medal should have been struck for these men, as I have great admiration for their courage.

That same morning another Jap aircraft was spotted over Porlock Harbour and shortly afterwards both ships were ordered to return to Milne Bay. We were given no air support during this operation and the only Allied aircraft we saw was a Flying Fortress being attacked by six Zero's above us.

Our convoy duties continued, there was no rest for the corvettes at this time except for boiler cleaning. It seemed to me that every time we poked our nose into Port Moresby the Japs bombed the place.

Frequently, loaded barges would be sunk, this resulted in the cargoes floating around the harbour before sinking. We often collected what we needed, including tinned chocolate and sweets. This was accomplished by using a small wooden dinghy which we had acquired from the Army in Milne Bay, albeit illegally.

On one occasion we berthed at the 'T' wharf at Port Moresby and a US Liberty ship began discharging her cargo, part of which were cases containing cigarettes. To prevent pilferage, a Military Policeman was stationed on the wharf, but the lads on the *Katoomba* invited this gentleman aboard to partake of hot, freshly baked scones, jam and tinned cream; together with fresh milk, brought all the way from Australia for his tea. By sharing the spoils with the cargo winch operators it was easy to arrange for a few cases of cigarettes to be dropped into the safety net, retrieved by our pirates and transferred in the dinghy under the wharf to the other side of the *Katoomba*.

I always thought that the dinghy, which was called 'Lapin', had been aptly named as 'lapin' is French for 'rabbit'.

Air raids continued to be a frequent occurrence at Port Moresby, and submarine alerts associated with depth charge attacks were not uncommon on the milk-run to and from Australia.

A corvette's armament at the time was so inadequate that our officers were exchanging bottles of whiskey with the Americans, for machine-guns which had been removed from aircraft. Our Oerlikons were proving to be excellent close range anti-aircraft

weapons and good for detonating mines.

The majority of our convoys were taken out through the reef at Grafton Passage during the afternoon, then, when our charges had taken up station, the escorts would exercise 'Action stations' and our armament would be fired. The locally made gun-mounts underwent their proof-testing in this manner.

As darkness fell, the ship was blacked out and the night with a star-lit sky was upon us. In the first couple of years in the *Katoomba's* life, the engine room watch-keepers kept their watches in a temperature of 130 degrees F on the plates. Later, axial-flow fans were fitted into the ventilator, thus giving us a breath of fresh air.

Our only respite from this monotonous watch keeping, was to split the dog-watches on Sunday afternoons. At least we had a change of watch as a result. I disliked the middle and afternoon's most of all, as after coming off watch at 0400, one would shower and attempt to sleep. Almost immediately dawn action stations would sound, on the completion of which it was time to lash-up and stow your hammock. The messman would then serve breakfast and afterwards clean up the mess, which generally took him to stand-easy. If you tried to sleep for a few minutes before going on watch at 1200, there was always a seaman busy with a chipping hammer, or a Quartermaster announcing the ships routine with his little bosn's pipe every few minutes. Coming off watch at 1600, one could snatch a couple of hours sleep before dusk action stations. From lights out, until awakened just before going on watch, a little more sleep could be obtained. I found myself lucky if I averaged two hours sleep a day whilst at sea. Boiler cleaning was carried out at an Australian port, either Townsville or Cairns and provided an opportunity for catching up on sleep.

Interspersed with the normal routine duties of sub-hunting, mine-sweeping and escorting convoys, we carried out a few clandestine operations such as transporting special American and Australia army units to secret destinations.

On the 9th of January 1943, as part of operation 'Lilliput', we escorted the Dutch merchant ship *Van Heutz* from Milne Bay to Oro

Bay. On our arrival *Van Heutz* began discharging her cargo into lighters, *Katoomba* dropped her anchor but remained at short notice for steam. At 1140 we were attacked by six Jap dive-bombers who dropped a bomb into the hold of the *Van Heutz* and another two near misses alongside her. They suffered several deaths and many casualties. *Katoomba* was saved by the prompt action on the part of the Duty Signalman on the Bridge, who, when he saw the aircraft approaching, manned the port Oerlikon and opened fire, thus forcing the aircraft to take evasive action.

The strafing attack resulted in some of our standing rigging being shot away. The lad was duly hauled before the Captain as a defaulter, charged with "opening fire without orders". He should have received a medal!

At the same time the Chief ERA was enjoying a siesta on the forecastle, asleep in a cane chair, someone called out a warning to him that they were about to strafe us. The Chief ran for cover with the cane chair over his head? This attack lasted four or five minutes and taught us the same lesson again, 'not to put our faith in the local air support'.

Both ships left Oro Bay that evening, before dark the *Van Heutz* stopped engines and carried out a burial service.

'Lilliput' convoys continued until mid 1943, most of the merchant ships were Dutch and were slow old tramps, only capable of achieving 8 knots when the escorts hoisted the black 'I am attacking submarine' signal flag; this was generally accompanied by clouds of black smoke being emitted from the funnels as they strove to resume their station in the convoy, their crews were all brave men.

During my service on the *Katoomba* I operated two 'firms' successfully, the first as the ship photographic firm, the second a boot repair or 'snobbing' firm. Not having a sewing machine at my disposal, the soles were all hand sewn. My 'dark-room' for the development and printing of film was the Armourers workshop. Photographers developer, fixer and paper were difficult to purchase at that time and only black and white film was available. Hides for boot repairing were always obtainable in Cairns.

I have hesitated whether or not to tell the following story and have decided to do so as I am sure it will raise a laugh amongst the old Navy types who read it.

My yarn begins in Cairns when *Katoomba* was lying at anchor. We of the CPO's Mess had finished our midday meal and were discussing the ramming and sinking of a minesweeper in Port Phillip Bay by the liner *Dunroon* and the tragic loss of life which resulted. The talk got around to the lack of escape scuttles or hatches on corvettes. At the time, I was one of the smallest men in the Navy and of very slim build; foolishly I stated that in an emergency I thought I could squeeze through one of the small scuttles on the hull in the mess. The Chief Stoker immediately slapped a ten shilling (\$1.00) note on the table to bet me I couldn't, I accepted his bet and to make it easier for me I stripped off my clothing, stood on the settee and was able to squeeze my head and shoulders out, but could not get any further. I looked up to see the ships Gunnery Officer, who was Officer of the Day, pacing to and fro above me with his telescope tucked under his arm, in the meantime, my mess-mates inside the mess were having great fun plastering my body with jam. Due to the close proximity of the OOD I was unable to shout words of protest. My tormentors eventually pulled me back into the mess and quickly disappeared giving vent to much laughter.

The problem must have also occupied the minds of Naval Architects of the time as ships built late in WW2 did have an escape hatch fitted on each deck. I doubt if my embarrassing experience influenced their decision though. I shudder when I look at the hulls of the new air-conditioned ships.

In the three years I served on board the *Katoomba*, during our busiest convoy periods of 1942 and 1943 we averaged a convoy outward bound from Australia every 10 days. Generally, on reaching our destination we would refuel at Milne Bay, it was always the tanker *Bishopdale*, we would then return with another convoy within forty-eight hours. Our only respite from this routine being boiler-cleans and annual refits. We certainly clocked up the miles.

From her commissioning until I left it in mid 1944, my harbour day work task was the servicing of

engine-room machinery; I acquired an intimate knowledge of it. Her main engines which had been manufactured by Walkers of Maryborough, Queensland, only required routine maintenance, generally 'big end' adjustment. An occasional tightening of condenser ferrules may have been required.

The Southern Cross 25kW auxiliary diesel generator had an excellent four cylinder engine. Top overhauls, regular oil changes and scrupulous attention to fuel filtration was all that was required. The distilled water evaporating plant required an experienced hand to ensure that chemically pure water was available for the Yarrow Watertube boilers; that person was generally one of the harbour auxiliary watch-keeping stokers.

Katoomba's two 2SkW English made Allen compound steam generators were, in my opinion, the best of their type. Other than one case of a sticking RPM governor, they gave us no trouble at all. They were truly beautiful machines, the Michelle type thrust blocks were trouble free. Provided the intakes were kept free of weed, jelly-fish and crushed coral, the condenser circulating pumps performed well.

The Australian made copy of the Scottish Weir pumps were a miserable failure. *Katoomba's* counterfeit pumps had been made by Kelly and Lewis and were used as condenser vacuum pumps, fire and bilge pumps, boiler-room feed water, fuel pumps and evaporating plant pump. The condenser vacuum pumps generally failed when you needed them most and that was when 'obeying telegraphs', their failure resulted in rapid loss of vacuum and water logged engines.

We used shuttle valve spanners, blocks of wood, oil, curses and prayers in our efforts to keep the bastards going. They were s---. I was never able to solve the problem. Stiction in the shuttle valve chest was probably due to the use of 'green' castings used during manufacture.

In 1942 when the *Katoomba* was being repaired in Brisbane I married and brought my wife to live in a flat at Highgate Hill. For my annual leaves of 1943 and 1944 I travelled by train from Cairns to Brisbane the journey being in excess of 1200 miles (1920 km). In the beginning we sat up all the way in old carriages, later the seats were taken out and bunks were fitted. The passengers

were a cross-section of the Allied Forces, they wore the uniforms of USA, Australia, NEI, Malaya, Canada, New Zealand and the odd Pom here and there. Meals of Army standard, generally stew, or onions and sausages were served on the railway platforms every few hundred miles. Poker games were played in the carriages continuously throughout the journey. We arrived at our destination covered in grit and coal dust.

In June 1944 a signal was received on the *Katoomba* drafting me to *HMAS Penguin*. I left my first ship knowing that I could not cancel my draft, so I packed my bag and hammock and began my long journey to Sydney with a heavy heart.

The little J204 was to sail on never far behind the landings of the invasion forces, leaving behind her calling cards in the form of 4 inch (100 mm) shells at Huon Gulf, Moratai, Hollandia, Biak Halmaheras and the Banda Straits. She was to survive WW2 and after the war she was one of the vessels comprising the 20th Mine Sweeping Flotilla. This flotilla is credited with sweeping up 1006 mines off the East Coast of Australia.

Katoomba was sold in 1957, towed to Hong Kong and broken up. I have a deep affection for her and all who sailed in her. Many years after leaving the Navy I attended a reunion of WW2 corvette crews at the Exhibition Building in Melbourne. The 1600 plus who attended were segregated into ships companies and seated about 10 to a table. Sitting next to me at one of the *Katoomba* tables was one old chap who seemed to know a lot about the ships activities during 1943 and I couldn't place him. Finally I turned to him and said, "Look mate, I was serving on the ship at that time and I can't remember you, what in the hell were you?" In a quiet, dignified voice he replied "Colin, I was your Commanding Officer." I looked again at his table place card and the penny dropped, my memory returned. He told me that he regretted not obtaining a *Katoomba* cap tally. Next day at another meeting of *Katoomba* ships company, I was able to present him with a tally and to show him my old service certificate with his signature therein. He was Lt.Cmdr.Trace. It made his day!.....[Colin's Oyssey continued in the next edition. Ed]



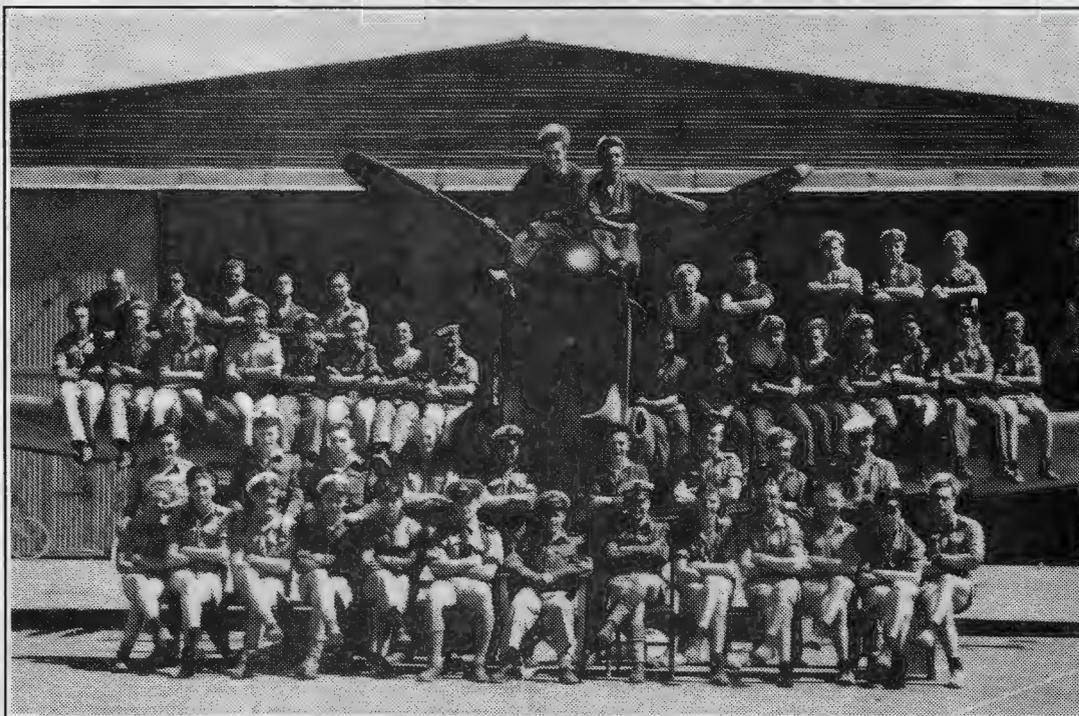
FACES AND PLACES

YOU tell me the details.Ed.

L-R: 'Stalky' Maley
Ken Marsden
Col Thornwaite
John Heffeman

Taken somewhere in Sydney - but
where and when?

Photo courtesy R. Maley



RANAS NOWRA

There are a few RN
Loan personnel in
this picture - I can
spot Bob Beamish
in the front row.

When and who?

Photo courtesy P.Webber

I can see a
debonair Don
McLaren and a
dashing Ron Tate.

Who, where and
when?

Photo courtesy R. Tate





SHROPSHIRE PARK
Ulverstone Tas.
04 November 1995

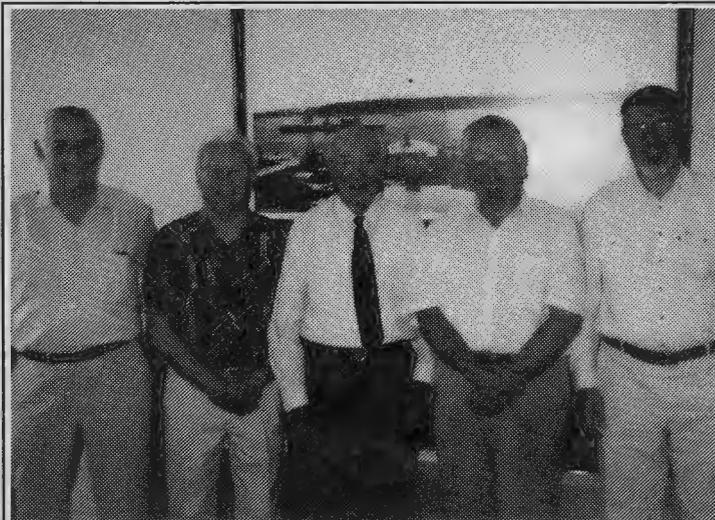
Left to Right:

- John Nobes
- Ralph Mayer
- Frank Crowe
- Ron Itchen
- Jim Lee
- Ron Christie
- Barry Simpson
- Les Jordan
- 'Toz' Dadswell (Rear)
- Len Ackerley (Front)
- Clem Conlan (Rear)
- John Ikin
- Ian Ferguson

Photo courtesy R.Christie



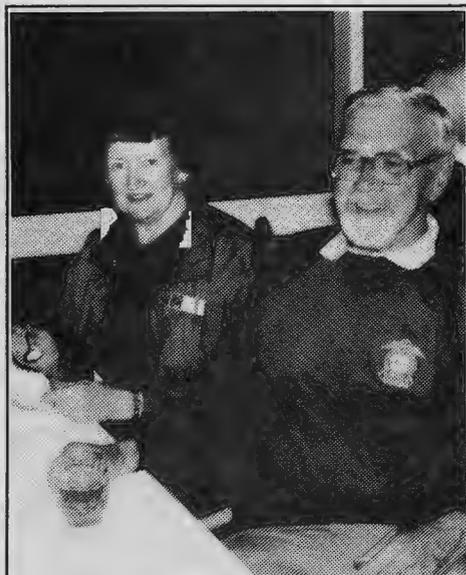
Ada and Len Ackerley at the Orford Conference



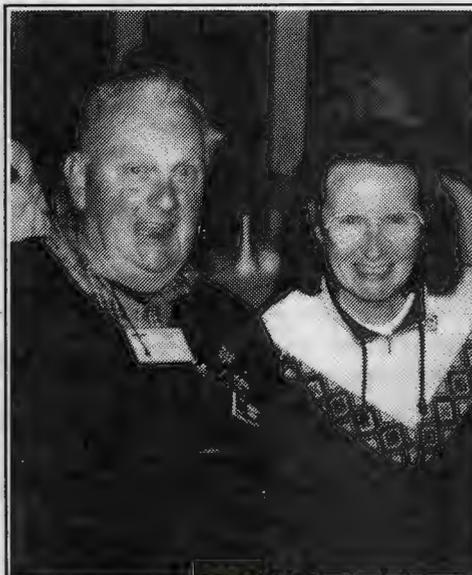
Sir Victor Smith and the National Executive at the ANAM



Peter & Millie Barnes at Orford



Betty and Clem Conlan at Orford



Frank and Alison Crowe at Orford