



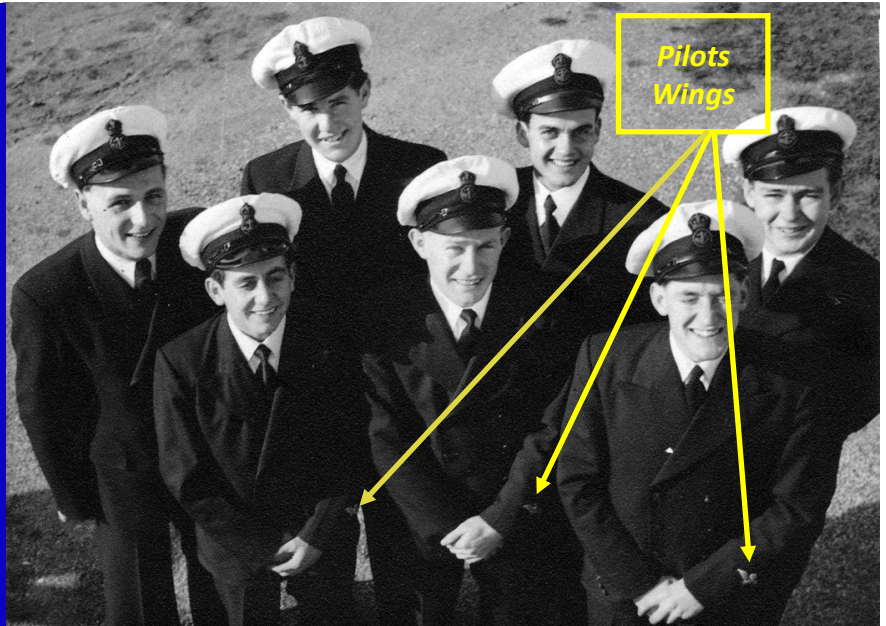
# Slipstream

Volume 31 No. 2

JUNE 2020

## ***Pilots Graduate as Pilot 4th Class On Early Courses (i.e. Leading Seaman equiv.)***

*To the right: Back row. Dick  
Sinclair (KIA Korea), Fred Lane,  
Ian Macdonald, Col Champ.  
Front row. John Roland, Mick  
Streeter, Ian Webster*



## **Number 1 RAN Pilots Course, from Recruit School to the 20th CAG**

*By Fred Lane*

Joining HMAS *Cerberus* in December 1947, ten new entries plus four retreads (Radar Mech, QM Gunner, Bunting Tosser and Scribe) knuckled down to Recruit School routine until bussed to 1 FTS, RAAF Point Cook, 23 March 1948. There, together with No 1 Course RAAF trainees, those surviving to graduation flew 200-odd delightful hours in ever-forgiving Tiger Moths and noisy Wirraways. Ahead, in the UK, lay the exciting promise of Seafires and Fireflies, firing live ammunition and qualifying deck landings before returning to join the 20th CAG.

Only eight of the original RAN 14 graduated on 29 July 1949. One of these elected optional discharge when not selected for immediate OFS (Operational Flying School). He went on to very senior flying and administrative positions, chiefly with TAA. Another back-classed to No. 2 course after breaking a leg.

Both RAAF Trainee Pilots and RAN Probation-

ary Pilots graduated from FTS as Pilots Fourth Class (P4s) in July 1949. The equivalent RAN rank and pay was that of a Leading Seaman plus "Flying Pay". By perhaps strange coincidence, this "Flying Pay" matched almost exactly the "Flight Risk" levied by our pre-DFRB private life insurance companies. RAAF equivalent to P4 was Corporal.

The RAN students best-dressed in what we called our "Recruit Steward" uniform, with bare "right arm rate". With great pride we seven graduates stitched our "provisional flying badge, pilot" onto our jacket's lower left arm.

Royal Navy OFS berths were limited and our Navy Office godfathers warned us they would accept only six (OK, maybe seven) RAN students at any one time. Also, the specific RN FTS course with which we would amalgamate was reported as

*Continued Page 3*

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## National President's Update

G 'Day Everyone,

It is a difficult slog, but I am delighted that Australia and most Australians seem to be slowly climbing out of the Covid 19 crisis. A couple of varieties of footy have recommenced and one can get a brew in most places without feeling like a criminal !! There have been difficulties for our Association as well. AGMs and other important meetings have had to be postponed, plans have had to change and we have even had some difficulties in getting our flagship periodical – Slipstream in hard-copy, out.

I know that you all read Slipstream with great interest, and most of you receive the hardcopy version through the post. I should tell you that a lot of time and effort goes into the production of Slipstream. A small band of dedicated volunteers go way above and beyond to mail out the hardcopy Slipstream to over 600 of our members four times a year. The mail out alone takes a day and a half each edition, and that is not considering all the work to gather the stories and put it all together. A big thank you goes to our Slipstream Editor Paul Shiels.

Covid 19 and its associated rules and requirements added to the normal Slipstream complexities. Indeed the initial assessment was that we would only be able to issue the softcopy version of the initial Slipstream for 2020. Happily, an enhanced team of Ron Batchelor, Pincher Martin, Denis Mulvihill, Terry Hetherington and Jim Caldwell ensured that the mail out proceeded smoothly. The same careful effort was required for this edition that you are currently reading. If you bump into one or some of this team you might consider a hearty thank you and if the situation allows, a beer might also be appreciated!

With over 7 million confirmed Covid 19 cases world wide and well over 400,000 deaths as a result of the pandemic, and with it still winding up in many countries, clearly there is much to occur before we all get through this. It is highly likely that this years Federal Council Meeting in October will



occur via Zoom or some suitable telephone hookup system and many other changes are likely in the short to medium future.

Can I continue to urge everyone to reach out to family, friends and old mates wherever you can. It remains an exceedingly difficult time and a mate that you have not spoken to in months may appreciate a quick call, or even a hand getting some medication or groceries. Everyone approaches these times in different ways, not least us Veterans. Everyone's life has been disrupted in some way. Many Veterans have medical issues of various sorts that may make a simple walk down the street problematic. So, please reach out to anyone and everyone that you can. If you need assistance, put your hand up. There will be someone around who will be able to assist you.

Please take care and look after one another,

*Mark Campbell*  
*RADM, RAN (Rtd)*  
*National President*

*June 2020*



***A Supermarine Seafire XVII with two 20mm cannons, four 303 machine guns and teardrop canopy. The original Spitfire design was modified to include tailhook (under rudder), arrester wire deflector (to protect tailwheel) , catapult spools and stronger undercarriage.***

#### ***No. 1 Pilots Course . . . . Continued from Page 1***

probably the “hottest” out of RAF Syerston since WWII. There were worries that we might have too high a failure rate. In fact, in the final summary, the RAN easily scored the top five and seven of the top eight places.

At times, though, we guessed that few in Navy Office really knew or cared much about us. For instance, after *Cerberus* in 1947, no one seemed to expect us when we joined a new establishment. Senior officers like CO 1FTS RAAF Point Cook and CO 766 Squadron RNAS Lossiemouth expressed considerable discomfort at our bright-eyed and bushy-tailed arrival on their doorsteps.

In September 1949 we sailed tourist class in RMS *Otranto* for Operational Flying Schools in the UK, never suspecting that we were under consideration for officer status. There were vague rumours that all future RAAF and RAN pilots might be commissioned, but we assumed that if we were lucky, most of us would serve out our 12 years as NCO pilots, then to be asked to leave—nicely of course!

We joined Number 13 Course OFS 1, 766 Squadron, RNAS Lossiemouth, Scotland, 5 October 1949. Four of us trained as fighter pilots in Seafires and three in ASW Fireflies. The environment was

novel and invigorating. Some of us had never seen snow and here we were mastering flying from a snow and ice-covered airfield. After Lossiemouth we joined OFS 2 in RNAS Eglinton, Northern Ireland, on the 18 January 1950, for live weapons training and deck landing.

Our now monthly pay, relatively huge by RN standards, seemed to vary up and down for no particular reason. Ashore in the UK we lived in the Wardroom Annex, along with fellow RN non-commissioned aircrew. In HMS *Illustrious*, 22-25 March 1950, during deck landing quals, all the NCO pilots bunked down on stretchers in the Air Intelligence Room and ate in the Gunroom.

After another 120 hours in Seafires or Fireflies and with nine successful deck landings we confirmed our “provisional” wings. One landing by course mate Dick Sinclair was unique. He deck landed his Seafire without damage and without catching a wire or barrier. Bouncing early, he boresighted the aft barrier only to touch down too early and “grand national” both barriers. Flopping down short of the forward lift and with an empty forward deck park, he braked to a safe halt with the still-turning propeller overhanging the bow deck edge.

*Continued Page 5*



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### DISCLAIMER

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About this stage we half expected official promotion to P3, supposedly equivalent to Petty Officer, but this never seems to have been officially relayed. No one told us to mount a PO's cap badge or change our jacket buttons, so we didn't. Ferry Flight postings to RNAS Arbroath and RNAS Stretton kept us busy for a few months, delivering aircraft all over the UK. Then it was hello RMS *Orcades* for a leisurely cruise back home.

Drifting gently into Melbourne, 2 September 1950, we were suddenly whipped off *Orcades* to a no-notice Officer Selection Board in Navy Office, Melbourne. Directly after this, the Government Tailor measured us for officer's kits.

We were then instructed to take a couple of days leave and join *Cerberus* for a Short Service Officer Course (SSOC) as Sub-Lieutenants.

Used to acting independently and told to expect leave after reaching Australia, Dick Sinclair naturally dropped off in Perth, his home port, with his new wife. Threatened with an Absent Without Leave charge, he was quickly whisked back to Melbourne for a reconstituted Board and the *Cerberus* SSOC.

This routine, FTS, OFS then Officer Selection Board and SSOC, changed radically when Number Three Course FTS graduates addressed their Board and completed SSOC directly after their Point Cook FTS. They experienced the luxury of a First-Class voyage to and from their OFS as Acting Sub-Lieutenants. Meanwhile, the poor old Number Two Course people (including Norman Lee), were completing their OFS in the UK and not commissioned until they returned to Australia. To their chagrin, they found themselves junior to the Number Three course laggards for a long, long time.

After our SSOC we were at last appointed to 20th CAG real live front-line squadrons, 805 or 816. Joining Albatross 3 December 1950, almost three years to the day after enlisting, we were given a variation of the usual greeting. "Where the hell have you all been? We heard you were coming but no one here knew when." Then, for some, "How

many Sea Fury hours. What, Zero? How many deck landings. What, just nine? You have seven weeks to learn to fly the aircraft and start deck landing! Forget Christmas leave." Seven weeks later, with 23 hours on Sea Furies and just 56 ADDLs (Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings) we started a surprisingly accident-free workup in HMAS *Sydney*.

This was surprising because some of the old and bolds had a bad run, including the loss of one very experienced Firefly pilot who clipped an aerial on the island and crashed inverted into the sea. It was not easy for them. They were all drilled into the

old RN deck landing signals system and had to requalify using the new USN system. Some vital battling signals had been reversed. For instance, the old "go lower" now meant just the opposite, "you are low".

Close in, there is no time to ponder. Old long-ingrained reflexes had to change.

Also, instead of being controlled all the way to touch down, the USN system demanded an engine cut about 20 feet up and a few yards short of the round-down. Then the pilot allowed the nose to drop, made minor line up corrections and flared to soften the touchdown. All in less time than it took to read the last sentence.

Finally, the cut was now mandatory and no power whatsoever was allowed after taking the cut, no matter how high you bounced. Instead, as a last resort, as Dick Sinclair had tried in *Illustrious*, pilots were obligated to boresight the barrier. Fortunately, our No. 1 Course and following groups learned only the USN system.

Nine months later, we were at last doing what we were trained to do: Korean operations.

*(Younger members may wonder why Fred said the 'Student Pilots' referred to wearing 'Recruit Stewards' uniforms. Until around the mid 1960s Supply and Secretariat Branch ratings (sailors) wore 'square rig' which included red type PO cap badge and black buttons. Apprentices wore the same rig except they had gold buttons. . . . .Ed)*



**Sea Fury aboard HMAS Sydney**

## Flight Trials undertaken by Reserve Test Pilot



***LCDR Michael Hardy is currently completing reserve time onboard HMAS Adelaide as an MH-60 Romeo test pilot for the Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Trials Unit***

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***By ABIS Jarrod Mulvihill  
(author and photographer)***

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**F**lying helicopters for the Royal Australian Navy is a childhood dream come true for LCDR Michael Hardy.

As a boy living in Kangaroo Valley, New South Wales, near the home of Navy's Fleet Air Arm at HMAS *Albatross*, Michael grew up watching Westland Sea King and Douglas A4 Skyhawk aircraft fly overhead.

"So I always wanted to be a Navy pilot," he said.

Leap forward 38 years after joining the Navy and Michael's career has taken off.

The Reservist is a test pilot with Navy's Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Test Unit (AMAFU) and his reserve time presently involves first class Flight trials in HMAS *Adelaide* where he is embarked.

The trials off the Queensland coast determine the safe operating limits of the MH-60R on the ship in a range of sea states and wind speeds, by day and by night.

In his civilian role, he is also a test pilot with one of the most prestigious aircraft manufacturers in the world.

He has more than 5000 flying hours in the unit flying military helicopters such as the MH-60R Romeo and the UH-60 Blackhawk.

"My civilian job is very similar to what I do at AMAFTU, I just travel a lot more and test-fly helicopters of other military forces," he said.

"I conduct experimental, production and maintenance flight testing, as well as providing pilot training on Sikorsky Sea Hawks, including the MH-60R (Romeo) and UH-60M Blackhawks."

Michael said his career had taken him all around the world.

"There are a lot of highlights, including deploying to Somalia in 1993 and flying a Sea King in Mogadishu for four months," Michael said.

HMAS *Adelaide* is Navy's high readiness vessel. The trials ensure the ship and crew preserve their readiness for national security and disaster response tasks.



# AWARD CEREMONY FOR U.S. SILVER STAR RECIPIENT - ANDY PERRY



**On 13 April 1995, COMSEVENTHFLT, Vice Admiral Archie Clemins USN presented Andy Perry with the US Silver Star onboard the USS *Blue Ridge* in Townsville some 25 years after the action in Binh Dai.**

The Australian Minister for Administrative Services, Frank Walker QC MP, announced that year a process was now in place for Australian servicemen to be allowed to accept and wear United States awards for the Vietnam War.

The announcement followed a recommendation by the 1994 Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards, which noted that new foreign award guidelines approved in 1989 (which replaced the Imperial guidelines) could allow the foreign awards for Vietnam to be officially worn.

Amongst the first group of United States awards for Vietnam which had been formally approved for wearing by the Governor-General of Australia was the Silver Star awarded to Andy Perry for his gallantry in action on 18 May 1970.

The following reflects the story of how the US came to the recommendation for the award.

Shortly after the Allies had declared a 24 hour Buddha's birthday truce on 18 May 1970, the 135th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) took part in an intensive action in Kien Hoa province.

A regional force outpost in the Binh Dai district had been overrun and then heavily fortified by a Viet Cong (VC) battalion. Three battalions of the 10th Regiment, 7th Army Division of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) were inserted around the outpost by 135th AHC aircraft supported by a platoon of the US Army 7th Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry.

The combined flight with LCDR David Farthing as mission commander, received heavy fire from small arms and machine guns throughout the six-hour long operation. LEUT R. K. Marum received multiple hits to his aircraft whilst leading the flight and had to return to base just before dark. SBLT A. C. Perry who had been released from another mission and was on his way home, then volunteered to lead the Flight for the remaining insertions. His aircraft was severely damaged by enemy fire on the first night insertion, receiving multiple hits in the cockpit area ... despite the damage to his aircraft SBLT Perry continued to lead the Flight.

A piece of shrapnel came off the pedals of the aircraft and hit Perry on the foot. Fortunately, his injuries were superficial and later that night he took part in three more landings despite the fact that his cockpit lights and instruments were no longer functioning! The brand new helicopter, which SBLT Perry was flying on this day, was so badly damaged that it never flew again.





***Colour Party marches past a group of USS Blue Ridge (Flagship) sailors 'fallen-in' with American and Australian Media awaiting the presentation at the stern of the ship by COMSEVENTHFLT -13 April 1995. An Honour Guard and Band were flown out from Okinawa, Japan for the Ceremony***

Working in support of the 7th ARVN Division once again, the 135th supported a large operation in the Bien Hai district of Kien Hoa province.

On his way back to base after completing a number of supply missions in the western part of the Delta and whilst monitoring the situation, SBLT Perry immediately volunteered to take over the lead, an offer LCDR Farthing gratefully accepted.

In the gathering gloom, Perry lead his first assault and in the process of unloading his troops, took hits to the front of his helicopter which inflicted minor injuries to both Perry and his American co-pilot, knocking out the chin bubble, cockpit lights and right hand rudder pedal.

The Flight was under heavy fire, one helicopter was shot down within the outpost and the scene was chaotic for the ground commander. LCDR Farthing, as overall Mission Commander was trying to control the operation from overhead. At this point, the possibility of a catastrophe and a significant victory for the enemy was very real.

However, Perry took charge of the remaining aircraft, collected two more loads of infantry and, after two more insertions the extra fire-power of the additional troops carried the day. The significance of SBLT Perry's leadership in this action was immediately recognised by the US Army in the awarding of the 'Silver Star'.



***Vice Admiral Archie Clemins USN , COMSEVENTHFLT reads from the award certificate for Andy Perry's 'Silver Star' the highest award a non-US combatant can receive. Andy stands behind him.***

Andy Perry had joined the Royal Australian Navy in February 1967 and after officer training and pilot training was posted to the RAN's Helicopter Flight Vietnam in December 1969. His duties included combat insertions and so-called night "hunter-killer" operations, where a helicopter would act as a decoy to draw enemy fire, with gunships flying nearby to respond.

On Perry's 21st birthday, 6 March 1970, he was involved in an operation where a US Army helicopter was destroyed after landing on a booby-trapped landing zone. The RAN pilot LEUT Dave Gibson was seriously injured and lucky to survive. He was immediately medivaced to the hospital in Can Tho. After the action LEUT Peter Clark and SBLT Perry transferred him to the Australian Task Force hospital in Vung Tau.

The action on 18 May 1970 was in the Kien Hoa province, where a regional post had been overrun and fortified by the Viet Cong. In total, three South Vietnamese battalions were inserted in the area to deal with the threat, and fought an eighteen-hour battle to retake the position.

The awards ceremony for the Silver Star onboard the Flagship of the US Seventh Fleet Flagship (USS *Blue Ridge*) was enhanced by an Honour Guard and Band being flown out from Okinawa, Japan

Andy Perry was awarded the US 'Silver Star' for gallantry in action on 18 May 1970. Approval to accept and wear the award was given by the Australian Government in 1995. He was also awarded a 'Mention in Despatches' on 17 December 1970. In a letter dated 21 August 2017 the Official Secretary for the Governor-General advised Andy he'd been awarded the 'Medal for Gallantry'. Andy elected to reject the medal for reasons outlined in his letter provided in the March 2020 issue of Slipstream

#### *Acknowledgements:*

1. *Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal dated 6 March 2017;*
2. *'United States awards to Australians for service in Vietnam' by Lloyd Brodrick*

### **"Coast Clear?"**

After the Petty Officer answered the phone yet again, he said to his saucy young wife, "That's funny. We must have a number similar to the Weather Bureau. That's the third bloke to ring and ask if the coast was clear."

## **Citation**

for the award of the

## **Silver Star**

To

**Sub-Lieutenant**

**Andrew Perry RAN**

For gallantry in action: Sub-Lieutenant Perry distinguished himself by gallantry in action on 18 May 1970 while serving as Pilot on a UH-1H Helicopter, 135th Aviation Company, Royal Australian Navy.

On that date, Sub-Lieutenant Perry monitored a radio call stating that his unit was engaged in night combat assaults against a strong hostile force and that several aircraft had been knocked out of action. Without thought to his own safety or the arduous hours of flying he had already accomplished that day, he contacted the Command and Control aircraft and offered his assistance.

Sub-Lieutenant Perry joined the flight as lead aircraft and carried one lift of Vietnamese troops into the landing zone. On the approach, the flight was raked by heavy fire, causing damage to several aircraft. Sub-Lieutenant Perry's aircraft was struck repeatedly, knocking out both chin bubbles, several important instruments, the side window and part of his pedal controls. The second aircraft in the flight was knocked out of action and could not continue to fly. Grasping the situation, Sub-Lieutenant Perry announced that he would continue as lead.

Despite the damage to his aircraft and the fact that he was bleeding from the face and had lost feeling in his right foot from the impact of enemy bullets, he led the flight back to the pickup zone and then into the same landing zone two more times. Each time, heavy enemy fire was received, but by his courage, flying ability and cool commands of leadership, the flight of aircraft never faltered and the insertions were completed.

Sub-Lieutenant Perry's conspicuous gallantry in action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal Australian Navy and reflects great credit upon himself and the military service.



## Gannet XG796 Side No. 815 and Later 858 Involved in Two Major Accidents

The major accident involving Gannet XG796 (815) occurred on 10 January 1964 when the aircraft carried out an emergency wheels up landing on its bomb bay doors at NAS Nowra.

This same aircraft XG796, renumbered 858, ended up over the side of HMAS Melbourne on 24 February 1966. This was another major accident. After collecting No. 6 wire in flight 858 went over the side of the ship. Hanging only on the arrestor wire, it subsequently was lost at sea during attempted recovery.

The original accident in 1964 took place on Runway 08. Structural damage to the aircraft was limited, due to the excellent emergency landing gear qualities of the torpedo/bomb bay doors opened by the pilot prior to landing, and the undoubted skill of the pilot.

The cause of the accident was stress fracture



*XG796 (815) Landing on Bomb Bay Doors on RWY 08 NAS Nowra*

failure of the nose wheel door actuator lug. The lug failure prevented the nose wheel doors from opening and resulted in the landing gear sequence valve remaining closed, and therefore the non-activation of all remaining landing gear sequence operations.

"Behind me in the middle cockpit was Alan Pring-Shambler and at the rear looking back was Peter Coulson, a fairly new arrival on 816 Squadron. If my memory serves me well – somewhere along the way Peter (Coulson) became disconnected from the intercom and may have been unaware of what was to come – however it didn't slow him down as by the time I was scrambling out of my cockpit the 'lookers' were already at the edge of the runway" the pilot, Peter Adams said.

He further added: "If some wonder why both props/engines were damaged and one not shut down prior to landing; a feature of the undercarriage system was the prop flight



*Front View XG796 (815) after aircrew had evacuated the aircraft*





***XG796 (815) on RWY 08 with ground personnel and Crane preparing to lift the aircraft***

fine pitch locks could not be withdrawn to allow the engines to constant speed with the undercarriage up – to prevent control problems in normal flight. Accordingly, the power response with the locks in at circuit speed was very poor. I had tried an approach with one shut down and found the handling less than desirable so opted for both engines. I believe I missed the laid down foam path and lip on the intersection of the runways damaged the bomb bay doors which were being used as skids.”

Peter Coulson was a crew member of XG796 involved in its two major accidents when it was 815 and 858. He continues the story on with respect to 858.

Albie Fyfe, Peter Coulson and Tom Lindsay had launched from *Melbourne* in XG796 side number 858, for a sortie that was to conclude with Albie’ Fyfe’s night deck landing qualification.

The weather was closing in and after a few touch and goes Albie was given down hook for his first night arrest. As we crossed the round down Albie thought the ship was turning and initiated a last minute wave off. This was in the era of no Landing Signals Officers!

However, as we rotated XG796 engaged number 6 wire, with the result that the aircraft went over the port side of the flight deck. The aircraft came to a precarious stop suspended by a combination of the hook, arrestor wire and the aircraft being partially embedded in a sponson below the flight deck!

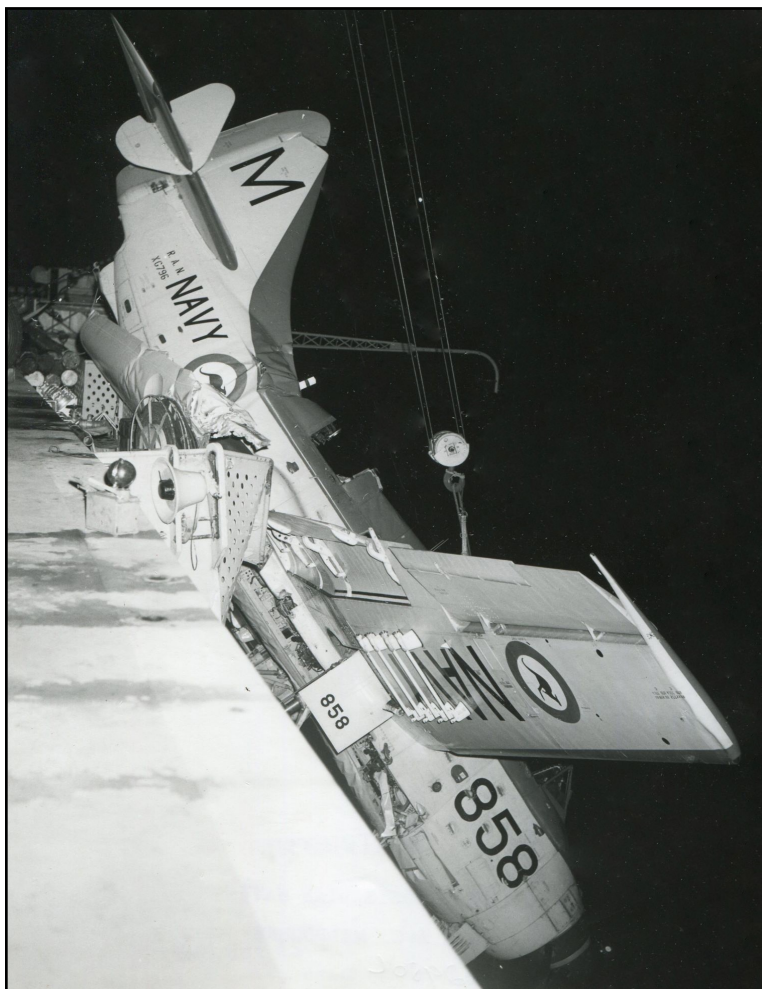
We communicated briefly with the ship and between ourselves before I asked Albie to

turnoff the electrical system, as I was soaked in fuel from the main fuel tank.

A decision was made to abandon the aircraft before any attempt would be made to recover the aircraft. The rear aircrewman, Tom Lindsay, was recovered back on to the flight deck with the aid of a length of line.

Albie and I were in a slightly more difficult situation, as we were inaccessible from the flight deck. We were also hanging in our harnesses and did not wish to upset the delicate balance of the aircraft by jettisoning our canopies. By carefully easing out the safety harness straps I was eventually able to gain a foothold and

release my safety and parachute straps. I was then able to force my canopy open until it locked in the open position. This allowed me to ease myself out of the cockpit and to perch on the edge while Albie did the same some six feet below.



***XG796 (858) hanging over the side of HMAS Melbourne held by No.6 Wire and the Flight Deck crane***



***XG796 (858) taxiing to the catapult whilst SAR Wessex 825 (Pedro) stations itself on the portside awaiting the launch***

An attempt was made to reach us using the flight deck crane but this was not possible and we elected to jump into the water. Fortunately, the double [aircraft] propellers had stopped in a perfect cross giving a relatively clear arc to jump through. To avoid hitting each other, Albie jumped first and when he was clear I followed. We then swam to the sea boat which was waiting clear of the aircraft, and we were recovered on board and taken to the sick bay and kept there overnight for observation (and many beers!)

While I did not directly observe it, an attempt was then made to recover the aircraft. The flight deck crane was attached to the aircraft lifting point but when this point was put under load in a direction of almost ninety degrees from its design load it pulled out. This was enough to disturb the balance of the aircraft and it fell into the sea and

XG796 sank very quickly and never made another attempt on my life. Albie and I finally completed his night qualification in April of that year and [we] continued to fly together regularly until the end of the Gannet era. In fact we led the last flight of four Gannets at the Air Day on 8 October 1967.

I had another four postings to 816 culminating in all, with short period as CO. Over those years, I think I sat through the initial night quals of about another dozen pilots and while some were also memorable there was never another XG796.

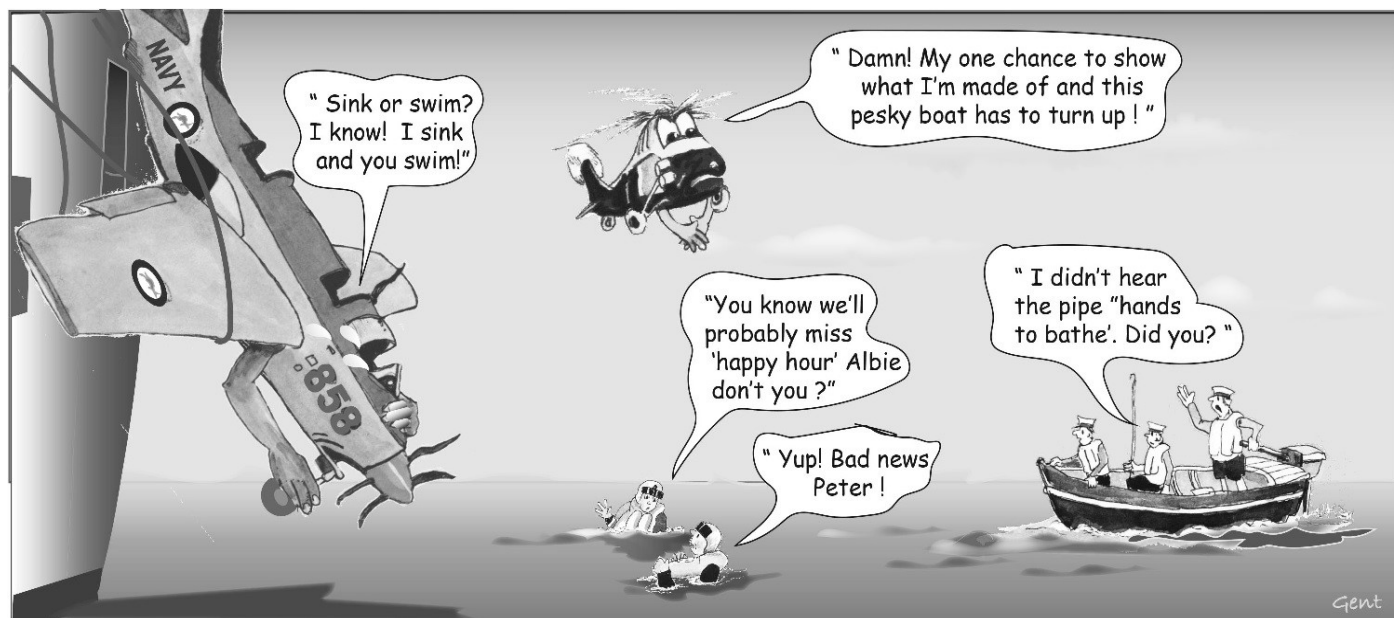
Years later, as "Wings" I had the pleasure of being involved in the trials of some new aircrew equipment and it was most reassuring to witness AMAFTU using the HUET to address the issues of safety equipment interface with the aircraft and escape from unusual attitudes. Perhaps the trial aircrew wondered why I showed such a personal

interest."

#### Acknowledgements:

1. Majority of the article is written by Peter Coulson with input from Peter Adams. Original used on FAAAA website [here](#) (online subscribers)
2. Extracts used from the book 'Submarine Hunter' by Zbigniew Patynowski and published by Mushroom Model Publications [here](#) (online subscribers)
3. Photos supplied from official RAN sources and FAAAA website [here](#) (online subscribers)

***'First Hand Account of Gannet Crew Rescue'***  
***Page 39***





# True Friend of RAN FAA Dies

By Andy Craig

**T**he RAN Fleet Air Arm has lost a good friend with the death on 6 April 2020 of Rear Admiral Colin Cooke Priest CB CVO.

Colin was an Observer and will be remembered by RAN aviators 'of a certain age' as one of the RN aircrew who were loaned to the RAN in the late 1960s/early 1970s to fill the gaps caused by our Vietnam commitment.

He was a member of the crew of Wessex 821 (flown by Murray Buckett and Trevor Rieck with LACM Barnes in the back with Colin) which was lost off Jervis Bay on 13 Nov 1969 when conducting a transfer to HMAS *Vampire*. The winch wire got snagged on the ship, parted and flew back into the rotor head causing the aircraft to ditch. All the aircrew were rescued. It was Colin's second ditching and he was phlegmatic about such things – as he put it 'one just has a drink with the pilot afterwards, and that's an end to it'.

He had four sea commands and finished his naval career as the Flag Officer Naval Air Command (1990-1993). He was relieved by then RADM Ian Garnett who will also be known to RAN aviators 'of a certain age' as he, too, was a member of the RN contingent of the early '70s.

On leaving the RN, Colin was CEO of the Trident Trust, Master of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, one of Her Majesty's Gentleman Ushers (1994-2009) and an Extra Gentleman Usher from 2009 until he died.



**Rear Admiral Cooke-Priest with  
HM the Queen**

A very senior RN officer said Colin "was one of the vertebrae which make up the backbone of the Service. Totally reliable, loyal, extremely able in every job he tackled, and above all one of the nicest and most good- humoured colleagues one could possibly work with".

He died in his sleep at home. The RN has lost an officer and a gentleman of the old school and the RAN FAA has lost a good friend .

## HARS — Naval Heritage Flight 844 Disc For Sale

**A**s you may already know, HARS' first big achievement to the Naval Heritage Flight was the restoration to flying of the ex RAN FAA Grumman Tracker S2G 844.

HARS restored it at Air Affairs Nowra and late last year 844 flew for the first time in over twenty years. With the sponsorship of Matthew Jones from Mountain Lion Productions, a DVD of



the last phase of restoration, the flight up and the Tracker performing was created. The main DVD is about 50+ mins and includes shots from the Cockpit as Owen Nicholls and Steve McMahon do circuits around HARS at Albion Park.

You can log on and purchase for \$25 through the website here at: <https://www.harsmuseumshop.com.au/> for an immediate download or for an extra \$10 buy a physical DVD including postage.



# US Continues to Train RN Pilots After WWII

“one transferring to the RAN”

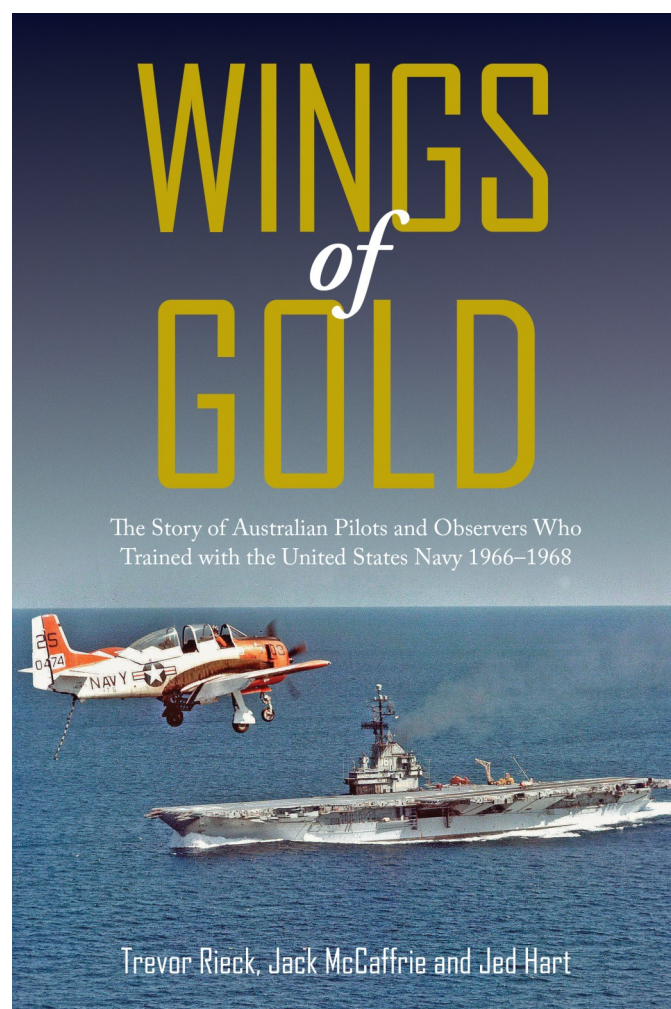
## *Wings of Gold* - postscript

It was a different time, but the same dream. The dream of becoming a Navy pilot. This postscript tells the story of Peter McNay, who trained in Pensacola with the US Navy in 1954 and was awarded his US Navy wings.

Authors Trevor Rieck, Jack McCaffrie and Jed Hart wrote *Wings of Gold* in 2019. It is the story of 49 Australians who trained as pilots and observers with the United States Navy in Pensacola, Florida in 1966. The project was supported by the Seapower Centre and Big Sky Publishing and drew on wonderful personal contributions from those involved.

There has been a lot of feedback since the book was published in January 2020, but among those commenting, the story of Peter McNay stood out. First, some history.

Fourteen years before the 1966 push (1952 – Korean War time), the flight program was less formal than that of 1966 and the aircraft were different. The basic trainer was the North American T6 Texan SNJ6 (Harvard) and the advanced aircraft



was the Hellcat F6F (night fighter) and the carrier-qualifying carrier was a straight deck World War 2 ship.

Acting Sub-Lieutenant McNay RN, joined the program in Pensacola, having been selected for fighter training, after six months sea training on HMS *Implacable*, which was on a two week standby war footing.

Three months of intensive ground school and physical training including swimming a mile in full flying suit and the Dilbert Dunker were undertaken as happened with the 1966 students .



WB - Whiting Field North, WC - South

**Above, SNJ6 (Harvard) and to the Left, the Hellcat F6F (Night Fighter)**



***"Paddles" giving the cut***



***USS Monterey***

Then it was to flying first the SNJ at NAS Whiting Field and after the requisite 18 hops (25 hours) the students were sent solo. Advanced training was conducted at various Fields – Sauflley, Corry and Barin. It included gunnery, which by 1966 had been discontinued..

During his first flight in the SNJ, with his 188cm tall 100kgs US Marine Captain instructor, smoke was seeping into the cockpit as they rolled down the runway. Peter thought it was normal, until the instructor pulled the power, slammed on the brakes and shouted to get the hell out of the aircraft as it was on fire.

Night formation flying was pretty hairy, even more so than deck landings in his opinion. He went on to say, "This was especially the case when the night was 'as black as where the sun don't shine'. The act of forming up was the worst, when all you could see was the small, faint blue light on the port wingtip of the lead aircraft. This was the only given indication of its position as it had its navigation lights turned off so as not to blind you! Once successfully formed up, you then needed to keep that pesky blue light in sight"!

Peter and his mates invested in a 1949 Plymouth which took them on many adventures during their training. The foul stench of the skunk they ran over on one trip still lingers in Peter's memory even more than 50 years later. They often drove to New Orleans for weekends to listen to jazz sessions, arriving just after dark, listening and sleeping in the car and driving back home with breakfast of hot cakes, maple syrup and fried eggs at a diner.

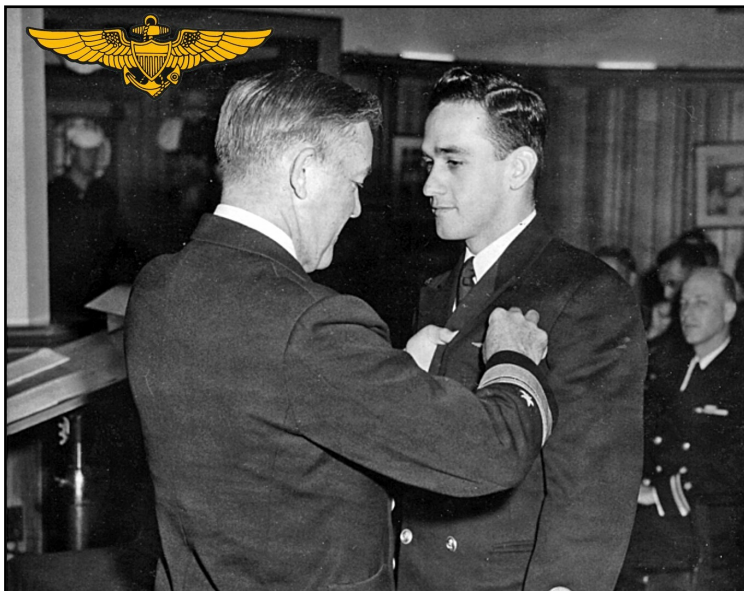
Carrier qualifications were undertaken in the SNJ, no tail hook and free take-offs (WW2 stuff). USS *Monterey*, a World War Two straight deck carrier was then the training command's duty carrier.

A variation of the 1966 program was that all 1952 pilots were given a twin engine conversion on the Beechcraft UC-45 for ad-



***RN Pilots Under Training for all weather flying at Corpus Christi, Texas 1953. Peter McNay is second from the Left.***





***A Rear-Admiral USN pinning USN Pilot Wings onto Peter McNay's breast***

the US Navy wings of gold set by an American Admiral and the Royal Navy's wings (for the left sleeve) pinned on by a British Admiral.

Back in UK and after time in RN squadrons flying Sea Furies, Peter, now a newly promoted Lieutenant, was posted to the RAN for two and a half years exchange. At the end of his exchange time he decided to stay in Australia. After completing his maritime career, Peter left the Navy in 1974, joined the public service in Canberra and finally retired in 1993.

Peter McNay OAM, is a sprightly 91 and lives in Canberra and recently met with Jack McCaffrie to relate his story.

So Peter's experience adds more intriguing detail to the stories of RAN aircrew who have been awarded the United States Navy wings of gold.

vanced instrument flying. Sadly, for the 1966 group, the twin conversion was discontinued in about 1962 and replaced by the T28B Trojan, thus shortening the time to qualify which was required for a faster throughput for the Vietnam War.

Then it was time for fighter training at Cabannis Field near Corpus Christi in Texas. For the Grumman Hellcat F6-F (night fighter), pilots were given pilot's notes to read, then both a verbal and a blindfold test. They were then strapped in and told to take off. This fighter training duplicated most of what had been carried out on the SNJ.

In February 1954 Peter was posted back to Barin Field for advanced deck landing qualifications and on 17 March 1954, as an Acting Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, Peter was awarded two sets of wings. These wings were



***A British Admiral pinning RN Pilot Wings on the sleeve of Peter McNay whilst he still wears USN wings***



***Peter McNay standing next to his car with VF-805 number plates***

## September Edition

*Closing date for  
Articles & Reports*

*to be into the Editor no later  
than*

**1 September 2020**



# ***“It’s Times Like These that You Need Minties!”***

***By Roger Harrison  
SA Whipping Boy***

**T**here comes a time in one’s life where you can safely look back and firmly say “That was a silly thing to do.” A “Bugga” moment.

That moment was in 1963 while at HMAS *Albatross* at MRS and I had just completed a Main Check something or other on a Firefly Rolls Royce engine. Quite an enjoyable time from memory and I think Bob Liddicote and Dave Varley were present for the overhaul.

A flight test was needed to check power settings and Neil Ralph was called upon to put the Firefly through its paces. The Chief needed ballast in the rear cockpit, and I volunteered which made the others standing close to me suck in large volumes of air through their teeth. So over to the Safety Section I drew out flying gear plus bone dome then returned to the hard standing and waited for the pilot to show. I had my trusty 35mm film camera with me and as the day was warm and with a clear sky, I thought the opportunity for Arial photography was too good to let go.

Neil Ralph materialized, and we spoke briefly, and I got the impression I should be settling into the rear cockpit. He walked around the aircraft kicking a tyre and climbed into the front seat and belted up. I had a parachute to juggle with as well as oxygen and communications to plug in. Closing the canopy, I thought about the escape procedure with canopy

release, oxygen off with mask, unplug cables and harnesses but, I thought I would just graciously go down with the aircraft. Save the trouble.

The Merlin rumbled into life with much smoke and gnashing of teeth but eventually settled to a familiar sound I was comfortable with. “You ready Harrison” coming over the intercom—“yes Sir” I replied.

We taxied off the hard standing and headed for runway 26 and after some power checks, took off into wind with minimal ceremony. The power coming from that V12 Merlin was magnificent and slightly arousing as we became airborne and headed out to the JB area. My camera was snapping at sunlit coastlines, blue mountain back drops, rivers and valleys as well as cockpit framed shots. Very pleased with myself as I anticipated the classic shots no one else had and in full colour as well.

After a period of power juggling and swanning around we returned to the duty runway for a smooth touch down and back to the hard standing. I scrambled out of the rear cockpit and thanked Neil for the flight around the local district. He grunted something and went off and here I had a “Bugga” moment as I totally forgot to release the film rewind button and snapped the film completely trying to rewind it into the canister. So instead of taking the camera into Nowra to salvage the film, I had another “Bugga” moment and opened the back of the camera and ruined the film totally. All my handiwork completely gone. To say I was disappointed was an understatement and why this is probably the first time I have disclosed my stupidity.



## SA Divisional Report for period Ending June 2020

By Roger Harrison

There comes a time in each of our lives where we wonder what the hell is going on. The world has turned upside down because the Chinese had not controlled or contained a virus, therefore denying "There's nothing to see here". In other words something the Chinese excel at. As a result we now have to pick up the pieces of their stupidity. Bats wings are off the menu.

So how are you all coping with reading the Slipstream on-line? I have an issue with tactile senses. I enjoy touching things and an apology to Doris right here, nice bum. The latest issue was well received as I wanted to see how the issue looked in the digital form and apart from having to magnify the pages and then drag the article centre page, it worked a treat. It appears that I should shorten my article down to 250 words as my last issue was over 1000 words and so half of it was left out? All the same, I will still root for the Hard Copy. No offence to the digital geeks amongst us.

The State Division AGM was cancelled in March due to the COVID-19 uprising, have I mentioned the Chinese? Anyway, it was shifted to the May 20th Meeting slot and I can pretty much bet that the State President, Michael Stubbington, will be forced to reschedule that Meeting until July 2020. Let's face facts, that could be in doubt too. At least some of those members who attend our Meetings will be familiar to us and easily recognised although with this length of time between meetings, perhaps a quick sneak peek at their name badge could be the answer.

You will be surprised to see a listing of this Division's Meeting dates/times are now recorded in the FAAA webpage under Calendar of Events. Marcus has exerted his last gasp of frustration in the SA Division's inability to get times and dates to him on time, so the Whipping Boy has moved into top gear and sorted the issue for Marcus and us, of course.

Secretary Jan Akeroyd had organised a 3 day discover Kapunda tour and she was looking for numbers from us. This adventure has now been cancelled and I hope John Siebert can recover his site deposit along with anyone else who got in first.

An Application for Membership from Pat Bainbridge (UK) has been forwarded by Marcus for action. Pat was a Wessex pilot, amongst other duties, over the 60/70's period. He was a lucky Pensacola Lad for all his aviation training with the USN. I guess he would have suffered the usual criticism of USN training not RAN training on his return. His nickname "Mad Dog" could be of concern.

Also received an Application for Membership from Hugh Gerry Dowling, Two Wells SA. Gerry was involved with the ATC side of Naval Aviation and reached the rank of LCDR and here I can officially wel-



come him and Pat into the SA FAAA Family. Gerry has been keen to attend meetings which have all been cancelled because of COVID-19

ANZAC Day parade has also been cancelled by the State RSL committee and rightly so as most of those attending are of the old and wrinkly vintage and so needing care and attention. I guess this was a National decision. What about those HMAS Albatross AFL 1990 Premiership footy team that would have flown in for the ANZAC Day Parade with this Division and now all cancelled out? Pity though all the same. Loraine and I held our ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the end of her driveway.

A pleasant phone call from Adrian Whiteman QLD concerning my Letter to the Editor in the last Slipstream edition. Just for the record, he agrees with my comments. Managed to catch up on all his gossip. The SA Division has been brought up to speed by our State Delegate for the Federal Council meeting in October 2019 and John Siebert stated at our January 2020 Meeting that the National FAAA have their hands full scouting out a replacement Patron also the National Secretary position has yet to be filled.

*(Just a suggestion re the online issue. You will find it easier if you select Full Screen and then use the -+ adjustment, if needed, to zoom in and out. With this selected you should be able to read Slipstream, the same as any online newspaper or magazine. For example, the RN Navy News newspaper uses the same format as Slipstream. Latest copy of RN Navy News is [here](#). Other online service and ex-service organisation magazines world wide can be found on this site.*

*Sorry about leaving half your report out last issue. Seems I only copied the first page. When I send you the draft copy, in future remind me about anything not included that you consider important.....Ed)*



**Roger in the early hours of Anzac morning in front of his house, remembering the fallen**



# ***RN Pilot on Loan to RAN Remembers Mid-Air Collision***

*Reproduced with Permission  
of 'South Coast Register' [here](#)  
By Robert Crawford*

Sixty-four years after ditching his Navy Fairey 'Firefly' anti-submarine aircraft into Jervis Bay after a mid-air collision that killed two of his comrades, 84-year-old David Eagles has made an emotional return to the Shoalhaven.

At just 20 years of age, the then Sub Lieutenant was on loan from the Royal Navy, along with fellow pilots Sub Lieutenants Arthur Arundel and Ian O'Gilvey.

At 1518 on 27 November 1956 Eagles and Arundel with trainee navigators, midshipmen Don Debus and Noel Fogarty, were returning to NAS Nowra after navigational exercises off Jervis Bay when their Fireflies, from 851 Squadron, collided at about 2000 feet, two miles east of Huskisson.

Arundel and Fogarty, who were also both just aged 20, were killed.



***RN pilot David Eagles alongside Firefly VX381 at NAS Nowra***

Their aircraft WD887, broke apart upon striking the water at around 250 knots, near the crash site.

Despite extensive searches at the time, neither their bodies nor the aircraft were ever recovered.

Eagles struggled to maintain control of his aircraft, VX381, after seven feet of the starboard wing, including the aileron, was sheared off by the collision.

Eagles and Debus (18) ditched in Hare Bay, off Callala Bay about three miles from the crash site, launching their life-rafts before the aircraft sank.

Rescue crews were scrambled from both NAS Nowra and HMAS Creswell, with Eagles and Debus rescued by a Sycamore helicopter and returned to the Naval Air Station.

Their aircraft sank in about 15 metres of water, and went largely undiscovered until 1983 when it was rediscovered by local diver Charlie Pickering, as it had since becoming a popular dive location.

On Sunday 8 March Eagles and his wife Ann, along with close friends Michael and Marie Murray from New Zealand, ventured onto Jervis Bay to visit both the crash location where Arundel and Fogarty lost their lives and to the location where he had "parked" his Firefly.

The trip was organised by well-known local diver Greg Stubbs, who after diving on the Firefly wreckage off Callala in 2005, started a quest to find



***David Eagles (left) and Greg Stubbs over the spot in Jervis Bay where his Firefly crashed in 1956 after a mid-air collision that killed two of his fellow flyers.***

out how the aircraft came to be on the ocean floor.

After researching the crash, Stubbs learnt of the wreck's story and even managed to track down Eagles in the UK and Debus in Canberra.

He became great mates with Eagles, who describes the North Nowra man as "his adopted Australian son".

After 10 years of painstaking searching, Stubbs found the other crash site in 2016, recovering debris which identified it as the right plane.

He was also the driving force behind having a permanent memorial placed on the Firefly in Hare Bay to mark the event's 60th anniversary, which tells the story and that of Arthur Arundel and Noel Fogarty. He also organised a commemorative service.

David managed to take part in one such memorial while in the UK four years ago via Facebook live feed, courtesy of the South Coast Register.



**RN pilots on loan to the RAN FAA**

**(from left) David Eagles, Arthur Arundel and Ian Ogilvy**

On Sunday 8 March a small but select group, including the former Commander of the Fleet Air Arm Commodore Chris Smallhorn and the retired head curator of the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Terry Hetherington gathered onboard 'Jervis Bay Wild's' vessel *Port Venture* to make the emotional journey to both sites.

"It's 64 years since I've been back here," said Mr Eagles, who went on to have an incredible career in the Royal Navy. He was a test pilot of the Tornado Jet Fighter and worked with the British Aerospace Program.

In a quiet personal moment over the crash site where Arundel and Fogarty perished, Mr Eagles paused for a moment's remembrance.

He was seen to throw something into the water, later revealed to be his service medal.

"The day has been tremendous - I'm not a great one for enormous celebration and this isn't a celebration but it's a very important commemorative day," he said.

"When I told Greg we were coming to the Southern Hemisphere, and probably for the last time, he insisted we come to Nowra.

"This really wasn't a priority, we had other things to do but Greg is irrepressible and he insisted and I've got to say it couldn't have been a more memorable day for me.

"Obviously I haven't been to the spot where Arthur and Noel were killed before; or back to where as Greg describes it, we "parked" the other one.

"This has been very important for me."

He admitted it was an emotional day.

"I'm an emotional person inside," he said. "Hopefully I don't show it but this cut to the spot."

He said the two years he spent in Nowra were very important in his aviation career.

## DEATH NOTICES

### **CLARK, Alan (Life Member)**

It is my sad duty to report the passing of Alan (Happy) Clark. Alan was a Life Member of the FAAAA and long time committeeman of the Victoria Division.

Alan joined the Navy in March 1948 and served until March 1963. He was a CPO at the time of his discharge. He was 92 at the time of his passing.

Alan was one of the originals who went to the UK for training and returned with HMAS *Sydney*. He was a Korean Veteran and served on Sydney, Melbourne, Albatross and Cerberus. I am informed that he also spent some time in the recruiting office.

Alan spent the last few years in the Vasey RSL Home where he died peacefully surrounded by loved ones on Saturday 5th June. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

*Mal Smith*

### **REX, Charles**

It is with much sadness that we pass on the news that 'Charlie' Rex passed away Thursday 11 June 2020.

*Bob Mummery/Doug Gillies*





**David Eagles in front of a Fairey 'Firefly' anti-submarine aircraft at the Fleet Air Arm Museum.**

"They were lovely days and were important in my overall career," he said.

Although when he first arrived, he wasn't too keen to be flying the "aeroplanes the Royal Navy had thrown away", "big pistons which the Australians were still using".

"I was quite cross when I arrived here and was told we were going to fly Fireflies - how wrong I was," he said.

"The experience you got from those great, enormous Griffin powered Fireflies was invaluable and no doubt it helped me in my eventual career."

He relived the accident saying the "day was cloud-free and blue sky, which was about 90 per cent of the Nowra flying - blue sky".

"We had gone out over the heads and done an exercise of navigation for the Midshipmen and when we formed up here, had this mid-air! Suddenly I couldn't tell you if it was day or night," he said.

"I just became aware of things to do - I couldn't have recognised the spot we put her down.

"It was flat and calm so I was pleased about that.

"We had to descend and increase speed up to 150-160 knots to keep it from rolling and we just put it down. As we slowed, the thing rolled and skewed - it wasn't a very pretty landing!"

Remarkably he sounds so calm about it all. Even more incredible he was just 20-years-old.

"It's amazing Greg was able to discover both sites," he said.

"I wouldn't have been able to get you to the nearest mile if I told you.

"It's wonderful for Greg to have arranged this."

The spot where David and Don were eventually rescued, the nearest point to "their landing" off Calala Bay was also pointed out.

"I remember we got to a little creek," he said.

"There were freshwater oysters on the rocks of the creek entry.

"It [the landscape] was very bare at the time - there were no houses there like today, it was just bush."

The visit concluded with a trip to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at HMAS Albatross, where David proudly posed alongside a Firefly which is part of the museum's collection.

For Mr Stubbs, the event brought closure to a chapter in his life.

"I've been very lucky to meet an incredible man in David Eagles," he said.

"I feel proud from an Australian point of view I've been able to fulfill an 84-year-old man's obligation to his mate.

"It was very emotional to see him walk down the gangway to say his peace with Arthur. And when we got

over his crash site, a man who has seen lots of things in life, things I'll never experience, shed a tear, I knew I had achieved what I needed to achieve.

"A proud moment and great to be able to do something small but special for a very special man.

"What we've done probably hasn't sunk in yet.

"In September last year when David told me they were coming to Australia I knew I just had to make this happen.

"A proud moment. It's right up there with what we did in 2016 when we marked the 60th anniversary of the crash."

## **BBC Series 2 on HMS Queen Elizabeth**

**Episode 1 (1hr) is [here](#)**

URL for Hard Copy is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyUFSNE-P2E>

**Episode 2 (1hr) is [here](#)**

URL for Hard Copy is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbkkNt329UA>

**Episode 3 (1hr) is [here](#)**

URL for Hard Copy is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYe3En8jam0>

**Series 1 not available**

# ***Letter to Minister To Prompt Further Action for 'Cyclone Tracey' Recognition***

The Hon. Ben Morton, MP  
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

For Information: Hon. Shayne Neuman  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

General A. Campbell AO DSC  
Chief of Defence Force  
PO Box 7900  
Canberra BC  
Act 2610

Vice Admiral M. Noonan AO RAN  
Chief of Navy  
Navy Office  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

## **Australian Service Medal 1945-75**

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter MC20-012296 of 27 February, 2020 in which you again refuse to amend the regulations for the award of the National Emergency Medal for the Navy's operation in cleaning up Darwin after Cyclone Tracy which involved, for the first time in Australia's history, a general recall of sailors to their ships on Christmas Day 1974.

I understand your point of view in holding to the regulations but you will also understand that I am of the other view. The more so since you have said :

"I do not dispute either the size of the disaster, the size of the response or the incredible contributions, effort and sacrifice of each individual involved. Indeed I recognise that in terms of the size of the disaster and the response, Cyclone Tracy rates one of the most significant national emergencies ever experienced by this country."

Thank you for that acknowledgement. But that, in itself, is the nub of the problem; others have been rewarded for lesser disasters, and , more importantly, those personnel involved in the cleanup of Darwin, received no government acknowledgement by way of a medallic award.

Taking into consideration the several difficulties you have mentioned and looking for an alternative award which does not require significant legislative action, the Australian Service Medal which was established in 1995 appears to have the capacity to embrace Cyclone Tracy. It recognises service in peacekeeping or non-warlike operations in the period 1945 to February 1975. This covers the period of first response to Darwin following Tracy.



A clasp **CYCLONE TRACY** could be included with the list of clasps already awarded. The one difficulty you may find is that the other clasps nearly always require a 30 day period in the zone. Because of the staggered arrival and departure of ships and aircraft it is suggested that a shorter period be considered. In this regard I suggest that a minimum of one day in the Darwin clean up should be considered. This suggestion follows the award of the National Emergency Medal to those members who responded to Cyclone Yasi and some of whom are understood to have had only 4 hours in the zone to qualify.

I note also that the Chief of the Defence Force, under the heading of Special Operations, is able to specify Cyclone Tracy as a "special" operation". I have knowledge of these operations and am not suggesting that Tracy comes into that category, but I am making the point that clasps to the medal can, and have, been made for periods shorter than 30 days.

Appended please find a number of email responses from sailors who were a part of the operation. They make very interesting and emotional reading and clearly instance some of the difficulties first responders faced.

I am also sending a copy of this letter to the Hon. Shayne Neumann MP, Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs, General A. Campbell AO, DSC, Chief of the Defence force, and Vice Admiral M. Noonan AO RAN so that they too may be aware of this application.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Swan

Captain AM RAN (Rtd)

*(This is of interest to the Fleet Air Arm because of HMAS Melbourne's presence providing helicopter relief and manpower assistance in cleaning up Darwin, but also providing two HS748 aircraft and crews evacuating many from the ruins . . . Ed)*



## Expressions of Interest for Aircrew Reunion

### Proposed Fleet Air Arm Aircrew Reunion

Seeking to Re-Unit Members, Friends,  
Partners and Navy Aircraft

In a Reunion over two days on

**23 and 24 October 2020 at**

**HARS—Historical Aircraft Restoration Society**  
AVIATION MUSEUM—Albion Park Rail

**Proposal**

**Friday 23 October 2020**

**COCKTAIL PARTY**

1800-2100

Venue: HANGER 1 - on company of  
Historical FAA aircraft

**Saturday 24 October**

### GUIDED TOUR OF HARS AVIATION MUSEUM

HANGER 3 — From 1800 to 1900

Followed by

**INFORMAL DINNER**

Venue: HANGER 2—Upstairs

**HARS Aviation Museum**

1900 — 2300

Overlooking HARS Flagship, QANTAS  
Boeing 747-438 VH-OJA

**Expressions of Interest Form**  
**on FAAAA Website [here](#)**

To extend the planning process further, The Committee needs to receive an expression of interest from anyone that would like to attend the fun filled days in October this year, and has not already registered their interest. Please indicate specific or both events and whether you will be solo or dual. Please forward your interest to:

**Mike MacNeill 0416 108 220 email: [mike.macneill2@bigpond.com](mailto:mike.macneill2@bigpond.com)**

Further information to follow after the expressions of interest have been gathered.



## Letters to the Editor



### RANHFV Member's View on the Andy Perry Story

In response to the Andy Perry article on Page 6 of the March 2020 *Slipstream*, the answer to the question posed can be found in the DHA Appeals Tribunal report you (Editor) quote.

It is time this pursuit of glory be put to rest. Perry was awarded the 'Medal for Gallantry' (the Australian equivalent to the US Silver Star). That he chose to be churlish is very sad. A disappointing ending.

I served in RANHFV as member 1968/69, just one of many who worked hard to have his bravery recognised by Australia.

Bob Ray

### A SAR Pilot's Perspective of Ramp Strike

Having just received my latest "Slipstream", Phil's story of his ramp strike brought back some still-clear memories of night flying. I thought I would write them down before befuddlement erases them entirely. Your readers may be interested from the ship-borne aspect.

I had been on HS817 (Wessex) for about 12 months, having joined from my conversion after a tour in Vietnam with the RAAF. To get some "ship time" and share the 'work-up' flying load, I was teamed up with Murray Buckett in the SAR Flight helicopter in September 1971, remaining aboard HMAS *Melbourne* for about 2 weeks as she came and went from/to Sydney to the training area, with the occasional overnight in Jervis Bay.

During all day DL practice, we would do the usual "follow the leader" with the carrier, waiting for a fixed-wing pilot to do something less boring than just landing successfully. The main game being to try and get back to 6 spot before the ship turned out of wind (I am sure in an deliberate attempt to ascertain our out-of-wind piloting technique), or before Wings transmitted "After the turn Pedro". I suspect any Wessex crew who read this will be familiar with that phrase!! Variety came in the form of the occasional mail/pax/etc transfer to an escort.

During night flying the Wessex was folded in "C" Hangar (most aft hangar, aft of the after lift for those unfamiliar with the carrier), with the duty SAR (2 pilot at night) ready to spring into instant action in the crew room. For those unfamiliar with the crewroom layout, there happened to be a fairly large, rectangular steel "door" which led out onto the Life Raft Sponson. (I believe it may have been an aircrew crew room escape hatch. If not, it must have been some ingeniously valuable engineering bit). The hinge was on the forward edge so, when open, this hatch did a magnificent job of reflecting sound from the rear of the ship into the crewroom. Trackers on approach could not be heard via our hatch until fairly close in, but the Skyhawk would be heard, and from quite a way out, being a distinct "up / down" whistle as the throttle changes were made.

Another idiosyncrasy of the carrier (for the "youngsters" out there) was that when the cat fired the entire ship would recoil with a pronounced jerk, and there-

after do about 2 "resonant" fore-aft shakes.

It will soon become apparent why this door and the shake became part of the story.

At this point I will note that *Melbourne* never launched and recovered (trapped) any 2 aircraft at the same time.

Murray and I were in our "ready to pounce" mode ("Playboy" magazine notwithstanding) with the sounds, vibrations and general procedures and sounds associated with "flying stations" going on sub-consciously in the background.

It is strange looking back, how the general hub-bub of your surroundings means nothing until it changes – even if you do not realise it. A Skyhawk was on approach – nothing unusual, resonant whistling coming in the hatch. Suddenly massive power increase – nothing here, it was after all, night jet DLs.

Then – the catapult fires !! Murray and I both sat bolt upright and looked at one-another in a WTFWT moment. This was followed by the crash alarm and a "Crash on deck" pipe. The A4 had hit the deck with enough force to cause the entire ship to react as it would firing the catapult!!

Out via the TA100 sponson and up onto the deck. Aft lift was down and the troops almost had 836 starting out of the hangar. Under the eerie glow of the flight deck (ships) moon-lighting it seemed to me that chaos reined. It actually didn't, the deck crew were starting an "emu bob" searching every inch of the flight deck for small (and some large) pieces of Skyhawk. At this stage the actual damage sustained to the still-airborne aircraft was not known – finding something important might help.

Before we could spread the rotors of the Wessex, we received the word that 885 had crossed the coast safely and that Nowra's SAR helo now had control.

Even in the darkness the 2 grooves and black tyre marks on the round-down were amazing to see.

The following morning a further inspection showed the sequence of events quite clearly.

Firstly (and most obviously) the rubber marks started (I am guessing here) about 2 feet below deck horizontal, with onlookers amazed at the depth of the dents in the deck. Looking down the direction of (aircraft) travel, the black marks started diverging (u/c legs flexing outwards) followed by metal-on-metal scrape marks (brakes?) also diverging. Memory suggests that one wheel (left?) departed the aircraft, anyway there was certainly much deeper, outwards-flexing, gouges that side.

Further down the deck (just aft of the Seaplane Crane) and much further outboard were the scrape marks (with associated drop-tank white paint) showing the distance the aircraft slid on the two drop tanks – not very far as I remember. Had it not been for the tanks, I fear the night may have ended differently.

Signals re the accident started flying and the Navy released a press statement. Obviously the press put in requests to come aboard when we reached Sydney and, as they do, wanted to make more of the incident that was reality. Little did they know!





## Letters to the Editor



The two black marks had disappeared under “Flight Deck Grey” paint even before we came abeam of Kiama en-route to Sydney!!! “Big Jim” Willis didn’t let the grass grow.

When the 4th estate did come aboard and the “damage” was pointed out, it was a “so, what was the big deal” from most of them. In fact the photo of the rubber in the latest “Slipstream” is the first time I have seen the marks since that time.

The years may have diluted some specifics, but the memory remains. If someone else can clarify any of my thoughts, please feel free to do so.

*“Bomber”*

*John Brown*

### A Sight I’ll Never Forget

I was duty Armourer on 816 Squadron the night Phil Thompson landed back at NAS Nowra and watched the landing from outside H Hangar after his ramp strike.

There was a glow under the aircraft as he landed, fumes burning off I assume, and then just enough light to see the pilot leap fast out of the cockpit and bolt....

*Pete Doré*

### Memories

The article about landings on RN ships on page 11 of the March issue reminded me of two related incidents.

The first that came to mind was when John Dacosta and I were sent out in the Skyhawk to land on HMS *Hermes* for trials. John landed first and I recall that I found the approach to a larger deck than the *Melbourne* was luxurious. I managed a sound landing and as I got out of the aircraft, I was summoned to the bridge! I was astounded and wondered just what I could have done wrong to warrant such an order. When I got to the bridge I was welcomed by the Captain of the ship who remembered me from when we had met previously at RNAS Lossiemouth in Scotland and when I was on an Air Warfare Instructors Course flying the Hunter aircraft. He simply wanted to say “Hello”!

That led me to my second memory as, during the AWI Course our squadron was invited to the Captain’s residence at “Lossie” for drinks. The hospitality was very pleasant, so much so that a few of our Course found that we were the only remaining guests. When the Captain’s wife suggested to her husband that we should leave he insisted that we have another drink!

When we returned to the Wardroom one of our group, Paddy, suggested that we really needed another drink so we retired to his cabin for a malt whisky which we did NOT need. Paddy put on a recording of the “1812 Overture”, turned up the volume and opened the windows of his cabin. As we drank our whisky, Paddy pulled out his very expensive shot gun and loaded it in preparation for

the moment when the cannons ring out in the music. Sure enough, right in time with the music Paddy fired his gun and our third member acted as his “Loader” in readiness for the second round.

This set off an interesting sequence of events as follows:

The cabin filled with gun smoke;

The pellets landed on the Base Commander’s window in the Married Quarters;

The Duty Lieutenant-Commander (DLC) was despatched to investigate;

There was a cry of, “Someone has shot themselves in the carpark”;

Someone else who had been out for some illicit shooting rushed to stow their catch in their car boot before a patrol arrived;

Suddenly the poor old DLC arrived in our cabin and in the dense smoke confiscated Paddy’s gun;

Paddy with a calm but clear and stentorian tone, said to the DLC; “If you are taking my gun, Old Man, please ensure that you clean it thoroughly as it has just been fired”.

Needless to say that the next day the three of us were fronted to the Captain.

The two RN Officers were awarded a month of stoppage of grog.

I, as a Foreign Officer was reprimanded and it was suggested that I consider buying my friends drinks when needed.

This turned out to be a very expensive month for me and I can see why the Captain had remembered me!

*Brian Dutch.*

### Credit for LSO Photograph

The photo on page 9 of the March 2020 Slipstream should have been credited to myself.

One day I was on board and wanted to get a shot of an LSO and Skyhawk.

Attempting to get near the LSO platform, “Wings” (Ken Barnett) caught me and “requested” my presence in Flyco. Suitably chewed out, I was still determined to get the shot.

Edging my way on my back along the flight deck gutting (unseen from Flyco) I finally reached the platform, and took the photo as seen – the original is in colour. I presented a colour copy to Peter “GT” James.

*“Bomber”*

*John Brown*

*(Note: It is the principle of Slipstream to acknowledge the copyright of author and photographers. However, in this case the photographs of personnel were supplied by the LSOs and thus, I was unaware of the photograph’s origin. Had I been aware of the source you would have been acknowledged.. .Ed)*

# ***A Pilot's 'Birdseye View' of the Ditching of Wessex 821***



***HMAS Vampire 'nudges' her bow closer towards downed Wessex 821 with Ship's Divers in the water***

*(The story of Wessex 821 appeared in the March issue of Slipstream but as one of the pilots has come forward to reflect his take on the ditching his response appears below. . . . .Ed)*

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***By Trevor Rieck  
Co-Pilot of Wessex 821***

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One Friday afternoon, I was the co-pilot of a Wessex, with Murray Buckett as captain and the backseat crew of LCDR Colin Cooke-Priest RN and LACM Barnes for a mail run around the fleet which was exercising off the Nowra coast. 817 Squadron was having a banyan, so the mail run crew could eat but not drink. The barbecue was well underway when we got airborne; more about that later.

So we flew around the fleet, both RN and RAN ships, dropping mail and picking up mail and a pas-

senger, CMDR Phillmore RN, who we were told afterwards was getting over a breakdown - we don't know if the ditching was detrimental to his recovery but it was something he did not need.

Things were pretty rough at sea and by the time we got to HMAS *Vampire*, the stern was up and down like a yo-yo. I was flying it from the left hand seat. Although it was normal to do transfers from the right hand seat, which gave a better view, we often tended, for experience, to fly the transfer from the left hand seat, in any case the crewman guided the helicopter movements. We were also sharing the load as we had just done half a dozen transfers.

At some stage in the transfer I felt the helicopter needed excessive power to keep the attitude stable on the horizon (Unknown to me, the hook had snagged the guard rail on the deck and the ship stern descended at the same time).

The helicopter overpowered when the 25 tonne cable snapped (the Wessex could not lift that



much!). I looked across at Murray and he was looking me at the same time. I noticed that he had a bloodied welt on his right cheek, as the cable had whipped up, looping into the cockpit and on up to the rotor head.

We had by then drifted slightly away from the stern but the helicopter was descending and as I had seen the cable whip up on its way to the rotor head I made a snap decision and wound off the throttle and ditched the helicopter.

We landed in a copybook level fashion, Murray applied the rotor brake and we egressed the Wessex, inflated mae-west and dinghies, climbed into the dinghies and all looked well. A bit of a concern was felt when black fins appeared around us but they turned out to be dolphins.

*Vampire's* boat picked us up and we climbed aboard to be dried out. We were then told we would be transferred to HMAS *Melbourne*. We were kitted out and waited on the stern for the transfer. It was with apprehension that we saw a Wessex approaching, as we know that the aircrew had all been drinking at the banyan. We had no idea who would be flying it, nor how much they would have had to drink - but we made it.

The aftermath was a board of inquiry. When my turn came to be questioned, I was asked things like 'what was the oil pressure at the time'? How the hell was I expected to know - I had other things on my mind! Commander Air, Benny Matthews, told



**LACM Barnes, LEUT Buckett and SBLT Rieck  
aboard the rescue sea boat from HMAS *Vampire***

me later that there was serious consideration to court-martialing me, for whatever reason was never disclosed. He declined to proceed with the court-martial, thank goodness.

I felt the justification for my action to ditch was that, with the cable wrapping itself around the fully articulated rotor head with flapping hinges, lead and lag mechanisms and so on, we were not very far from uncontrollable flight.

On a lighter note we joined the famous Goldfish Club for all those who had survived a ditching.

Colin Cooke-Priest retired as a Rear Admiral and spent many years as Extra Gentleman Usher to HM the Queen in Buckingham Palace. His son was the first Captain of the new RN aircraft carrier HMS *Queen Elizabeth*.

## ***The Late CMDR GLEX (P) Charles Rex MID RAN***

**Y**ou may have learned of this from another source, but after a very welcome absence of FAA "bad news", I regret to advise of the passing, after a long illness, of Commander Charlie Rex at BUPA Woodend VIC, on 11 June. One of his sons, Ashley flew in from Japan. He, and Charlie's dog Bonney, were in loving attendance over recent weeks.

Sub Lieutenant Charlie Rex was a member of the 2nd Contingent of the Helicopter Flight Vietnam in 1968, where he was awarded a Mention in Dispatches. His Citation mentions, inter alia, that he flew "combat missions almost daily since his arrival in South Vietnam....has been quick to evacuate wounded from hostile Pick-Up Zones....under fire....even when a bullet narrowly missed his head after passing through the aircraft windshield....has remained calm..setting an admirable example for his men...".

After returning from Vietnam, Charlie transferred to fixed wing aviation and completed No 4

Skyhawk OFS in December 1970. After being granted a Permanent Commission, he served as:

- Senior Pilot 724 Squadron
- Commissioning Commanding Officer HMAS *Launceston* (FCPB)
- Executive Officer HMAS *Success*
- Commanding Officer HMAS *Penguin*.
- Joint Services Staff College
- Final Posting — Information Technology

I have been advised that due to COVID-19 travel and quarantine restrictions and the fact that Charlie's three sons are living/working overseas, no funeral is planned. However a memorial event will probably be arranged later, possibly in 2021. Condolence messages to the family may be sent to Ashley Rex at [ash.a.g.rex@gmail.com](mailto:ash.a.g.rex@gmail.com).

A very sad, and far too early, demise of a popular FAA Officer.

*John DaCosta*

# Flying Mosquitos and Being a Maintenance Test Pilot in the RN

*By Basil Nash*

There were about 130 Mosquitos transferred to the Navy during the period 1945 to early fifties. It started with carrier trials in 1945 with 'Winkle Brown' and others doing deck landing trials in HMS *Indefatigable* on one of the Fleet carriers in March 1944.

After about 10 fairly hairy take offs and landings, it was decided that it would be beyond the capability of the average pilot. This was long before the angled deck, so the deck configuration at the time meant that there was about six (6) feet between the starboard wing tip and the island as you went past and the port undercarriage leg was about six (6) feet in from the edge of the deck. The Mosquito being very prone to swing on take-off, this left very little margin for error. Apart from this the Mosquito never went to sea. I did the Twin Conversion course at RNAS Ford (HMS *Peregrine*) with 762 Squadron in April I June 1946.

We did 20 hours solo and dual on Oxfords plus three (3) hours night flying, then 20 hours on the Mosquito, flying the Mk 3 with dual controls, and the Mk 6 and also three (3) hours night flying. The course included single engine landings, made easier by the 2000 foot-runway. On take-off it was essen-



**790 RN Sea Mosquito Squadron**

tial to lead with one engine, and firm use of rudder, to prevent the swing starting and once the tail was up, you could open both engines up to full power, lift off about 110 knots and gain safety speed of 130 knots as quickly as possible.

You took off on wing tanks which were gravity tanks, as a safety measure and then switched to main tank as soon as you gained safety speed. To do this the pilot had to reach behind him and move the switches. The story goes of the Wren passenger who thought the pilot was being a bit free with his hands and gave them a good slap!! The passenger seat being slightly set back from that of the pilot.

In a Foxtel programme 'Air Warriors—the P38 Lightning' seen [here](#) (online subscribers only) a statement was made that the Lightning was changed to handed propellers in 1943 to eliminate accidents caused by swinging. The D.H. Hornet in 1948 had them so I wonder why it was never considered for the Mosquito? It would have certainly saved a lot of accidents.

The Navy at the time had virtually no aircraft with tricycle undercarriage, so everything was a tail dragger and naval procedure was that you did a three (3)-point landing. At shore bases in single engine aircraft you joined the downwind leg



**Sea Mosquito wings folded with a slung torpedo  
ready for action**





**An RN Mosquito 39 commonly used  
for Photography and Target towing  
- Primarily out of Malta.  
Note: the all glass nose**

at 1000 feet, and did a curved approach down on to the runway. At sea you did the downwind leg at 300 feet, with a similar curved approach being guided by the Batsman on the final approach.

The approach speed would be about five (5) knots above the stall, with lots of power so, when you hit the deck or runway, you stopped there. With a twin you had excellent forward visibility so you could do a straight-in approach on finals. The Mosquito, Mk 6 or 33, would stall with full flap and undercarriage down at about 93 knots, so we used to come over the fence at 97, in a three point position, with lots of power on and I found when you got to about 10 feet you pulled hard back on the stick and in fact, did a high-speed stall straight on to the ground and there you stopped. It may not have been the accepted way but it worked every time. I did it when flying with an Instructor at Culdrose, and put the fear of God up him, but he had to admit it worked.

The RAF because of their long runways used to wheel land the Mosquito at anything up to 140 knots, so when landing at RAF airfields the naval pilots as a matter of honour used to plonk the Mosquito down on the end of the runway and if possible, turn off at the first intersection. It used to worry the RAF Air Traffic Controllers, who had never seen this done before.

On completion of the course, in July 1946, some people joined 811 Squadron at Ford, but I went to 790 Squadron at RNAS Dale (HMS *Goldcrest*) in South Wales.

It was a mixed squadron with Seafire 3s and Mosquito 25s. The latter were Canadian with Packard Merlin engines (i.e. less powerful than the Rolls

Merlins, in that maximum power was +12" boost instead of +18". The squadron task was to work with the Radar school next door at Kete to train RN navigators to become Fighter Direction Officers (FDO) This meant learning to control aircraft in the air by ground radar. The operational area was the Irish Sea to the west of Dale up to 100 miles out.

The Mosquitos could work singly but, for safety, the single engine aircraft worked in pairs. Mae-Weests were standard equipment. The Mosquito 25s were replaced with Mk 6s at the end of '46 and then 33s in early 1947. Without doubt the 33 with the 4 bladed airscrews was the nicest of all the Mosquitos to fly.

One aircraft in pair was the "bomber" and the other the "fighter" and it was the job of the FDO at Kete to vector the fighter on to the incoming bomber. The fighter and bomber were supposed to be 500 feet apart vertically but this didn't always happen and we had some spectacular near misses. It was good that we were able to take the navigators up in the Mosquitos, so they were able to see what happened in the air, and how quickly it happened.

We normally did the exercises at 10,000 feet and we happened to be in the direct line from Heathrow to Shannon in Ireland, so the Constellations used to drag over at this height. On occasions they used to come over and if we were not busy, we used to formate on them. One Mosquito on each side and in quite tight. The passengers found it a great joke but I don't know what the drivers thought. They used to wave us vigorously off, but as they were mostly ex-service pilots nobody was ever reported!! RNAS Dale was a conventional three (3) runway airfield with a 1000 foot, 1200 foot and 1400 foot runways,

but what made it more interesting was that four (4) of the six (6) runways had about 100 yards of grass at the end of the tarmac then straight down a 200 foot cliff to the sea. It says a great deal about the high standard of maintenance that in the 18 months that I was there we never had an engine failure on take-off or landing. The maintenance at the time was part service and part civilian.

The weather factor at RNAS Dale was point five (5), which meant you flew three (3) days out of six (6), if you were lucky, and the area was prone to sea fogs which came in very quickly from the Irish Sea. When aircraft were airborne, the call would come over the radio that fog was coming in. All exercises were cancelled and everyone airborne would make a dirty dive for home, and you made jolly certain you landed quickly. If you couldn't get in, it meant a diversion to Cornwall or somewhere south usually for a day or more with no clothes or gear, so the circuit procedure was not always gentlemanly.

RNAS Dale closed at the end of 1947 and the squadron was transferred to RNAS Culdrose, (HMS *Seahawk*). The work was carried on from there until Kete was closed and then the whole operation was transferred to Airwork who in fact then operated the Fleet Requirement Unit for the Navy. I think a lot of the Mosquitos were taken over by Airwork.

I went to RNAS Yeovilton (HMS *Heron*) in Jan. 1948 to do the Naval Maintenance Test Pilots course. We flew Seafire 15, Firefly 1, Barracuda 3, Harvards, Sea Otter, one of the more horrible aircraft, Tiger Moth and an Anson 19, The course lasted 3 months. The point of the course was to have Maintenance Test pilots at all Naval Air Stations so that all new and aircraft off major repair could be tested to a set standard before they went to the squadrons.

While there, I was asked to move the prototype Mk 33 Mosquito LR387 from Worthy Down to storage at Yeovilton. Worthy Down was a small grass airfield with a hill in the middle, and I was a bit worried if I would have room to get off. So I put the tail against the fence, 15 degrees of flap, opened up to maximum power on the brakes and let go. Although there was a little wind, we got airborne, in the middle of the airfield off the top of the hill. After a good beat up of Worthy Down, my passenger AA3 Leach and I returned to Yeovilton. What happened to this aircraft later I don't know, but I assume it was broken up or went to Israel.

In April 1948 I was posted to RNAS Stretton (HMS *Blackcap*), near Warrington, as one of the MTPs. It was the home of No 1 Ferry Flight, a storage and maintenance depot, and 1831 RNVR



***Fairey Barracuda Mk.III of 713 Sqn  
RNAS Ronaldsway October 1944***

Squadron, who flew at weekends in Seafire 17s.

The ferry Flight meant aircraft were coming in and out all the time, and during my time there I flew Seafire 15, 17, and 47. The latter really bore very little similarity to the old Spits because it had contra props, and a laminar flow wing and a beefed up undercarriage. The thing you had to be most careful about was that with the tail up there was about six (6) inches clearance between the prop tips and the runway.

Other aircraft were Tiger Moths, Ansons, various Dominies, which we used as taxi aircraft for the Ferry Flight; Sea Fury 10 and 11; Firefly 3, 5, and Trainer Barracuda 3 and 5; Sea Hornet 20, Firebrand 5, Oxford, Harvard, Sea Otter, and Auster 5.

The Mosquitos that passed through were Mk 3, 6, 16, 33, 34, 37, and 39. Apart from the 3s, most of these went to Fleet requirement Squadrons and most of the 39s went to Malta. The Mk 39 was a specific requirement for the Navy and was used for photography and target towing. The conversion of mostly 16s was done by General Aircraft at Lasham and they came to Stretton before being ferried to Malta. The conversion which consisted of a square all glass nose totally compromised the flying characteristics of the Mosquito and increased the stalling speed by 10 knots and generally it was fairly horrible to fly.

During my six (6) years flying I had three (3) accidents, all in Mosquitos, which with one exception showed how forgiving the Mosquito was. In the first I had a faulty airspeed indicator in a Mk6, and through inexperience I did not realise this fact and stalled out at about 60 feet on the final approach to Heston Airfield. The aircraft hit the ground at about 100 knots and the undercarriage came up through the wings and it stopped in about five (5) yards. No fire, no disintegration, and my passenger and I hopped out. My passenger had a bottle of scotch in a suitcase in the back and it was in one piece!

The second one was at Stretton in a 39 when I had engine trouble on one engine and did a single engine landing. Having got too far down the runway, I was running out of runway fast and there was a large pond at the end of the runway into which I



had no intention of finishing up, so I lifted the undercarriage. You stop remarkably quickly!

The last proved the point made in the initial article by David Ogilvy on flying the Mosquito. "...if you have an engine failure on take-off or landing and are under safety speed you shut the other engine and land straight ahead. If you try anything else you will be dead."

In my case I was coming in to land, quite normally in a Mk. 16, with undercarriage down and full flap and on reaching round out, I decided to do an overshoot and go round again, and as I opened up both engines to full power, the port engine stopped.

I was about 50 feet up with a speed of about 100 knots. I started to get the undercarriage up and took off some flap, in an attempt to get up safety speed, but realised very quickly that it wasn't going to work. I throttled back the starboard engine and sat and waited. I knew the country ahead was mostly farm land, but I didn't have a lot of choice in the matter.

The aircraft hit the ground about 2 miles from the end of the runway, and started shedding bits. The propellers went first, followed by most of the wings as it went through some trees, the tail, starboard engine, and the remains which consisted of the cockpit and the port engine came to rest about 500 yards from where it hit the ground. The survival of my passenger and me was greatly increased by the fact that the ground had been ploughed fields.



*The aftermath of my Stretton Accident*

Once the aircraft stopped, we both bailed out very quickly! It is funny that one automatic reactions are to carry out normal routine. I remember holding very tightly to the control column for support, only to find when the aircraft stopped that it wasn't attached to anything at the bottom! Apart from a lot of bruises, neither of us were hurt.

I was flying again a couple of days later [no counselling in those days] and I don't think it affected my flying. There was no doubt that someone upstairs was sitting on my shoulder that day. .

The finale to the story, is that when the accident report came back from the investigation it was found that a bleed hole in the block between the high and low pressure oil systems was blocked with carbon, which had starved the low pressure system of oil causing it to seize up. The engine had done 3 hours since major overhaul.

In all I did about 380 hours in Mosquitos out of a total of 1010 hours, and of the 130 odd Mosquitos in the Navy I flew about 70 of them.

## ***Does Anyone Know What This Device Is?***



Ailsa Chittick, the Fleet Air Arm Museum Collectors Curator, has sought 'Slipstream' assistance in identifying this 'tool' above the ruler.

Any help would be greatly appreciated.

You can either contact Ailsa direct at the Museum on phone (02) 4424-2194, mobile 0418 146 945, or Email [ailsa.chittick@defence.gov.au](mailto:ailsa.chittick@defence.gov.au). If no contact direct your call to the Editor on 0481 302 760 who will pass the information on.

# Lost men and women of 'Shark 02' remembered



***XO HMAS Albatross, CDR Nigel Rowan RAN lays a wreath at the 'Shark 02' Memorial during the service to remember those lost in the Sea King helicopter crash on 2 April***

***By Ms Dallas McMaugh and  
Photographs by CPOIS Cameron Martin***

In the close-knit world of Naval Aviation, 2 April is a sombre day for many personnel as they remember and reflect on the loss of nine Australian Defence Force personnel who died when Sea King helicopter 'Shark 02' crashed while on a humanitarian support mission on the Indonesian island of Nias in 2005.

Among those who died were Lieutenants Paul Kimlin, Jonathan King, and Mathew Goodall, and Leading Seaman Aircrewman Scott Bennet, all aircrew from 817 Squadron at HMAS Albatross.

A service is usually held on this day at a memorial located outside the Albatross Chapel.

The memorial's location in the home of Navy's Fleet Air Arm serves as a tangible reminder of Navy's history of service and sacrifice.

The memorial also has an enduring connection with the Shark 02 families who were involved in every stage from design to construction, when the memorial was refurbished and rededicated in 2014.

Due to current physical distancing requirements, personnel and family were unable to gather for the service this year, however Chaplain Steve Estherby conducted a private memorial ceremony, which has been uploaded to social media platforms. This can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/403158509>.

"This year is the 15th anniversary of this tragedy

and while I deeply regret that we were not able to conduct a public memorial service, I'm pleased we found a way to mark this important event and remember those who died and their loved ones are important to the wider Navy family." Chaplain Estherby said.

In a sombre and solitary moment, which reflected a wider loss still keenly felt by many personnel, HMAS Albatross' Executive Officer Commander Nigel Rowan placed a wreath at the memorial on behalf of all those who could not be there.

"This is a place of profound memories," Commander Rowan said.

"Many still carry the loss of their friends and colleagues in their hearts

and minds.

"While we were unable to assemble as a group to share that loss, I know many others will also be thinking of them today," he said.

Chaplain Estherby concluded his address by saying, "We remember them so that we do not forget what they have shown us. Faithful service and sacrifice for others. We need their example in the midst of the current crisis and we stand on their shoulders."

The Royal Australian Navy remembers all nine members of the Australian Defence Force who lost their lives in the 'Shark 02' helicopter incident. They were:

**Squadron Leader Paul McCarthy**

**Lieutenant Matthew Davey**

**Lieutenant Jonathan King**

**Lieutenant Paul Kimlin**

**Lieutenant Matthew Goodall**

**Flight Lieutenant Lynne Rowbottom**

**Petty Officer Stephen Slattery**

**Sergeant Wendy Jones**

**Leading Seaman Scott Bennet**



# ***LHD capability expanded through First Of Class Flight Trials***

*By LCDR Christopher Thornton and  
Photographs by ABIS Jarrod Mulvihill*

**F**irst of Class Flight Trials on HMAS *Adelaide* are providing the ship's Aviation Support team with vital training and the Royal Australian Navy with increased operational capability.

The trials off the Queensland coast determine the safe operating limits of the MH-60R 'Romeo' helicopter on the ship in a range of sea states and wind speeds, by day and by night.

Lieutenant Commander Chris Broadbent of the Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Trials Unit (AMAFTU) said the trials increase *Adelaide's* operational capability and provide a war-fighting edge, particularly surface and underwater warfare.

"We have a three-week period where we fly the



***Petty Officer Aviation Technician Avionics Nicholas Simmons enters test flight data from an MH-60R helicopter into the computer onboard HMAS Adelaide***

helicopters day and night, in different sea states and approaching different locations on the flight deck under varying environmental conditions and aircraft configurations," Lieutenant Commander Broadbent said.

"Even the aircraft's behaviour in different ambient air temperature will provide us with important information."

The AMAFTU is not the only unit to benefit from conducting flight trials on board.

*Adelaide's* Aviation Support team is also conducting deck handling and crash-on-deck exercises to improve their familiarity with the MH-60R helicopter.

Chief Petty Officer Aviation Justin Penrose said the flight trials provided vital training to the ship's aviation support sailors.

"By taking part in the flight trials my team has been able to complete a number of evolutions such as ground taxiing and running take-offs," Chief Petty Officer Penrose said.

"This has been a great opportunity for them to develop their understanding of the roles and responsibilities required of an Aviation Support Sailor at sea."

Aviation Support sailors manage the movements and deck systems of the Navy's fleet of advanced military helicopters both on shore and at sea.

The trials ensure Navy maintains its readiness to conduct Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations in support of the Australian public and our neighbours.



***An MRH-90 helicopter prepares to land onboard HMAS Adelaide with MH-60R helicopter running in the foreground during Flight Trials***



# The Marum Family's Collection of Wings of Gold



*By Jack McCaffrie and  
Trevor Rieck*

**D**ick Marum's adventures of navy life; war, multiple naval postings, career change, marriage, procreation, were followed by further adventures in civilian life in Canada and Florida.

After resigning from the Navy, in a brave move, Dick emigrated with his wife and five children to Canada. He was employed as a Financial Consultant with Merrill Lynch Toronto, Canada for three years before relocating to Palm Beach area, in Florida retiring in 2005 after a successful career in the finance industry.

That is how Dick came to live in Florida for the second time and gain American citizenship. The first time, 30 odd years earlier, was with the RAN in Pensacola in 1967/68 for flying training.



**CMDR Bippus USN, CO HT8, Dick and  
host family Marg and Nate Rotoreau**

Dick qualified, at 25, for his United States Navy Wings of Gold on 9 February 1968.

What would Dick, who in 1968 was not yet married, and an Australian to boot, have thought of the possibility that one day, one of his children would graduate from the same squadron with the Wings of Gold and a daughter at that? When Dick was under training there were no female aviation candidates - the age of enlightenment had not been switched on.

Victoria Marum, his youngest daughter, received her Wings of Gold on 25 September 2009, nearly 42 years later. Victoria was 25 at the time. "I was winged by my parents. My mother pinned on my wings, and two years earlier dad read the oath to swear me in as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy", Victoria said.

Technology had moved on since Dick graduated and Victoria trained in the T-34C Turbo Mentor and the TH57B/C Sea Ranger. She was selected for front line ASW duty and flew the MH-60R Seahawk. After many front line tours she is now a Reservist, as a Lieutenant Commander, and resides in Washington pursuing a civilian career.



**Crystelle Marum pinning Victoria's wings,  
at the HT8 Ceremony**





***TH-57B/C Sea Ranger on the left and the T-34C Turbo Mentor on the right which Victoria trained on.***

As a Reservist, Victoria is currently assigned to the Navy's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Detachment. In this capacity, she supports NATO missions in joint-multinational operations and exercises, providing security oversight and sharing expertise and recommendations with military leaders in the Alliance. Though she is not currently flying for her Reservist duties, she looks forward to getting airborne again this summer and qualifying as a civilian fixed-wing pilot ("just for fun!").

In 2018, Dick attended the RANHFV citation for Gallantry at the Canberra War Memorial. He was joined by his wife Crystelle, their eldest daughter Tiffany with her daughter Alexandra, and Victoria. Victoria was invited to lay a wreath at the Pool of Remembrance and was honoured to participate in the sombre occasion.



***"LBoH" is Victoria callsign . . . Stands for "Little Ball of Hate" - Pronounced "elbow"***



***Victoria laid a wreath at the Canberra presentation of the RANHFV Unit Citation for Gallantry, which she attended along with her father, mother and eldest sister formerly a GP in Yass before returning home to the US***





## News from the FAA Museum



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**By Stuart Harwood**  
**Manager & Senior Curator**

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**As the saying goes ...*How time flies when you're having fun!* I've just chalked up a year in the chair and it's well past time that I provided the readership with an update on how our Museum is traveling.**

Firstly, a long overdue thank you to my predecessor, Terry Hetherington. In January 2019, Terry retired after more than 12 years as the Fleet Air Arm Museum (FAAM) Manager. Terry's contribution to our cultural heritage was recognised on Australia Day 2020 when he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM). The FAAM staff wish Terry the best on this next leg of his journey.

On 15 April 2019, I commenced as the Manager and Senior Curator. For those I have yet to meet, I now have over 43 years in Defence providing capability to the RAN, the first 33 years in uniform. The RAN FAA is my family and I have developed an

abiding interest in our history and heritage. Besides, every type I flew in the RAN is now in this Museum, what better place for me.

This past year has been very busy with a wide reaching review of Navy Heritage standing up, the Branch embarking on a much needed governance overhaul, invigorating a collection rationalisation program, whilst conducting business as ... unusual, with bushfires at our doorstep over Christmas and now the COVID-19 restrictions limiting our visitations and Museum opening. The Museum remains closed until further notice.

While we have not been able to share the collection with the public, or employ our volunteers, we have not been idle.

### **Ons and Offs**

The FAAM has an estimated collection of 10,000 items accommodated in the Museum, five buildings on HMAS *Albatross* and several shipping containers. Approximately 2,000 of these items are fully catalogued in the Navy Heritage Collection. We have embarked on a significant rationalisation

program with a clear focus on RAN FAA history and heritage.

22 and 23 October 2019 saw the arrival of PC9/A A23-028 and fuselage segments of HS748 N15-709 respectively. Generations of FAA pilots earned their wings in the PC9. Our example is now in storage until we can



**PC9 A23-028 Meccano Edition**





***HS748 N15-709 arrives home after a 19-year absence***

make room in the Museum. N15-709 had been on open air display at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown and was offered to Navy at short-notice and incomplete. We were able to acquire the fuselage sections encompassing the cockpit/navigator and Electronic Warfare Training System (EWTs) operator stations, which will be developed into a EWTs exhibit as resources permit. If any members are able to share information on the EWTs, particularly photographs of the operator stations, we would be grateful.

Mark Davis, a Shoalhaven native, donated his painting of Wessex 31Bs 831 & 834 in formation over Merroo Meadow. Mark's painting is a very welcome addition to the collection of FAA aircraft paintings.

Commencing in 2018, the Navy Heritage Branch has worked with Military Disposals to divest 16 excess aircraft and a large holding of excess spares and equipment. Of note, Firefly WJ109 and Wessex N2-216 are now with the Australian War Memorial and the Meteor, 1 x C47 and the Lockheed L10 were transferred to RAAF Heritage. The remaining aircraft were sold to private interests.

Once COVID-19 movement restrictions ease, the privately owned MIG15 and MIG17 stored in J Hangar will move to HARS and the S-51 Dragonfly, which graced the Museum conservation area for many years, will be transferred to RAAF Heritage at Amberley.

### **Into the Future**

The Museum's systems, particularly IT, are obsolete and becoming increasingly costly to maintain and Business Cases arguing the introduction of contemporary IT systems and practices to better achieve Defence Heritage objectives are in development. This financial year the Museum will take delivery of a high-end document scanner to establish a digitisation project for the thousands of historic documents and publications held in the archive. Future procurements will look to establish a dedicated Heritage Network to better serve Navy and the public.

Project Managers have been appointed and pro-



***Mark & Emily Davis w/painting***

ject planning will commence shortly to restore a number of aircraft to museum display standard, commencing with the Sea Fury and Auster.

In the longer-term, a revitalisation of the display hall to better engage younger generations and present our heritage may be a possibility.

With a permanent staff of three, the Museum looks to volunteers to make these projects viable. If you can spare some of your time to help preserve our past for future generations, please contact the Museum on 02 4424-1920 or [navy.heritage@defence.gov.au](mailto:navy.heritage@defence.gov.au).



***S-55 off to become B&B accommodation***



***Hunter bound for Bulls Creek WA***

# HARS—Naval Heritage Flight

Professor Michael Hough AM RFD ED, Navy Heritage Flight (NHF) Project Leader for the Historical Aviation Restoration Society (HARS) provides the following update to this flights activities.

These actions are supported by HARS major sponsor Air Affairs which is located in the south-west corner of NAS Nowra where 'Masling Airlines' was once located. Air Affairs also provides added storage for some NHF aircraft that are still undergoing maintenance.

HARS is conforming to all required COVID 19 health measures. It is closed for visitors, and no HARS members are attending the HARS main sites - other than for absolutely essential maintenance and security related activities. This must be approved in advance before a HARS volunteer is admitted to the facility.

All NHF air frames are on display or in safe storage, and are being worked on where possible, with only essential services being attempted.

A digitally remastered (1hr 20 min) coverage of 'Wings Over Illawarra' 2013 Celebrating Naval Aviation— is available at:-

<https://www.harsmuseumshop.com.au/collections/digital-downloads/products/wings-over-illawarra-2013-celebrating-naval-aviation>

Another DVD is also available on Tracker 844. More details can be found on Page 13.

The present state of NHF airframes are:

## ***Navy C-47 & Tracker 845 returning on 21 June***

The long-awaited travel permits are now in place for the ex-Navy C-47 and Tracker 845 from Air Affairs, Nowra to be transported by road to Albion Park Rail. The move is planned for Sunday 21st June.

Subject to traffic and any un-foreseen hitches these aircraft should be at HARS by mid-afternoon.

The C-47 has previously been readied for transport with the wings already at HARS Albion Park. Tracker 845 has recently had its props and part of its tail plane removed- making it ready for road transport. HARS volunteers have finalised the applications for CASA.

## ***Other NHF Air Frames***

As previously mentioned, our remaining NHF air frames remain on display at HARS or are in safe storage as in the case of the two Bell UH-1B Iroquois helicopters at Air Affairs, Nowra

Hopefully, CASA remote location approval appli-



***C-47 Dakota without wings or engines located at Air Affairs Nowra Airfield—one of four C-47s the RAN procured***

cation will be finalised soon when HARS volunteers can officially commence on the Hueys' return to flight status under our CAR30 CASA Approval.

HARS is due to reopen on 15 June 2020 under a HARS COVID-19 safety management plan, a requirement of the NSW Government. For further information ring (02) 4257 4333 or check the HARS website [here](#) (online subscribers only)

## ***National Secretary Report for June 2020***

Greetings Fellow Members

This is the last time I will be presenting this report to you all as I am handing over the reins of the National Job to a person that most of you will have come in contact with either in your time in the Andrew or as manager of the Fleet Air Arm Museum, namely Mr Terry Hetherington who I am sure will continue the good work carried out by our past secretaries. Terry's contact details will appear in both the Slipstream and on the Website and at the end of this report

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have made my time as national secretary a little easier and sometimes harder so I wish you all well and keep healthy.

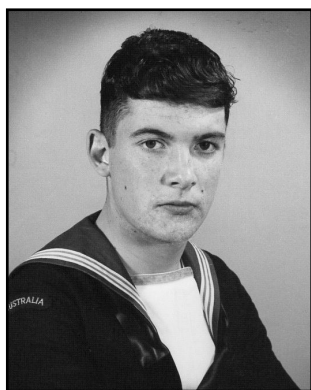
With the situation in the country as it is at the current time your national executive has not been able to hold a face to face Executive Meeting but are keeping abreast of things via emails and phone calls.

So now I can concentrate on catching up on my fishing.

*Yours Aye  
Dick (Pincher) Martin*



# First Hand Account of Gannet Crew Rescue



*By David Bryant*

**I was an Ordinary Seaman "Watch on Deck" allocated to the Starboard seaboard (which was a designated as the rescue boat) as it could be dropped quickly whilst the ship was underway on the night of 24 February 1966.**

It was fitted with 'Kitchener's Gear' – a combination rudder and directional propulsion delivery system for relatively slow speed displacement boats. It turns the rudder into a directional thruster, and allows the engine to maintain constant revolutions and direction of drive shaft rotation while altering thrust by use of a control which directs thrust forward or aft. Only the rudder pivots; the propeller itself is on a fixed shaft and does not.

During flying operations, night and day, both Port and Starboard Sea Boats would be manned continually by the "Watch on Deck", consisting of a PO Seaman I/C, and a boat's crew of a Leading Seaman, Boats' Driver and two Seaman handlers (Able Seaman or Ordinary Seaman).

When Peter's Gannet went over the side when his arrestor wire broke, he was lucky enough to be hung up in one of the Port Side Gun Sponsons (Aircraft generally ditched to port, as that was the nature of the angled flight deck).

Both the Port and Starboard sea boats were launched "Davit dropped" with HMAS *Melbourne* going full astern to take the way off and trying to prevent the Gannet from being blown off the sponson – Fortunately it was still being held by the severed arrestor wire.

The Port sea boat was first on the scene, and Peter and his Pilot were still strapped into their seats, although at some stage they released their life raft.

The enclosed photograph shows the Port Sea Boat (No 2) after having picked up Peter (white helmet between the falls) after they undid their safety harnesses and dropped into the ocean. They had released their liferaft because the rescue boat had not yet got to them. The rescue boat recovered the liferaft which can be seen still inflated in the photograph.

HMAS *Vampire* who was the RESDES (Rescue Destroyer) came alongside and helped illuminate the rescue with her large 18" Searchlights/Signal Lamp.

I was employed in No 1 (Starboard) sea boat recovering all the "bits and pieces" which had fallen from the Gannet when it crashed.

I think that the whole episode took about 6-8 hours, and we were all pretty much exhausted after the event. From memory, the weather wasn't very nice at all.

Years later, I was privileged to serve with Commander Sandy Coulson CSC RAN when she was the Executive Officer of HMAS *Platypus* and I was the Senior Warrant Officer in the Submarine Squadron, not knowing that over 20 years earlier I was involved in the rescue of her husband!"



**The 32ft cutter that picked up Albie Fyfe and Peter Coulson. Note the Coxswain handling the Tiller and 'Kitchener Gear' to control movement and direction.**

## Victoria's Report for period ending June 2020

*By Mal Smith*

**G**reetings to all members from the Victoria Division. Hopefully all members are safe and well during this difficult period.

This may well be the shortest, least newsworthy report on record. I'm afraid there isn't much to report from this part of the world. Since our last meeting in early February ( AGM ) we have not been able to hold meetings which I suspect is the same in other divisions.

The cancellation of the ANZAC Day March and after march reunion, the temporary closure of our meeting venue the Mission to Seafarers and the postponing of our June meeting has meant that other than

a few emails and phone calls there has been little action.

We are currently investigating the possibility of replacing our June meeting with a virtual meeting using Zoom.

By now I would normally be starting to arrange our Annual Dinner and Memorial Service at HMAS *Cerberus* scheduled for late August. Clearly this is not possible at the moment and it is not certain that these events will take place this year. Currently HMAS *Cerberus* is subject to the same social distancing and no gathering in large groups as the rest of the population. There is no way of knowing when this situation will change. As the old Chinese saying goes "May you live in interesting times". Whoever it was that first uttered these words may well have had our current situation in mind.

# A Landing Signals Officer History



"LSO Diploma" signed by RN batting legends Bill Hawley and Geoff Higgs

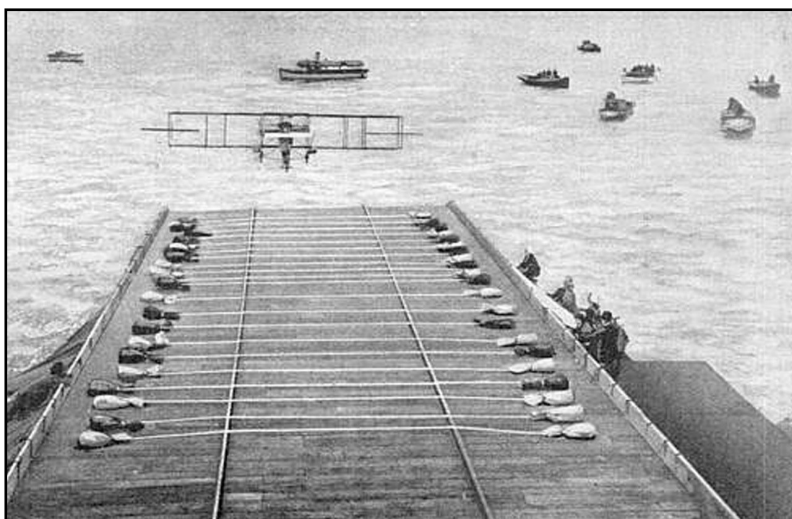
By Fred Lane

Thank you, Graham Quick for your *Slipstream*, March 2020, Tracker and Skyhawk LSO article. To step back a little, history tells us that the first deck landing experiments were conducted with the ship at anchor or travelling slowly in smooth water with no help from a Landing Signals Officer. When did LSOs start guiding aircraft onto aircraft carriers at sea and what is their future?

Pioneer pilots always had plenty of goofers, but they deck landed otherwise unaided. In January 1911 Eugene Ely was the first to land aboard a ship, the heavy cruiser USS *Pennsylvania*. In August 1917 Squadron Commander Dunning successfully emulated that feat twice on HMS *Furious*'s fore-deck landing platform when underway, but he ditched and was killed attempting a late wave-off from his third approach. With a new 91 metre landing platform tacked on aft, *Furious* launched a highly successful raid in inclement weather on the German airship base at Tondern, Southern Jutland, 19 July 1918. However, the turbulence generated by *Furious*'s broad midships superstructure and

funnel were reportedly so lethal that, instead of risking landing back aboard the ship, all pilots of the seven raiding Sopwith Camels elected either to ditch or seek asylum ashore in neighbouring Denmark.

The USN was the first to experiment with the LSO or "Paddles" concept. Aboard USS *Langley*, new pilots learning how to deck land in 1922 reported that while the executive officer, CMDR Ken Whiting, was filming each landing from the port quarter, they were



Eugene Ely, flying a Curtiss Pusher, launched from the USS Birmingham 14 November 1910. On 18 January 1911 he made the first deck landing on the USS Pennsylvania.

Note: the makeshift arrestor gear!



aided by his body language. They could still see Whiting even when the deck ahead was obscured by their aircraft's engine. One pilot was having a particularly difficult time. Whiting, as a last resort, grabbed a couple of sailors' caps to emphasise his hand positions.

By the mid-1930s, new -fangled Fairey Swordfish were approaching RN carriers at a then breathtaking 55 knots or more. The first pilot of an embarking squadron to land his Stringbag on the carrier might jump out and race to the port aft quarter of the flight deck to wave in his fellow pilots. Some pilots were better than others in this role. The better ones in the RN were designated DLCOs (Deck Landing Control Officers, or Batsmen). They were especially useful in rough seas and with torch wands at night.

In 1922 the Japanese Navy led the world by commissioning INS Hoshō, the first ship to be built from the keel up and commissioned as an aircraft carrier. More carriers and aircraft followed. By the time of the six-carrier Pearl Harbour raid the Japanese were well ahead of the rest of the world in carrier aircraft design, numbers of carriers and how to operate multiple carriers together. Instead of a DLCO, the INS chose a unique coloured light display to help pilots. The glideslope angle could be adjusted for aircraft type and



**The 1918 HMS Furious had an aft landing deck added to its forward flying off deck. In early 1920 she was converted into a flush deck carrier with a very welcome tiny starboard island superstructure.**

pilots saw two conical arrays of red and green lights. The aim was to keep the green cone just above the red cone. Red lights alone meant far too low. A green cone well above a red cone meant way too high. Meanwhile, though not employing an LSO, a very nimble and brave red flag signal officer stationed roughly amidships might initiate a foul deck wave off.

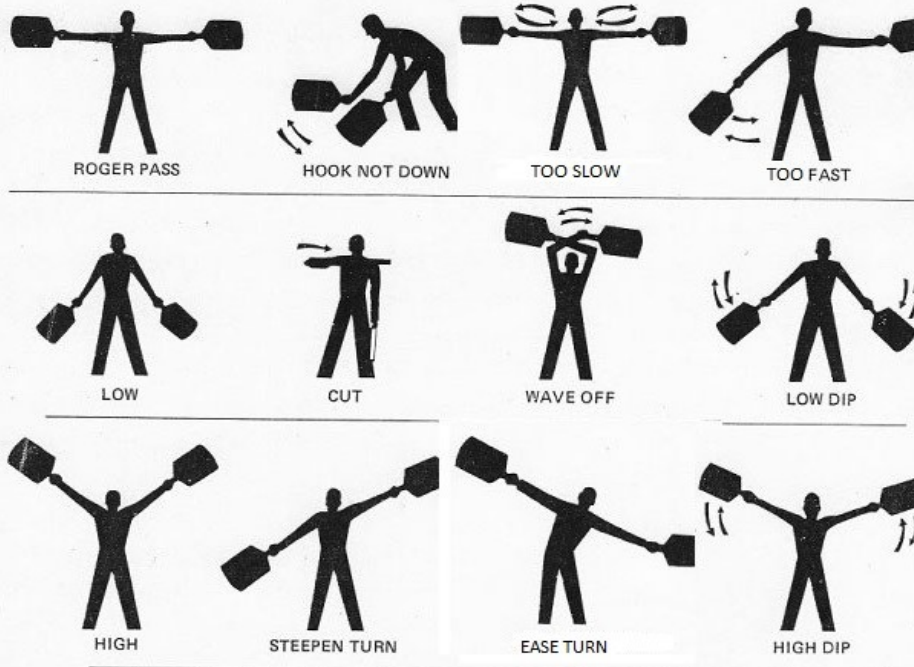
In the late 1930s and 1940s newer aircraft came with faster approach speeds and demands for safe, all weather and night-capable flight decks. Deck landing accident rates were high in WW2. Sometimes aircraft design was a problem. For instance, the RN's Supermarine Seafire, a Spitfire derivative, might have been an excellent RAF fighter but it had a long nose that obscured the flight deck on finals. Additionally, the undercarriage was weak, it had a narrow track and was

highly sprung. The slightest misjudged touchdown or moving deck might result in a high bounce and barrier. The USN's Vought F4U Corsair was also an excellent fighter, better than the Seafire, but its nose also obscured the flight deck. Early model Corsairs also had a serious "Ensign killer" no-notice wing drop at low carrier approach speeds. Initially banned from carriers, those rejects were welcomed with open arms by the shore-based Marines fighting the Japanese in Guadalcanal.

USN and RN carriers rarely operated together, but they did from time to time and it was glaringly apparent that batting signals and landing circuit procedures should be standardised, if for no other reason than aircrew safely cross-decking following an emergency. Some batting signals were dangerously different. The "wave-off" and a few other signals looked

## LANDING SIGNALS OFFICER (LSO)

### Signals



## ***The USN defines the Role of the Landing Signals Officer (LSO NATOPS 1.5):***

**T**he landing signal officer's primary responsibility is the safe and expeditious recovery of non-V/STOL fixed-wing aircraft aboard ship.

The employment of high-performance aircraft and the necessity for all weather operations have placed ever increasing demands on the LSO's skill and judgment. Through training and experience, he is capable of correlating factors of wind, weather, aircraft capabilities, ship configuration, pilot experience, etc., in order to provide optimum control and assistance in aircraft landings.

The LSO is also directly responsible for training pilots in carrier landing techniques. In this re-

gard, he must constantly monitor pilot performance, schedule and conduct necessary ground training, counsel and debrief individual pilots, and certify their carrier readiness and qualification.

The pilot and LSO form a professional and disciplined team, both ashore and afloat. The LSO strives to develop the pilot's confidence, judgment, maximum effort, technical proficiency, and personal interest. The pilot must rely on the LSO's experience and ability to prepare him for optimum effectiveness as a carrier pilot.

much the same but a few, like the RN "go higher" and "go lower" signals, meant exactly the opposite "you are high" and "you are low", respectively, in the USN system. Close in, over the last 100 metres or so, pilots flying piston-engined aircraft at 95 knots or more had no time to ponder the meaning of signals. They trained hard to develop reflexive responses. Once learned, those reflexes were well-ingrained and not easily changed.

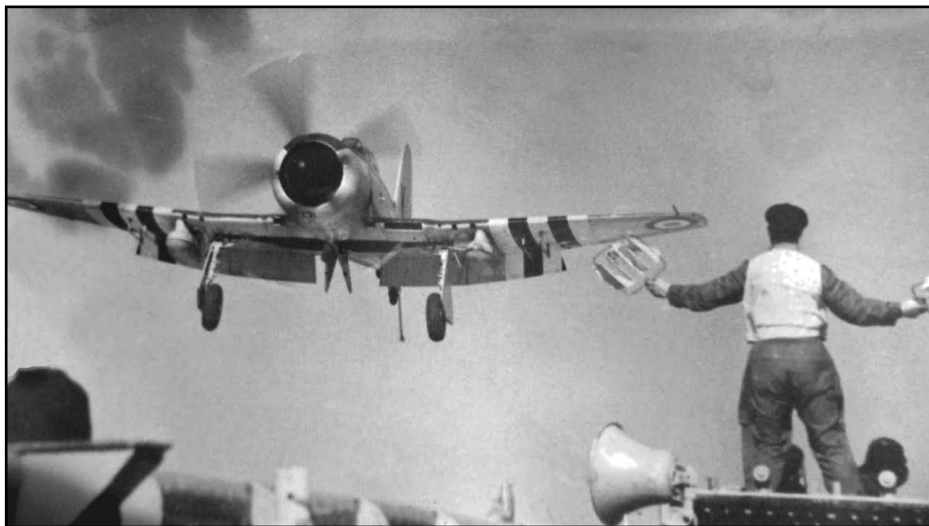
In the USN both the engine "cut" and "wave-off" were mandatory. In the RN, the "wave-off" was equally mandatory but a brave enough pilot might well choose a "wave-off" instead of cut and he might even re-apply "wave-off" power if he bounced high enough. Other differences, such as a slightly different approach and the landing flair, were relatively easy to manage.

The USN and RN systems flew different touch-down techniques. The RN DLCO batsmen controlled the aircraft nearly all the way to the deck before giving the "cut". The USN preferred a slightly flatter approach and delivered the "cut" anywhere inside a "box", depending on perceived airspeed, height, deck movement and wind-speed over the deck. At the "cut", the pilot throttled back, allowed the nose to drop, corrected minor alignment errors and flared to soften the touchdown. All in less time than it took you to read this sentence.

The USN set up a Landing Signals Officers School in NAS Cecil Field, Florida and moved it to NAS Oceana, Virginia, in 1988. They also developed a simulator that was programmed to imitate all facets of landing every modern

aircraft type aboard a USN aircraft carrier. Training up to 200 LSO team graduates a year the school established a hierarchy of five grades, from "Field LSO" to "Staff LSO". The USN's first LSO NATOPS 80-page manual was a good step. Nowadays, the manual has blown out to more than 250 pages, bigger than some modern aircraft NATOPS pilot's manuals.

The RN were a little slower formalising their Deck Landing Control Officer (DLCO) training. In time they, and the RAN, recognised a dedicated DLCO or "Batsman" position, borne not as a squadron pilot, but a permanent ships company member of the Air Department. Formal training was set up, for instance, in the "Deck Landing School" in 767 Squadron, RNAS Stretton. The RN adopted the USN system and converted one air group at a time, supervised by a very small group of highly trained DLCOs. Upon completion, the old RN DLCO school was renamed the "Landing Sig-

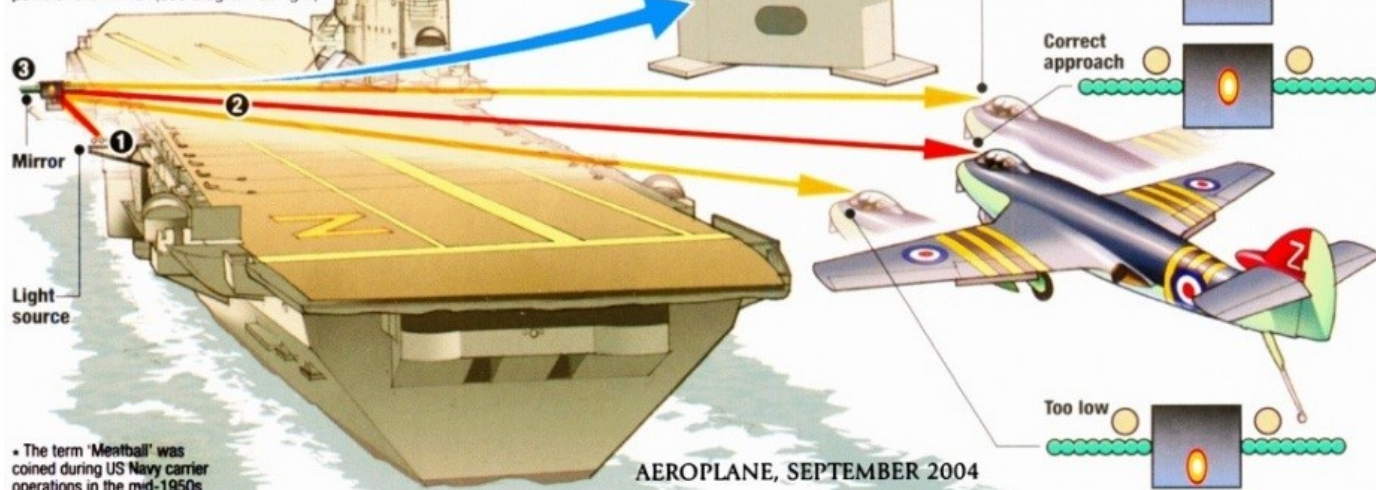


***A "Batsman" (LSO) waving a Sea Fury down to the deck of HMAS Sydney during the Korean War***



### How the mirror system works

- 1 A light source projects a 'Meatball'\* of light forward on to a stabilised mirror 160ft in front of it. The source consists of 4 lights so that a defective lamp will not hinder operations
- 2 The angled mirror reflects the light along the approach path to the carrier
- 3 When a pilot is at the correct approach altitude the 'Meatball' will align with a line of green datum lights at the mid-point of the mirror (see diagram at right)



Special thanks to Aeroplane Magazine for their explanation of the mirror-deck landing system (Aeroplane September 2004).

**Mirror Deck Landing System operated in HMAS Melbourne. Displayed on RAN website**

**Located here: <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-melbourne-ii>**

**HMAS Melbourne's Mirror Landing System is now located at the FAA Museum Nowra**

nal Officers School" in late 1952. Meanwhile, the RAN's 20th CAG (805 and 816 squadrons) needed conversion and after shore-based ADDLs (Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings) this was started in January 1951, with LEUTs Syd Richardson and Maurice Graham batting. Later that year, in July, came the embarked Korean work up for 805, 808 (Sea Furies) and 817 (Fireflies) squadrons. Rough seas off Jervis Bay contributed to a spate of barrier and other accidents but calmer waters were found off Hervey Bay.

Anyone missing the arrestor wires or landing with a known hook or undercarriage problem might face a barrier engagement in those days. Until the angled deck came along, there were two or three head-high collapsible steel wire barriers, designed primarily to shield sailors and aircraft in the forward deck park. Any "full toss" into a crowded forward deck park must be avoided. Collision with the barrier certainly damaged the landing aircraft, but repairs were usually limited to a spinner and maybe propeller change and a wingtip or two.

In the event of something going wrong, blame was sometimes difficult to apportion. One senior pilot tells a story about how he experienced just three instances of aircraft landing without a hooks and engaging the barrier; once when he was a Swordfish pilot, next when he was the DLCO and the third time when he was "Little f" in Sydney's Flyco. The blame-game goalposts moved over the years. Each time he copped

the whole sole and total blame. Then again, it might also be difficult sometimes to sheet home any blame to the LSO. Short of a ramp strike or hookless approach, the LSO might cogently argue, "Well, he was OK when he passed me".

When the angled deck and jets came along, aircraft deck landing accident rates more than halved. Also, the spider web steel wire barriers were replaced by a much higher single barricade, with softer but stronger vertical nylon straps. Stowed in a nearby bin, this barricade could be erected by a well-trained flight deck team in less than 60 seconds.

Jet engines were comparatively slow to accelerate therefore, instead of taking the "cut", jet pilots applied full throttle and retracted the speed brakes on touch-down. Then, when certain of having caught a wire they throttled back to idle. If they missed the wires, they would be at full power and better positioned for a safe "bolter" on the angled deck.

As well as guiding pilots safely into the wires, the LSO also supervised landing intervals. A strict 30 seconds interval was acceptable in the RAN, but this was halved in rough seas. When the deck pitched or rolled badly, every second aircraft, it was assumed, would have both a clear deck and steady enough deck for a safe landing. All others just waved off to join the queue and try their luck again. If two consecutive wave offs were necessary, the next try to board would



save time by being only 15 seconds away.

When the weather turned nasty, with poor visibility or low cloud, a “waiting position” might be set for jet aircraft at 20,000 feet or more and aircraft directed out of that “Delta”, one at a time, by radar for a “Carrier Controlled Approach” (CCA). This involved a fast fuel-conserving descent from altitude to a point where the pilot, dirtied up for landing, might call “(callsign) Ball” on sighting the mirror maybe half a mile out. The LSO responded and took control for the rest of the approach. In the event of a wave off or bolter, the pilot might return to a CCA Controller for a “short circuit” and second attempt.

HMAS *Melbourne* (R21) commissioned with jet Sea Venoms and turboprop Gannets. She was the first operational carrier in the world to mount all four major flight deck modifications to accommodate jet aircraft: angled deck, deck landing mirror, steam catapult and Davis barricade. There were also only five, instead of 10 arrestor wires. The new Mirror Control Officer (MCO) had a wave-off button but his major duty was just to monitor his mirror’s performance and operate the MOVLAS (a manual emergency “mirror”) in the event of a major mirror failure.

Following the RN, we also retired the LSO and in



***HMAS Melbourne at sea with  
8 Skyhawk, 4 Tracker and 2 Wessex on the flight deck***

one early refit even *Melbourne*’s batting platform was removed to save topweight. By 1968 the platform was back in place for the USN-trained LSOs to guide the USA-sourced Skyhawks and Trackers.

What is the future for the LSO? One measure, the effort put into their training, remains unchanged. LSOs are still carefully chosen from a heavy surplus of volunteers and trained in formal schools. LSOs are still needed for conventional fixed wing aircraft carriers but modern heavy drones, helicopters and VSTOL aircraft, once more, tend to warn of perhaps some future Paddles redundancy.

Auto-Throttle and Auto-Landing systems have been used for many years in the USN, and Auto-Landing is built into the newer heavyweight drones such as the

Boeing MQ-25. However, for the time being, pilot deck landing proficiency and the LSO are both still required for those conventional fixed wing aircraft that still carry a pilot. If for no other reason, the LSO-pilot team can cope with most battle damage or electronic failures that might affect any ship or aircraft auto-system..



***USN LSOs (pickle switch in right hand above their heads) waving aircraft  
into a trap aboard a US carrier***

*Australian War Memorial  
Footage of Sea Furies  
and Firefly’s landing on  
HMAS Sydney [here](#)  
(online subscribers only)*



# ***“Man Overboard”***

***By Gary Tearle***

**Departing Sydney in June 1971 destination San Diego (USA) the ‘Fast Troop Ship’ and former aircraft carrier HMAS *Sydney* was on its way to pick up eight A4G Skyhawks plus two TA4G Skyhawk trainer aircraft for the Fleet Air Arm. On arrival in San Diego the aircraft were craned on board and stowed in the hangers below ready for the onward passage back to Australia via Vancouver.**

In late June enroute to San Diego the ship arrived in Hawaii where the ships company were scheduled to enjoy a couple of days R&R (Rest and Recreation). At that time the drinking age in the USA was (and still is) 21 years of age. The drinking age in Australia had been reduced from 21 to 18 in the mid-1960s. So, it meant when the crew visited the US for them to obtain an alcoholic drink it was necessary to show an ID card, even when those ordering a drink looked over 21!

Leaving Hawaii the ship headed on its last leg for San Diego. About two days out from port an Ordinary Seaman in the mess in which I was responsible as Leading Seaman, decided to jump overboard (this we were informed of later). At the time he went missing the weather was far from ideal for such an act, consisting of strong winds, poor visibility and heavy rain.

Next morning the alarm was raised when Clint (I will call him Clint) could not be located even after searching the entire ship. The only assumption to be made was he had fallen overboard.

## **US Coast Guard**

The ship retraced its earlier course and with weather getting worse the search for Clint became more difficult. The ship was assisted by an aircraft from the US Coast Guard observed overhead searching for him. *Sydney* searched for two days without finding Clint before the search was abandoned and the ship continued onto San Diego to pick up the aircraft.

I learnt from another Ordinary Seaman sharing the same mess as Clint that he, like all Ordinary Seaman on board had to spend a number of weeks experiencing other departments on the ship. This could be on the flag deck, engine room, supply sec-

tion, galley, electrical section, boats crew etc. Once the rotation system was completed, the junior sailors could request a change of branch, if sought.

Clint was an Ordinary Seaman Electrical and about to spend some time down in the engine room (part of his training). According to the aforementioned Ordinary Seaman, Clint was not happy about his Engine Room rotation. So that night he went up onto the flight deck and launched a 20 man life raft and followed it into the water.

## **Reluctant to Reveal Source**

On arrival in San Diego a board of inquiry was formed under the direction of an RAN Commodore and witnesses were called to determine what happened to Clint. Needless to say, as Leading Seaman of the Mess, I was called to give evidence. I related the story of Clint’s unhappiness at the prospect of his assignment to the Engine Room as part of his training.

The next question from the board was who told me? I was very reluctant to reveal my source. I was threatened with being court marshalled if I did not answer the question and it was only due to the intervention of the Master at Arms (MAA) on board the *Sydney*, that I reluctantly gave the name of the sailor in question. On a personal note I greatly valued the MAA (“Boofer” Harold) advice.

The inquiry formed the opinion that Clint was lost at sea and a memorial service was held for him. After taking the aircraft on board and enjoying a day or two in San Diego the ship sailed for Vancouver to join other allied Naval ships to celebrate a Royal Canadian Navy event at their base on Vancouver Island.

On the passage north to Canada, word was received that Clint had been found very dehydrated in the ship’s 20 man life raft by a coastal freighter. He was sent to San Diego to recover and then Australia where he was discharged from the RAN.

Each 20 man life raft has attached via a lanyard a canister containing sufficient supplies for 20 personnel. It was later discovered that Clint had failed to retrieve this vital canister, leaving him without food or water during his ordeal.

The stay in Vancouver was a good moral boost for the sailors on board the *Sydney*, so much so that some sailors remained behind after the ship sailed home to Australia!

# The British Carrier Strike Fleet—After 1945

By David Hobbs

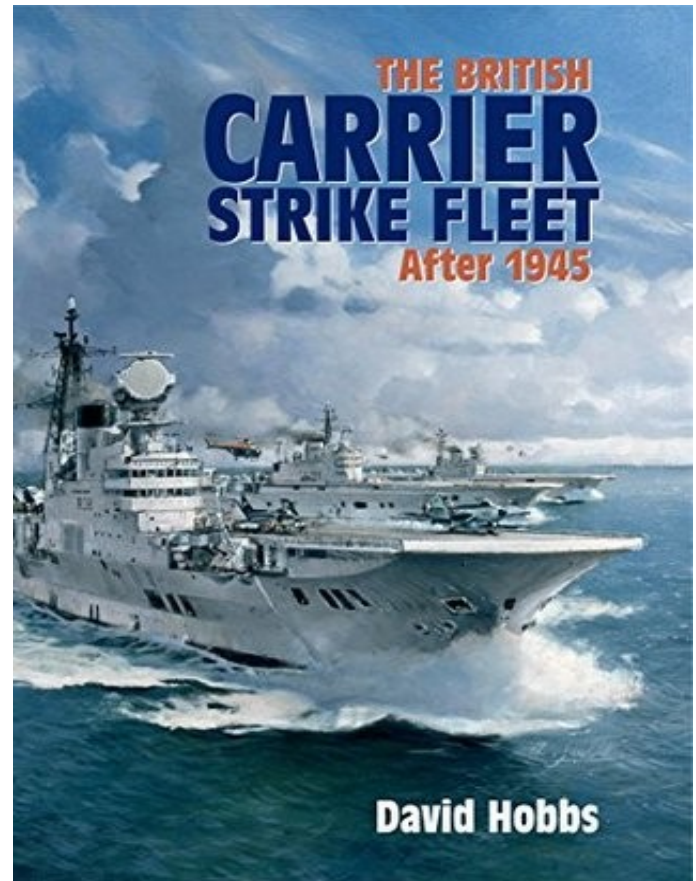
Air power strategists themselves admit that much of their past has involved a tendency to over-claim air technology, overstate air effects and to oversell the capabilities of the independent air force. As the self-styled centres of excellence for air power it is no wonder that the RAF and its Australian version (the RAAF) should see themselves as the sole source of informed advice on air matters to their national Governments. Unfortunately, for the past 70 or so years, carrier strike from the sea has been little understood by these so-called Air Force experts, while the British and Australian Fleet Air Arms lost their voices in the national debate on Defence.

So under the circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that the story of the decline of British Carrier Strike capability has never before been written down. The story of how the British Carrier Strike Fleet changed from one of the most powerful and effective forces available at the end of the Pacific War into a situation where it practically ceased to exist in the first decade of the 21st century is now told by David Hobbs in 'The British Carrier Strike Fleet after 1945'. Political decisions were based upon theoretical beliefs rather than upon actual evidence. One of the most consistent myths is that aircraft carriers are expensive, vulnerable and of limited usefulness. Given the right circumstances the reverse is true. In Britain, this truism has only slowly come to the fore as the two new Queen Elizabeth class strike carriers demonstrate. Similar construction of new or replacement carriers is a major feature of 21st century navies, including China and India. Australia however has yet to see the advantages. Perhaps the experience of helicopter operations on its two Canberra class amphibious ships will highlight the limitations involved when compared against even a relatively small strike carrier.

CMDR David Hobbs, RN (Rtd) has prepared a comprehensive volume with over 600 pages that is packed full of important details, operations and sources. It is a masterpiece of modern naval affairs. David Hobbs is a world renowned specialist on maritime aviation, having served as a pilot in the RN's Fleet Air Arm before working on carrier development and acquisition at the MoD (UK). His concise, well-written expression puts the reader in touch with the decisions and circumstances of the events described.

Although 'The British Carrier Strike Fleet' has 21 chapters discussing every aspect of British naval aviation over the 70 years between 1945 and 2015, it is perhaps best examined in the book's three major themes – carrier operations, carrier technological ad-

## BOOK REVIEW



vances and the politics of carrier acquisitions. Overall the development of strike carriers and associated aircraft over the post-war period was astonishingly very cyclical. As David Hobbs explains the formal cancellation of the strike carrier CVA-01 in February 1966 was the turning point in the recent history of British carrier aviation. As the elderly strike carriers were run down and not replaced the choices for military response that could be put on the table were few.

The South Atlantic War of 1982 is the best known example of a British victory as 'a near run thing'. The necessary point being also the fact that if the Argentinians had waited a few more years for the downsizing of the RN to be further along, the British Government would not have had the option of recapturing its Falkland Islands.

David Hobbs once again has done an excellent job in bringing together this important and relevant information. His open and forthright style gives this work a timeless aspect. Hobbs provides detailed explanations that overturn many of the myths surrounding carrier operations since 1945. 'The British Carrier Strike Fleet' is a must read for navy professionals and defence acquisition specialists alike. If you don't already have a copy you need to get one!

*Dr Gregory P. Gilbert (Edited Version)*



# The Royal Navy Wasp - An Operational & Retirement History

By Larry Jeram-Croft and  
Terry Martin

First we'll teach you to fly, then we'll teach you to hunt' proclaimed the RN recruiting ad in 1973. We might have expected to read about Phantoms, Buccaneers or Sea Kings but instead the ad was seeking pilots for the Westland Wasp

In the mid-1950s the Royal Navy was investigating whether a small helicopter could be operated as an autonomous weapon system for frigates. The Saunders-Roe company had developed the turbine-powered P531 as a private venture and the RN thought this could be a basis for its requirement.

Westland took over Saunders-Roe as part of the British aircraft industry rationalisation and developed the P531 into the Wasp and Scout.

Section 1 of the book charts this development, continues with a technical description of the helicopter and then describes the weapons and roles before commencing 120 pages of personal accounts. While some further editing would have been beneficial there is plenty of interest here.

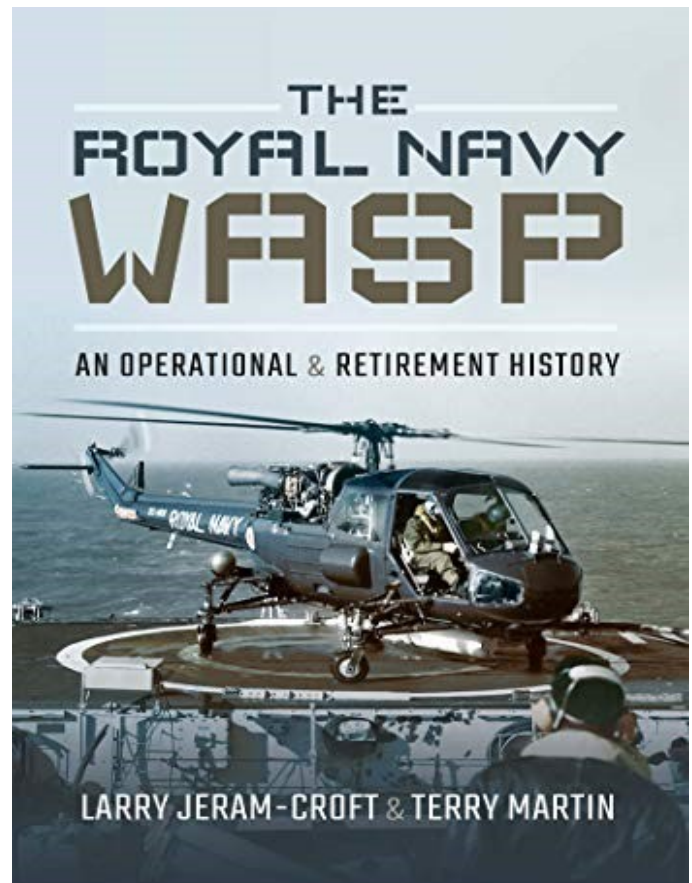
The early years saw Wasps participating in the RN blockade of Rhodesia, exercising in Aden, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. These relatively benign conditions hotbed during the Cod War with Iceland in 1975/6. Wasps were flown in extreme weather conditions (doors off) to locate and determine the position of opposing gunboats and trawlers, occasionally also harassing the gunboats. In one instance a Wasp had a wheel on a gunboat's bridge wing while the bridge team were trying to hurl items into the rotor disc.

In 1982 HMS *Endurance* with its two embarked Wasps was the only RN asset south of the equator and was asked to investigate Argentinian incursions on South Georgia. The Wasps were used for reconnaissance but this was only the start of their role in what became the Falklands War. They took on tasks ranging from casualty evacuation to night insertion of Special Forces and missile attack on the submarine Santa Fe. Wasps remained after the cessation of hostilities to assist in the clean-up of unexploded ordnance. All these tasks are well recorded by the pilots and aircrewmembers. Chapter 8 comprises random personal accounts, including a night ditching in the Atlantic. The final tale relates how hangar design, failure to follow standard procedure and spilt custard combined to produce a squashed Wasp.

Section 1 concludes with the impressions of the Wasp from the perspective of Jeram-Croft as a maintenance test pilot, including a description of the test where the helicopter was taken up to 12000'

Section 2 opens with details of use with six other nations but only New Zealand is dealt with in some depth.

## BOOK REVIEW



The remainder of the book details Terry Martin's experience of Wasps in private ownership.

Pilots are quoted as either loving or hating the Wasp, some were perplexed at being appointed to a Wasp Flight after Sea Kings. One US Navy exchange pilot described his time as 'exciting, exhilarating and very challenging'.

Martin concludes the book by stating 'the Westland Wasp is an amazingly unique and very special helicopter that demands a lot from its pilots, but returns the favour with the joy that is felt when master and helicopter work as one'.

Recommended to those with an interest in the Wasp or more generally in the development of small ship flights.

(Note: the RZN operated the Wasp from several HMNZ Ships and the RAN operated the Scout, a variant of the Wasp from HMAS Moresby).

Dr Richard Kenderdine

Publisher: Pen and Sword Books

Book website: <https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/The-Royal-Navy-Wasp-Hardback/p/15524> or via [amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au/s?k=the+royal+navy+wasp&ref=nb_sb_noss) here: [https://www.amazon.com.au/s?k=the+royal+navy+wasp&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss](https://www.amazon.com.au/s?k=the+royal+navy+wasp&ref=nb_sb_noss)

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