



Edition 50 - October 2021

FlyBy



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News of the FAA's activities

The Council's Pigeons

A Story of Futile Feathered Ambition

The Very First Hunter-Killer

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EDITORIAL

This 50th edition brings a new milestone - Microsoft Word is in the bin and a new kid on the block, Affinity Publisher, is in the chair. I'm hoping readers see some of its capabilities evident in this edition.

The first edition of "FlyBy" was published in June of 2017. It was a modest affair with just three pages of loosely typed notes and a few thumbnails. Nobody, least of all me, thought it would last the pace. Now, some four years later, we celebrate the 50th Edition and I continue to get letters of support from people who enjoy reading it. Thank you to all of them.

This edition brings a very welcome update from COMFAA on what the Fleet Air Arm has been up to over the last few months. We don't get many of these as it now requires a 2-star to sign off on any external PR material, so red tape is a problem. Our thanks to DCOMFAA for persevering with the production of this one, however - they are always very welcome.

At the time of writing this column the Eastern States race towards their vaccination targets and its only a matter of time before they start to open for business. This means that responsibility for COVID protection shifts towards individuals and the unvaccinated will

be at higher risk, so I urge you to have the jab(s) now if you have not already. Leaving it to later may be a dreadful mistake.

I've had the occasional comment asking for more about Australian Naval Aviation and less about well, everything else. It is hard to find material on my own so if you do have a story to tell, can you help out? Also, please consider contributing to the "Where Are You Now" column to bring your mates up to date on what you've been up to since leaving the FAA. Just email me [here](#).

Our brand new website is about to be commissioned and there's a bit in this issue about it. The webmaster (me) is working hard to bring it up to scratch but it will take a little while, so please be patient while I iron out a few of the remaining wrinkles.

Until next time, stay safe.

Marcus Peake, Editor.



Cover:

Able Seaman Indiana Van Arkel stands on the flight deck of HMAS Canberra during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2021. Photo by LSIS Sittichai Sakonpoonpol. (Defence Image).

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COMFAA UPDATE



2021 has been a busy period for the Fleet Air Arm, marked by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuing importance of delivering Maritime Aviation combat power at sea.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has also significantly constrained our ability to participate in many community engagement activities. These include important events such as ANZAC Day, Vietnam Veterans' Day and various other remembrance activities either cancelled or only occurring with very limited attendance.

The importance of such activities continues to be a catalyst for Fleet Air Arm members to reflect on the foundations of those that have gone before us. The events recognise the sacrifice of many, while concurrently enhancing the reputation established by past Fleet Air Arm members, and continued through to today. Rest assured the Fleet Air Arm has taken these opportunities throughout 2021 to reflect and recognise the proud history of the Fleet Air Arm, albeit not in a way readily visible to the eye of the public.

Throughout the year Fleet Air Arm work has been focussed on delivering Navy Aviation capabilities in support of Government directed requirements. Development and growth of the workforce has been a critical component of our endeavours. This has included activities such as introduction of alternate training pathways for Aviation Technical (AT) sailors, Aviation Warfare Officers (AvWOs) and instructors; introduction of the Remote Pilot Warfare Officer (RPWO) workgroup, and revised employment regimes for Aviation Support Sailors (AVNs). Two of the most significant steps have been in the training of AvWOs and ATs.

AvWO training has completely moved from RAAF East Sale to Nowra, and is all conducted on the EC-135. This has realised a significant cost saving, and provides greater continuity and increased locational stability for our people. It also saves more than six months in the training of an AvWO.

In 2020 a trial Initial Employment Course was undertaken for the training of AT Sailors. This harnessed local training tools within the Seahawk system and a local company (Air Affairs) to train ATs via a tailored rotary-wing package that delivers the same skills in a different way. Similar to AvWO training, the trial has delivered required competencies in a much shorter timeframe, and enabled provision of qualified AT Sailors in the Squadrons earlier, with significantly greater relevance and understanding of the contemporary Naval Aviation environment. The trial courses have delivered an approximate six months savings. A pilot of the trial courses is intended to be conducted via open tender in 2022.

On 6 June, we also marked the tenth anniversary of the partnership between the Royal Australian Navy and the United States Navy through the MH-60R Romeo program. The anniversary builds on 100 years of international mateship and exemplifies the ties between Australia and the US.

Since the delivery of the last of the 24 helicopters in 2016, the RAN has flown over 30,000 MH-60R flight hours: mostly in training, exercises and on operations, but also in assistance to the Australian Public through events such as Operations BUSHFIRE ASSIST and NSW FLOOD ASSIST. The partnership with the US Navy has been extremely successful from a capability and industry perspective, delivering shared facilities



An EC-135 of 723 Squadron returns to dispersal at sunset over HMAS Albatross. The aircraft is the platform for all ab-initio training in the FAA.

for Navy's Squadrons and purpose-built co-located facilities for industry.

A broad summary of Squadron activities over the past months is below:

723 Squadron

723 Squadron has continued to train and develop our future Aircrewman, Sensor Operators, RPWOs, AvWO and Pilots, as well as Aircrewman and Pilots for Army. Two graduation ceremonies have occurred this year, both unfortunately under strict COVID-19 restrictions, meaning family and friends of graduates were unable to attend and help celebrate the significant achievements of their loved ones. Course members were then posted to Operational Flying Training on the MH-60R, ARH Tiger, MRH90, CH-47 or 822X SQN UAS. In addition to ab-initio trainees, the Instructor Training Wing is now also in full production, producing Pilot, AvWO and Aircrewman instructors for both Army and Navy. RPWO instructors will develop over the coming years.

To date, in 2021, 723 Squadron has graduated 22 Pilot Students, 11 AvWO Students, 23 Aircrewman Students and 3 RPWO Students.

On 22 March, another major milestone was reached when the Helicopter Aircrew Training System within 723 Squadron achieved its concluding project capability milestone - Final Operating Capability. This new training system does an outstanding job in training and preparing Navy and Army rotary wing aircrew (and Navy RPWOs) to undertake operational flying training on complex modern combat aircraft.

723 Squadron will change Command on 15 Dec 21 with Lieutenant Colonel **Richard Green**

handing to Commander **Sam Dale**, RAN. Lieutenant Colonel Green was the inaugural Army Officer appointed in command of 723 SQN.

725 Squadron

725 Squadron has continued to train Aircrew and maintainers to fly and maintain the MH-60R in the Maritime Combat Helicopter role. Through a broad range of enterprise and unit process, cultural and policy change initiatives, the Squadron has significantly increased our ability to support critical workforce development and growth initiatives.

Courses are conducted continually throughout the year, even under the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has required a very deliberate approach by the Squadron to ensure capability continues to be delivered, while our people and the community continue to be protected. Overall, the Squadron is responsible for the supply of 816 SQN front-line aircrew and maintenance personnel, which, in turn, provides embarked operations around the globe.

The first all-female crew for a Royal Australian Navy MH-60R helicopter from 725 Squadron took to the skies on 13 January 2021. The training sortie was crewed by Pilot Lieutenant Rhiannon Thomson, Aviation Warfare Officer, Lieutenant Hannah Best (RN Exchange) and Sensor Operator Leading Seaman Clare Lassam. This was a first for the MH-60R and highlighted the increasing numbers of females within Fleet Air Arm aircrew numbers.

725 Squadron will change Command on 07 December 21 when CMDR **James Hawley** RAN will handover to Commander **Marcus Baxter** RAN.

808 Squadron

The Maritime Support Helicopter (MSH) Squadron remained heavily focussed on providing embarked aviation capability to HMA Ships Canberra, Adelaide and Choules using the MRH90 helicopter.

Over the last year, 808 Squadron has been heavily involved in domestic and overseas Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief operations. This has seen the Squadron tasked in Operations FIJI ASSIST and NSW FLOOD ASSIST, which of course followed the 2019/2020 national Bushfire emergency.

Despite a range of MRH90 availability challenges, 808 Squadron has continued to perform to the highest standard, and represent Navy with distinction when called upon.

For Operation FIJI ASSIST, the



The first all-female MH-60R crew in the RAN. L-R: LEUT Hannah Best RN, LEUT Rhiannon Thompson, and LS Clare Lassam. (Defence image)



An MRH90 of 808 Squadron conducting a transfer of personnel to an RAN submarine.

Squadron Flight embarked in HMAS *Adelaide* to assist after the devastation of Tropical Cyclone YASA. *Adelaide* anchored in the vicinity of Galoa Bay for most of the ship's tasking period throughout January, with the Flight providing over 70 hours in support, conducting 149 PAX moves and transferring 17,000 kgs of supplies to local communities.

Shortly after returning to Australia, the Squadron was called upon to assist the NSW community with the devastating floods in March 2021 as part of Operation FLOOD ASSIST. A highlight included flying the Prime Minister around flood-devastated Western Sydney. On completion, the crew were also required to extract nine campers and their dog 'Candy' from their remote, flood-affected camp-site on the Wollondilly River. State Emergency Services had been trying to get them out for several days before 808 Squadron rendered assistance.

As this article goes to print the Squadron is preparing for the next high-risk weather season – preparing for the worst but hoping not to be called upon.

816 Squadron

816 Squadron continues to ready, provide and sustain deployed Maritime Combat Helicopter Flights across the globe.

In mid-2021, 816 Squadron conducted a major weapons firing activity (Exercise TIGERFISH). TIGERFISH is a SQN based exercise that provides critical development and experience for MH-60R crews and maintenance teams, specifically focussed on weapons employment. The Squadron fired Hellfire Missiles, Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems (Rockets), and Tor-

pedoes during the period. Whilst highlighting the potent maritime combat capability delivered by MH-60R, significant knowledge and experience was gained by all involved.

In addition to warfare development and supporting various Flights embarked across Fleet units (in both the MCH and MSH roles), the Squadron also participated in several notable public events. This includes supporting Australia Day activities with an underslung Australian National Flag in both Sydney and Canberra; and support to the RAAF 100th anniversary in Canberra – the MH-60R was the first aircraft in the flypast with the RAAF ensign un-

derslung (pictured below).

816 Squadron and her deployed Flights continue to support RAN major exercises and activities with coalition partners across the globe.

822X Squadron

822X Squadron continues to experiment in the maritime environment with the rotary-wing S-100 Camcopter and the fixed-wing ScanEagle remotely piloted systems. This informs Navy's ability to exploit unmanned systems in the maritime environment. The ability of the unmanned aircraft to collect imagery and other



An 816 Squadron MH-60R flies a RAAF Flag in support of that Service's 100th anniversary over the Carillion in Canberra.



Remote Pilot Warfare Officer Lieutenant Jack Parsey pilots HMAS Ballarat's embarked Scheibel S-100 Camcopter from the flight deck while sailing off the coast of Queensland, during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2021.

sensor data by day and night, at long ranges and in near real-time can significantly improve battlespace awareness. The new Remote Pilot Warfare Officers, teamed with highly skilled aviation technicians, are vital to realising this capability and enhancing the delivery of Naval power.

As part of this campaign, 822X Squadron has undertaken several embarkations throughout the year. These have occurred in both MV *Sycamore* and HMAS *Ballarat*. The embarkation in *Ballarat* included participation in Exercise TALISMAN SABRE – a major coalition exercise conducted off the QLD coast earlier in the year.

822X Squadron will change Command on 16 Dec 21 with CMDR Phil Woodward RAN handing over to CMDR Bill Veale RAN.

Aircraft & Maintenance Flight Trials Unit (AMFTU)

AMFTU again faced an exceptionally busy and dynamic period, predominantly focusing on expanding operating limits for the MH-60R, MRH90 and UASs. The team will shortly embark on First of Class Flight Trials in HMAS Supply, towards achieving the capability for the new AOR class of ships.

Elsewhere, a number of events across the FAA highlighted AMFTU critical support to the Navy Aviation Enterprise's ability to rapidly undertake engineering design changes and prototype activities to deliver new capabilities, or rectify

existing shortfalls. This was particularly evident in prototyping of alternative towing mechanisms and fitment of role equipment to aircraft.♦

All images courtesy of the ADF.



THANKS

This will be my final update for *FlyBy* as I hand over Command of the Fleet Air Arm to Commodore **David Frost**, RAN on 10 December 21 before posting to Defence Headquarters in Canberra.

I would again like to pass my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Fleet Air Arm Association Australia members for their ongoing support, guidance and friendship over the past three years.

It has also been a manifest privilege, honour and pleasure to Command the extraordinary team that is the Fleet Air Arm over the past three years.

Fly NAVY.

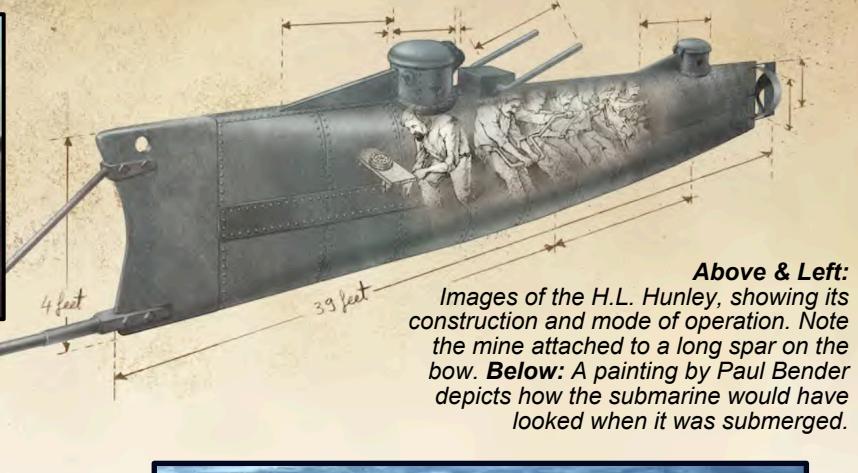
DL Dezentje, CSM
Commodore, RAN
Commander Fleet Air Arm ♦

The Very First

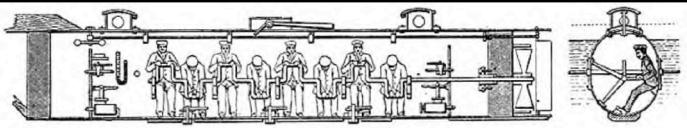
Hunter-Killer

As the only other Arm of the Service that works in three dimensions we are always interested in the submariner's world. These photos are of the first successful combat submarine in history, which attacked and sank the USS Housatonic in February 1864. After completing her mission she vanished, however, to remain lost at sea for over a century.

She was finally found in 1995, and efforts began to raise her fragile hull from the sea bed. Years of preservation work followed to protect her remains and remove tons of debris and sediment . The pictures and words on the following pages tell the extraordinary story.



Above & Left: Images of the H.L. Hunley, showing its construction and mode of operation. Note the mine attached to a long spar on the bow. **Below:** A painting by Paul Bender depicts how the submarine would have looked when it was submerged.



In the early 1860s the city of Charleston was still in Confederate hands, despite significant fighting. Federal warships were denying their forces of supplies, however, so two men, **McClintock** and **Watson**, set about building a submersible vessel to wage war on the Federal blockade.

It was their third attempt at building a submersible - the previous two being lost in trials, but they were not deterred. They used a cut-down steel boiler as the main hull, with various ballast tanks affixed to give negative buoyancy as required. The biggest problem was propulsion: steam power was impracticable, so they settled on a system where the crew would manually turn cranks, which rotated a propeller shaft set the length of the vessel. The time it could remain submerged depended on how long the air for the nine crewmen lasted, which was calculated to be about two hours and thirty minutes.

The first trial was successful with sinking a target barge, but it became evident the vessel was woefully unseaworthy. This was reinforced a few nights after arriving at Charlestown, when it was overwhelmed by swell from a passing steamer. The CO escaped but his eight crewmen drowned. The boat was raised and another crew recruited - but shortly afterwards another accident took the lives of a further six men.

News of the second sinking reached **Horace Hunley**, one of the backers of the project, and he decided to travel to Charleston himself with a third volunteer crew to try again. His first run was successful but on the second dive they failed to surface and all on board perished - bringing the total death toll to 23.

The submarine was raised yet again and more



volunteers found, despite full disclosure of the fate of their unfortunate predecessors. You have to admire their courage!

On the bright moonlit night of 17 February 1864 The *H.L. Hunley* slipped her moorings and slid beneath the waves. But a Confederate deserter had advised Federal forces of the threat of the submarine.

So the master of the *Housatonic* was alert. He observed movement in the water and immediately sounded the alarm, but it was too late for him to move the ship. As his crew fired their small arms into the water a massive explosion ripped through the vessel, destroying the stern section. The *Housatonic* sank almost immediately with the loss of five men.

It was the first successful attack by a submarine on a warship - a feat not to be repeated for another fifty years.

After the attack no word was heard from the *Hunley* and it was assumed she had been lost, together with her victim. She was rediscovered in 1970 but salvage was not to be attempted until some 25 years later.

The remains of her crew was discovered inside the vessel where they had lain for 137 years. ♠



Above Left. After more than 100 years in the ocean the hull was encrusted with marine life which required painstaking work to remove.

Above. Once the tons of debris was cleared from the interior the inside of the vessel could be seen, including the manual crank handle by which the craft was powered.

Left. The vessel now sits in a large aquarium at the Hunley museum in Charlestown. Various artefacts were recovered including a gold coin, curved from the indentation of a bullet, which had saved the life of the Captain at the Battle of Shilo in 1862. Regrettably the talisman was not to save him from his watery grave two years later. The remains of the entire eight man crew were given a full military funeral. ♠

Wall of Service Update



Order Number 50 remains open with no names on the list so far. You can kick off this order by clicking [here](#) to access information and an application form.

Order No. 49 was sent to the Foundry at the end of August and the finished plaques have just been received back at Nowra.

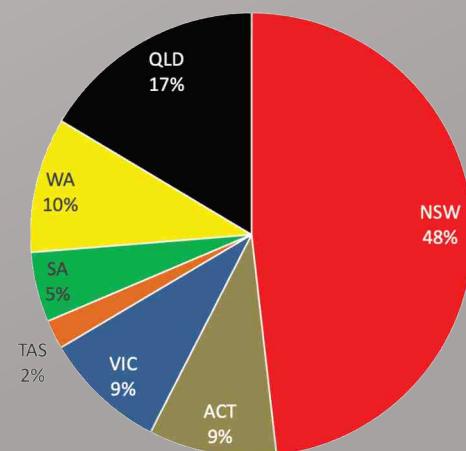
Our hard-working WoS Administrator, **John Balazic**, has indicated he will fix them to the Wall in the coming weekend and all of people whose names are borne upon them will be notified, according to the preference they indicated on their application form :♠

New Member Listing

The following new members have joined the Association since the last edition of "FlyBy":

David Tindall (NSW)
David Rendell (ACT)
David Baddams (NSW)
Steven Todd (NSW)
Neil Austin (NSW)
Rick Coombs (NSW)
Graham Robinson (NSW)

The current distribution of our members by State is shown below. If you are a member you can find other members' contact details [here](#). ♠





A bit of History for Sale

Mrs Lynne Ridley has contacted us to say she has a genuine HMAS Melbourne cigarette lighter for sale. She'll consider any reasonable offer. Contact Lynne directly [here](#). ♠

Why Women Last Longer Than Men - No.2





The Curious Case of the Council's Pigeons

By Marcus Peake

In 1982, having left the Navy, I was employed as the Chief Pilot for the National Safety Council of Australia (Victorian Division). Back then it was a small outfit with just 43 employees, two helicopters and a couple of trucks.

The Executive Director was a German fellow named **John Friedrich**. Well, that's what he told us although it later transpired he was really called **Johann Hohenberger** who had faked his death in Germany to avoid arrest, and made his way to Australia as a fugitive.

John was a bright, energetic and charismatic guy, as all con-men must be. When he took over as NSCA's Executive Director in 1982 it was a sleepy little outfit specialising in safety services at the Latrobe Valley, mostly for the big power stations there. He set about transforming it into Australia's best equipped and trained Search and Rescue organisation. By the time it collapsed in late 1988 there were over 400 employees and dozens of aircraft, fire tenders, rescue trucks, bowsers and recompression chambers spread over the three Eastern States of Australia. All in just six years!

My duties were initially in the Latrobe Valley, flying helicopter ambulance and SAR/Fire Fighting roles. It was great work but the family didn't like the area, so when the opportunity to set up a SAR Base at Townsville came up we jumped at the chance.

It was a dream job: as manager there I had ten people, a Bell 212, a Beech Kingair, and a boat. My SAR 'patch' was pretty much the whole of North Queensland.

John was a restless soul: he would constantly think of new ways to enhance the services we offered. Fire tenders. Self-contained fuel bowsers. A parachute deployment team, mobile recompression chambers and so on. To begin with, the ideas were sound, but then they started

to become – well, a little bizarre.

One day I was sitting in my office in Townsville when the phone rang. It was John, and he sounded excited.

"I've had this idea, Mac-us", he said, "about Pigeons."

"Pigeons, John?" I'd become used to his fluid schemes but this was a new one.

"Pigeons," he said firmly. "Did you know they have excellent eyesight?"

"Er, not really, John."

"Well they do. They can see things we can't, including in the infra-red spectrum."

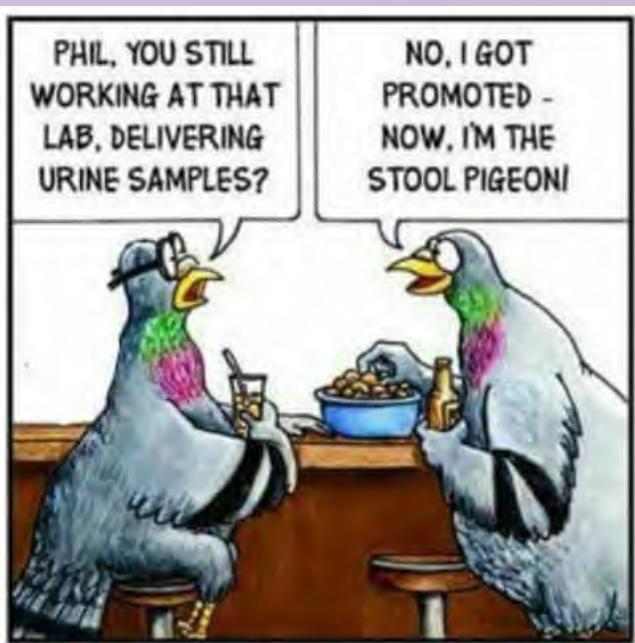
"Well, good for them."

He ignored my sarcasm. "I've been looking into a thing called Project Sea Hunt," he continued. "It was done by the US Coast Guard and they used pigeons to spot survivors out at sea. I think we can do it."

Gradually the story came out. The USCG had put some pigeons into a glass bowl mounted below one of their aircraft and trained them to look for anything red or yellow, upon which they would peck at a small lever to indicate the direction of an object. There was an instrument in the cockpit that guided the pilot: peck-peck to the left meant steer left, peck-peck right, steer right. An absence of pecks presumably meant the object was dead ahead, or there wasn't one.

I listened intently. Surely this was a joke, worthy of a little reciprocal mirth? I decided to go for it.

"I had a pet pigeon once," I told him.



"Really?"

"Yep. He could forecast the stock exchange. I think he must have been an 'Omen Pigeon."

There was a long silence. John was German, so humour was always a challenge. "Was that a joke Mac-us?" he asked.

Oh well.

I hurried on, eager to erase the sin of being flippant. "So, what do you want me to do?"

"We're getting some pigeons," he replied firmly, "and I want you to use them in Queensland."

It is true that much of the SAR work we did in Townsville was over water. In the eighteen months I'd been there we'd searched for at least three lost aircraft, a number of missing boats (including some Midshipmen in one), and countless dull fishermen washed out to sea. And finding something in the ocean wasn't easy, as anyone who's tried can attest. It's a big place and what you're looking for is invariably small.

"Well, how do I train them?" I asked.

"We'll do the training down here," John said, "and we'll send them up when they're ready. I've hired a pigeon behavioural expert who will

get them up to scratch."

I put the phone down in some trepidation. WTF was a pigeon behavioural expert? Did he/she understand that pigeons have a brain about the size of a peanut – and they were the bright ones?

The rumour of the Safety Council's pigeons spread like wildfire and, not surprisingly, there was a deal of light-heartedness involved. The staff rapidly decided the first thing to do was to get them to wear the NSCA's olive-green uniform but, owing to their irregular shape, it would be best if it was spray-painted on. "But surely that will kill them!" our safety equipment guy remarked. "Nah," said the engineer, "we'll use water-based paints." He paused for a moment to get the timing right. "But sandblasting the old colours off might be a problem." Even the Union Rep got involved, writing a lengthy industrial submission about the chickenfeed pay of our newest category.

But John persevered. The PTC (Pigeon Training Centre) was set up, and the first intake inducted. Recruiting standards had been poor, apparently, as by all reports they were a sorry-looking flock who spent all day flapping and crapping in their custom-built cages, watching videos of boats and life-rafts with little interest. The idea was that if they reacted to anything

A cartoon drawn by the author for a National Aviation Magazine of the time. It was a little while after the event, so the dates don't quite match up.

Daily Sun - October 1988

A well known non-Government Search and Rescue Organization is to trial the use of rescue pigeons for SAR duties. A spokesman for the organization said that the birds would be housed in perspex bubbles beneath search aircraft and would indicate unusual sightings to the pilot by means of switches which they would be trained to peck. The pigeons' high visual acuity would allow them to find articles which the crew could easily miss.





orange on the screen they'd be rewarded with a pellet of food that was automatically dispensed into their cage. Our lot were apparently happy to starve, rather than think.

In the meantime, the engineering staff got on with the aircraft interface. A perspex bubble was designed that bolted onto the port skid, affording a reasonable view of the ocean below and into which two sensors were affixed. These were the 'pecking plates', which, when touched, would transmit an electrical signal to the cockpit.

An extra instrument was introduced into our Bell 212 which comprised a dial with a central needle, pointing vertically. If the port pecking plate was pecked, the needle diverted left, and if the starboard plate was pecked, it flickered right. Easy Peasy.

The expected pigeons still hadn't arrived, so just for a laugh we tried it out one day using a simulated pigeon, our aircrewman. He'd been unanimously voted the most bird-brained amongst us so sat in the back with a small console and injected what he thought our feathered friends might do in a real situation – a challenging job. I was under the hood, flying.

When I was doing my pilot training in the UK we had a thing called a "Violet Picture Homing", which was an obsolete procedure for finding your way home. It gave a simple turn left/ right or straight-ahead indication on an instrument in the cockpit not unlike the one I now contemplated. Armed with that otherwise useless training I found it easy to fly the peck-peck left and peck-peck right instructions our crewie injected into the system, although our track must have resembled a drunk on a pub crawl.

A couple of weeks later I phoned John on another matter. "So how is the pigeon training going?" I asked as we concluded our business.

"Not good," he admitted at length.

"So what's the problem?"

"They got sick and died."

I tried hard not to laugh, I really did, but couldn't help it.

"Perhaps they all had Coo-lon cancer, John."

There was another long silence. "Is that another joke?" he asked.

It was the last time the project was ever mentioned, so we removed the Pigeon-Picture-Homing device and got on with life. I heard later that the original batch of spotter birds in America had also expired - squashed when their aircraft suffered an undercarriage failure - so all in all the experiments were not a great success.

John got into horses a little while later - lots of them. I think he intended to make his rescue teams more mobile as they trekked around the Snowies looking for lost souls. There was even talk of parachuting them, perhaps at the gallop off the ramp of the CASA C-212 Aviocar he was thinking of buying, but I don't think that ever happened.

Perhaps it's just as well. Pigeon humour was one thing, but saddling John with Pegasus jokes really would have been flogging a dead horse. ♠

MY GRANDAD WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR 25 DOWNED GERMAN PLANES IN WW2



STILL TO THIS DAY HE IS KNOWN AS THE WORST MECHANIC THE LUFTWAFFE EVER HAD



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In the late 50s aircraft manufacturers were looking to build a short to mid-range turbo-prop aircraft, basically to fill the void left by the DC-3.

Several different aircraft were produced, but the two most successful, were the Fokker F.27 and the Hawker-Siddley 748. Both were 42-48 seat aircraft, powered by R.R. Dart engines, driving Dowty Rotol 4 blade propellers, and carrying a crew of four - two pilots and two cabin attendants.

Like the Gannet, the propellers were fitted with locks to prevent a possible overspeed and also had an auto-feather function which was armed during Take/Off.

Water methanol injection was also available to give a boost to power levels as required by performance criteria.

Early in my career I had the opportunity to fly both of these aircraft, logging around 4000 hours between the two. The F.27 throughout Australia and the HS748 around the Pacific region.

Fokker elected to go for a high-wing design and pneumatics to control the under-carriage and nose-wheel steering, whilst Hawker-Siddley preferred to utilize the low-wing option and hydraulics.

The F.27 with its high aspect wing, was 15kts faster in cruise, but the HS748, with a higher chord ratio wing and softer under-carriage required less runway length and could operate off unsealed and grass runways, which was mainly the case when flying into the many island nations of the South West Pacific back in the 1960s.

I enjoyed the years spent flying each of the aircraft, but of the two, I definitely preferred the HS748. Mainly, because the Brits had finally put some effort into the study of cockpit ergonomics and the end result was a vast improvement.

At long last, the all-black cockpit was a thing of

the past and whilst the actual instruments were still a black-white combination, the panels and surrounds were now in a light grey; and aside from the usual basic "T" flight instrument layout, all ancillary controls and switches, were easily to hand and logically positioned.

The combination along with the sheep skin covered seats made for a very pleasant working environment.

Anson E (Ted) Goater.♦

Dear Editor,

The DC "Two and a half" story didn't continue to say just what it did later.

It was obviously put into service traversing the Indian continent; doing what, I don't know, possibly supplying the Allies in Burma.



However, I once noticed it quite distinctly in the early 1940s, flying eastward at, oh, I don't know; in retrospect, probably about 10,000 ft or so above my school located in the foot-hills of the Himalayas. Quite a few of we kids remarked on it, as it was so unusual.

Peter McNay.

By Editor. Thanks Peter. I'd just imagined the aircraft was given another DC3 wing when it got back to Hong Kong. I'd also assumed that China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) was overrun by the Japanese when they occupied Hong Kong at the end of 1941, but apparently that wasn't the case. The Corporation operated out of India for the duration of the war and continued to fly supply missions to China over the notorious route over the Himalayas known as "The Hump." CNAC relocated to Shanghai in 1946.

I've been unable to find any further information on "The DC Two and a Half" but would welcome any input from our readers. ♦

Dear Editor,

I've just seen your latest edition of "FlyBy", which was sent to me by **Brian Abraham**, a retired Navy man. My name is **Terri Fairbairn** and I am the daughter of **Gordon Fairbairn** [pictured right with head bandaged] who was one of the four survivors of the W.D. Atlas tragedy you covered.

I was amazed that you have included an article, but I have some information to update you from what you have written. I was able to find Brian because I put an article in the Veterans newsletter looking for service members

(particularly Navy) who had anything to do with the aid and rescue of the Atlas, as I am currently writing a book on the event.

The meeting with **Sam De Vries** at Nowra was the catalyst to my writing the book and the journey since has been incredible. I have been overwhelmed by the amount of people who have contacted me and in particular their individual stories about the event. Unfortunately, Sam passed only a year or so after the event, before I could really get into the meat of the book, however, my research has been intensive and I have found some amazing information. I'm at the end process now and have been working with an editor with the view of having it published, hopefully soon.

However, I had one question which remained unanswered. What happened to **Jeff Mulder**, one of the four survivors. I couldn't find any information on him at all. We thought him long dead but I couldn't locate him in any of the states births deaths and marriages records. In fact, Sam De Vries thought he was the last survivor and you have included this in your article; we all thought this. Then a couple of weeks ago I got in touch with a facebook page who look for long lost people. They came up with an address of what might be Jeff's daughter. I wrote a letter and several days later I got a call. It was Jeff's daughter, and more incredibly, she told me that her mother and father were still alive and living in Healesville in Victoria. Jeff had turned 90 only a couple of weeks before.

So it has been incredible to hear the story from his side and to get some real life facts from him. I have been adjusting the book since and am, again, at the end stage. I now only need to get some information on how Navy helo pilots in the 60s communicated with each other in the air. I am ex Army and have used Army syntax, but need to correct this before I publish it as I'd hate any of the Navy readers look at it and think it something akin to Rambo firing an anti tank weapon (with a back blast danger area of 50 metres) out of a helo without causing any damage! Just need the facts to be right. Luckily, I have just learned that Brian was a helo pilot so hope to get this sorted soon.

So if you'd like to publish a follow on article please feel welcome to do so. The name of the book will eventually be 'The Shadow of the Ship' and as well as the story of the ship also contains the heroics of the rescuers, many Navy.

The helos were incredible. What **Pat Vickers**



did is one of the most extraordinary tales in my story. He took a Wessex out at 0200 in gale force wind knowing that he wouldn't be able to see or rescue anyone, but he knew that if there was anyone alive and they could hear the rotors they'd know that someone was looking for them. Ultimately, that is what my father said in the Maritime Inquiry.

The pilots along with Pat (whose is a terribly sad story; killed in Vietnam, way too early) and **Barry Lovett** in the Hueys.

Fred McCreanor was the winch operator with Lovett. **Ben Bathurst** was in the Wessex. Vickers did some incredible flying; he was a legend, and very sadly killed as the first helo pilot in Vietnam.

The men of the Vendetta were also incredible and the conditions she fought to get there put her in great danger. It is a great Australian story, as yet untold.

So if you'd like to publish a follow-on article please feel welcome to do so. The name of the book will eventually be '*The Shadow of the Ship*' and as well as the story of the ship also contains the heroics of the rescuers, many Navy.

Kind regards,

Terri Fairbairn (email supplied) ♣



OP BURSA UPDATE



By: CAPT Andrew Whittaker, RAN

The Operation Bursa Recognition Project is responsible for validating applications for the award of the Australian Service Medal with clasp Counter Terrorism/Special Recovery (ASM CT/SR) for Fleet Air Arm and associated personnel.

Op Bursa was the provision of a counter-terrorism capability to protect the Bass Strait oil and gas platforms against potential terrorist attack. Navy provided air support with Wessex and Sea King helicopters to Special Forces from the commencement of the Operation in 1980, until the task was handed over to Army Aviation in 1990. As well as protection of oil and gas platforms, training was conducted in Ship Underway Recovery following the hijacking of the MS Achille Lauro in the Mediterranean in 1985 by members of the Palestine Liberation Front.

Operational security meant that much of HMAS *Albatross* didn't really know what was happening at HC723, HU816 and later at HS817, with constant comings and goings in the dark and disappearing to East Sale for weeks at a time.

The operations were real "seat of the pants" flying, which would likely be considered very high risk if examined through today's flight safety and risk-management prism: but it was a job that needed to be done.

This was before such technology as Night Vision Goggles or GPS. For the Wessex, it involved six aircraft flying in formation at low level, over

water, at night, no lights, with nothing more than strategically placed cyalumes (glow sticks) attached to the aircraft to give reference points for formation keeping.

The terminal stages of the assault had three aircraft in line abreast, Lead and the two snipers, with the sniper aircraft conducting night formation out the side windows, before racing ahead to reach their firing positions before Lead arrived over the oil or gas platform, to deliver SAS troops by fast-rope.

The requirements to have the minimum number of serviceable aircraft available at four or six hours notice-to-move (six aircraft in the case of Wessex) meant a demanding load on the maintenance team and any shortfall had to be reported as a capability deficiency to Fleet Headquarters and rectified ASAP. This meant long hours on the tools, often in the depths of winter on the flight line at East Sale (no hangers were provided by the Air Force). Invariably, eight or more Wessex were available, and the additional aircraft became running spares for the assault wave.

While much of the operational training involving assaults with the SAS was conducted under cover of darkness, there were also daytime tasks out to the rigs, airborne sniping and fast-rope training. This meant that maintenance and flying activity while on deployment to East Sale was conducted around the clock.

Just being on recall on a short notice-to-move was in itself a challenge. This was pre-mobile phones and for years the squadron duty officer had the latest technology, a pager. He then had to call numerous land line numbers in the event of a call-out.

For those who didn't have a phone at home, the Police were often used to door-knock. Some people also remember being in the



Roxy Cinema in Nowra and Squadron recall announcements being made during the movie.

Squadron personnel were limited in how far they could go from home or the base for virtually the entire time they were posted to a Squadron holding the responsibility for counter-terrorist operations, because once a call-out was initiated, they were expected to be on an aircraft heading to East Sale in less than six hours, having first prepared the aircraft and the aircrew conducted flight planning and briefing.

For those who were involved, many remember well their experiences operating with the SAS; such as the amazing airborne sniping and loading-up for a practice assault, where matt black vans would drive along a darkened flight line, delivering heavily armed troops, dressed completely in black, to a row of running aircraft.

Although we lost two people in the crash of Wessex 825 in Bass Strait, this was due to a manufacturing defect leading to metal fatigue, not aircrew or maintenance error. As such, the safety record is testimony to the skill and diligence of the aircrew and maintenance teams in highly demanding conditions.

So, why did it take over 40 years to get the medal? The ASM was established in 1988 and eligibility backdated to 1975. The Counter Terrorism clasp was approved in 2011 and backdated to 1979. As such, those employed on Op Bursa and other CT work only became eligible for the medal in 2011. However, Navy was not included in the eligibility criteria and this was only rectified in 2020.

Those who have received their medals or are in "processing" are:

- **Batches 1-4** – notified (eg "received and registered" email from the Team) before 15 Apr 21 (medals received)
- **Batch 5** - notified between 15 Apr 21 and 28 May 21 (medals arriving)
- **Batch 6** - notified between 29 May 21 and 29 Jun 21 (medals arriving)
- **Batch 7** - notified between 30 Jun 21 and 29 Jul 21
- **Batch 8** - notified between 30 Jul 21 and 30 Aug 21
- **Batch 9** - notified between 1 Sep 21 and 28 Sep 21

So far, 348 people have been awarded the ASM CT/SR, or had their application successfully

vetted, under the Navy's Op Bursa Recognition Project. There are many more out there who qualify, but are either unaware or have not followed through with an application. Tell your mates who may qualify to apply [here](#).

The Op Bursa team is still looking to conduct presentation ceremonies in Nowra, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne in December/January, but these will be subject to the volatility of state borders. A presentation ceremony was conducted at Australia House in London on 6 September. The article on page 28 by Graeme Lunn, *Exchange Service Recognised* provides a brief history of RN/RAN personnel exchange and details of those exchange officers awarded the ASM in London.

Of the RN exchange personnel, the Team is still trying to trace LCDR J. **Bennetts** SDEN AE (HC723 - 1981). The only USN exchange officer located so far is LT **Carl Bindman**, who is yet to apply.

As part of the ASM processing, a number of personnel were noted as having not received the Australian Defence Medal (ADM). These were mainly due to leaving the Navy before the ADM was established in 2006 (eligibility backdated to 1945), or were missing clasps to the Defence Force Service Medal. These were processed on behalf of members without any additional paperwork. If you believe you are missing an award, you can apply directly to the Directorate of Honours and Awards [here](#).

Finally, in celebrating the award of the ASM, let us not forget those who died while protecting our nation.

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN

Those who died on domestic counter-terrorism duties

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1982 | Diving operations in Bass Strait.
TPR David O'Callaghan , SASR |
| 1883 | Crash of Wessex 825 in Bass Strait.
LSA Gary Macey , RAN
CPL James Campbell , RAAF |
| 1992 | Diving operations in Bass Strait.
SGT Paul Kench , SASR |
| 1996 | Black Hawk mid-air collision, High Range near Townsville.
18 killed (SASR and Army Avn)
Plus 10 injured (SASR and Army Avn). ♠ |

Last Month's Mystery Photo Answer



Last month we asked readers to tell us where and when the above photo was taken, and what the connection was to the FAA. We received four correct replies.

For the motor-heads amongst our readers, the image was snapped during the Racing Championship of NSW, which was held at the airfield at Nowra on 16 June 1947. In those days our Fleet Air Arm was still a plan on a piece of paper (although it was getting pretty close), so the airfield was still in RAAF hands.

Up until a week before the event it was called the "NSW Grand Prix" but the Australian Automobile Association, who was the governing body of motorsport at the time, deemed the 'Grand Prix' title to be reserved exclusively for the broader Australian event.

The race was a 110 mile handicap conducted over 25 laps of a 4.35 mile course laid out on the runways and taxiways of the airfield. In those days only the main runway was sealed so some of the track was on dirt.

There were 38 entries from NSW, QLD and

VIC which reflected the pent up demand for racing in the early post war years. Crowd estimates vary from 15,000 to 25,000 - an impressive figure for those days.

The crowd saw Tom Lancy's MG TC win the race from the field of 30 who actually started. In those days things were simpler - Lancy had packed his wife and young daughter into the car at his home in Manly, driven down to Nowra, unpacked, removed the screen and hood, and won the race. He reversed the process to get home again.

We don't have a figure for Lancy's time or speed, but one of the race favourites was Alf Barrett in his beautifully prepared Alfa Romeo Monza which was considered the fastest car in Australia. A newspaper report focused on Barrett's top speed of 120mph which provides an idea of the performance level of such vehicles at the time.

Some excitement was added to the meeting when a privately owned aircraft landed at the airfield which was being used for the race at the time. Service and local police ordered the pilot to remain until after the meeting!

The use of Service airfields appears to have been a common occurrence until Philip Island was adopted as the default - but not until 1956.

The next page shows a few more photos of this time, when racing was a little more visceral than it is today. ♦

The Nowra grid ready for start. From L-R: No.5 Jack Murray (MacKellar Ford V8); No.3 John Crouch (Delahaye 135CS); No.14 Alec Mildren (AGM Ford V8 Special); No.4 Frank Kleinig (Hudson Special) and No.1 Alf Barrett's Alfa Romeo Monza, the eventual winner.





Of special mention in the race was Frank Kleinig's self-built Hudson Special. This was an amalgam of many parts but especially an MG L-type chassis with a Hudson 4188cc straight engine. He finished the race just 14 seconds adrift of the winner. ♠

Amongst those who did not finish was Alex Milden's self-built AGM Ford V8 Special. Running off a handicap of 12 minutes the engine overheated, a common affliction of these engines in modified form. ♠

A car rally from Canberra to Nowra in more recent times. It must have been a few years ago. Now you need a Royal Decree to get anywhere near the airfield. ♠



Extracted from the website "Primotipo...Motor Racing Memories, Observations and Opinions on the sports past, present and future. You can see more details of the Nowra event, and of the website itself, by clicking [here](#). ♠



Sometimes the answers we get to our Mystery Photos throw up unexpected gems, as in this case.

Rick Sellers not only answered the question perfectly, but enclosed a snapshot of his latest project, a simulacrum of a 1932 Ford V8

Special (for racing in GEAR club events). Great Job! ♠

This Month's Mystery Photo

OK, OK, we admit it...the aviation connection to last month's Mystery Photo was tenuous, to say the least. It was an interesting bit of motoring history though.

This month's MP is right back in the aviation game with an image of a contra-rotating craft in what appears to be a museum. The question is very simple: what type of aircraft was it? Answers to the Editor [here](#) please. ♠



The Latest Scam

Have you been receiving Text Messages about fraudulent payments recently? If so, you are the target of a Scam.

This week I received two such messages: one reporting that someone had tried to buy a diamond bracelet on my Amazon account, and the other about a transaction on PayPal. I deleted them both.

The following appeared in a Brisbane newspaper recently which tells you why:

"I received a text purporting to be from PayPal, telling me that a payment of \$1199.10 appeared to be fraudulent, and asking me to ring a number which was highlighted in blue.

This was a red flag to me, because there have been warnings recently about texts asking people to click on links that insert malware into your phone.

But I figured it could be important, so to protect myself I dialled the number without clicking on the phone link in the text. A foreign voice answered promptly and the conversation started.

It didn't take him long to establish his credentials: he was able to read me the last 10 transactions on my PayPal account, and then told me my correct address and asked me to confirm it. He then said that, to prove his bona fides, PayPal would text me a six-digit authentication number which I was to read back to him. This duly happened.

Then the conversation turned to credit cards. He claimed a fraudulent transaction had been made on my Virgin credit card. He said the number he had on file started with 4724 and asked me for the other digits on the card, plus the expiry date and the security number on the back. He told me that he was in contact with Virgin Money, but Virgin needed me to authenticate the communication and to do this he would text me a six-digit number. This quickly arrived from Virgin and I read the

number to him. This process was repeated several times because 'their computers are slow today'.

A while after the call ended, I got a niggling feeling that something wasn't right. I redialed the number and received a message that the number wasn't connected.

Next time I tried to use my Virgin card it was declined. I rang them immediately, and they told me there had been six attempted unauthorised transactions on my card during the day.

The reason that my caller had been asking me to give him the authenticating numbers from the Virgin texts was so he could authenticate the fraudulent transactions he was trying to make.

Virgin had prevented each one, but in stopping them my card got stopped too.

When I reported this to PayPal they said they never send texts to anyone. All their communications are by email. "

So...its getting scary out there. Scammers are getting more sophisticated, and appear to have access to at least some information on your third party accounts, so take care!

The golden rules are:

- **Don't click on links that you don't recognise.**
- **Don't respond to such messages. If in doubt, contact the agency (PayPal, Amazon etc) which is the subject of the purported fraud. ♣**



Around The Traps...

Wild About Harry's



Last month's cartoon featuring Harry's Pie Van resulted in a couple of responses, including one from **Phil Thompson**, who pointed to some pages from his huge and excellent [PDF file](#) of all things FAA.

It included an excerpt from the 'Slipstream' of September 2010 which tells the story of Harry and his van, and what happened to them both.

You can see a copy of that Slipstream [here](#), and if you scroll to page 8 you can read that story for yourself. There was also a follow up in the [December 2016 Slipstream](#), which tells us that Harry's was saved from the knacker's yard and now resides in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

That was a few years ago so perhaps our Sydney readers (post lockdown) can confirm it was/is true. ♠

Immunisation Certificate?



It seems whatever State or Territory you live in, there will soon be a divide between those who are vaccinated against COVID-19, and

those who are not. It may well be that you can only freely engage in some activities - such as travel, dining and socialising - if you are in the first group.

Those who are vaccinated will be able to access a free Certificate to prove they have been double-jabbed, and the prediction is that this 'pass-

port' will need to be shown on an increasingly regular basis. But how do you get it?

Well, that depends on your preferences. The easiest way for the majority of our members is to access your "Medicare Only" line account through MyGov, or through the "Express Plus" Medicare Account. These allow you to store your Certificate on your phone and to save a copy to your Digital Wallet (such as Apple Pay) if you use one. Read [here](#) for more information.

But what if you don't use Medicare? Gold Card users are a good example. Well, if you had your two jabs at a local provider, such as your Doctor's surgery, you can ask them to give you a printed copy. Alternatively, you can contact the [Australian Immunisation Register](#) on 1800 653 809 and ask to have a statement sent to you, which will take up to 14 days. ♠

New COMFAA Appointed

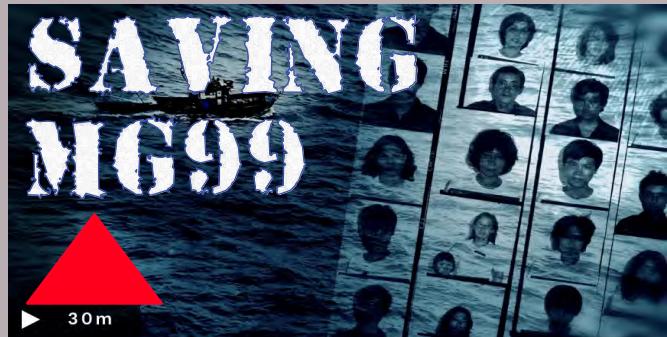


We hear that the next COMFAA is to be **Captain David Frost** (pictured), who is currently the Director of the Maritime Warfare Centre in Sydney.

David will be promoted to Commodore upon taking up his new posting to Albatross at the end of the year.

The current COMFAA, who will have completed three years in the job, is to be posted to the Contestability Division in Canberra. ♠

Video Streaming Opportunity



We've now got a link to the "Australian Story" presentation on iView, which recounts HMAS Melbourne's extraordinary rescue of 99 refugees adrift in the South China Sea, and of the events that brought them and their rescuers together after some 40 years. Click on the image above to watch it. ♠

VETERANS' HELP COLUMN WANTED

Each month when I publish this newsletter, I'm aware that there may be news of interest to veterans about DVA or Government entitlements, and their payment or eligibility. It seems to me to be a shifting minefield, and one that would be of great interest to the majority of our readers if it could be presented in a simple, digestible form.

But I lack the time or expertise to do it.

What I'm after is a volunteer to produce a column each month that alerts us to changes, benefits or initiatives, or things they may not have thought of in that space. It can be a few words or a lot, depending on what is happening.

I'm easy to work with...it would be a simple matter of sending in your column each month and I'll do the rest. The words would be advisory only with an appropriate disclaimer.

Is there anybody who would be prepared to help? Contact the Editor [here](#). ♠



From Auckland in NZ comes this recent picture of FAAA member **Graeme Lunn** in hotel quarantine.

Graeme has recently relocated to NZ after retiring from his airline career in the UK.

New Battlefield Helo Submitted



A joint Sikorsky-Boeing team has officially submitted its proposal for the Defiant X helicopter to the US Army's future Long Range Program.

The airframe is based on the Defiant Technology demonstrator which flew for the first time in March 2019. It will feature a coaxial rotor system, fly-by-wire flight controls, a pusher prop, composite construction and a retractable landing gear.

Changes made since the first prototype include speed, survivability and other enhancements of capability.

The Army is looking to replace its fleet of Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, and expects dramatically improved performance.

You can see a short promotional video [here](#). ♠

Lost & Found

An honest soul contacted us recently to say he'd found the pictured hat, and do we know who the owner is?

Normally a cap is a disposable thing and we wouldn't bother, but this one is probably special as there won't have been many like it.

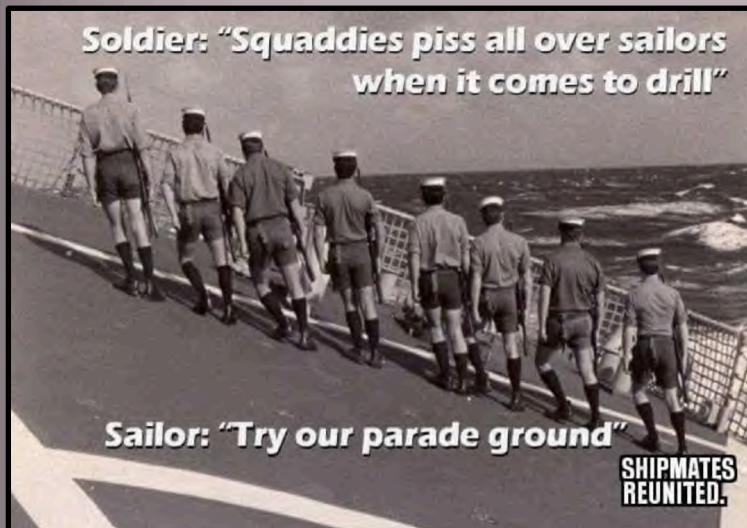
If you think it is yours please contact Mark Neasby [here](#), advising how you came to own it and where you think you lost it. ♠



REST IN PEACE

Since the last edition of "FlyBy" we have been advised of the loss of **Bob Steele** (in April).

Click on the candle image for more details. ♠



HMAS Sydney 80th Anniversary Memorial Event.

Folk from the Eastern States probably won't make it, but here's the last chance for WA people to register for this event.

It's been two years in the making due to the unremitting labour of Adrian Burns, an RAN veteran. He's a FIFO worker so contact him before the 8th October if you wish to get the latest details and register your interest in attending this historic event.

Full details and a link to register your interest can be found at the link below, but don't delay.



SAVE THE DATE

Memorial Weekend for all HMAS Sydney warships,
19-21 November, 2021, Denham, WA.

Commemorating the 80th Anniversary sinking of
HMAS Sydney II on 19 November 1941, and honouring
personnel from all HMAS Sydney warships.

sydney2021@checkedevents.com.au

Vaccine Concerns, Myths and Misconceptions

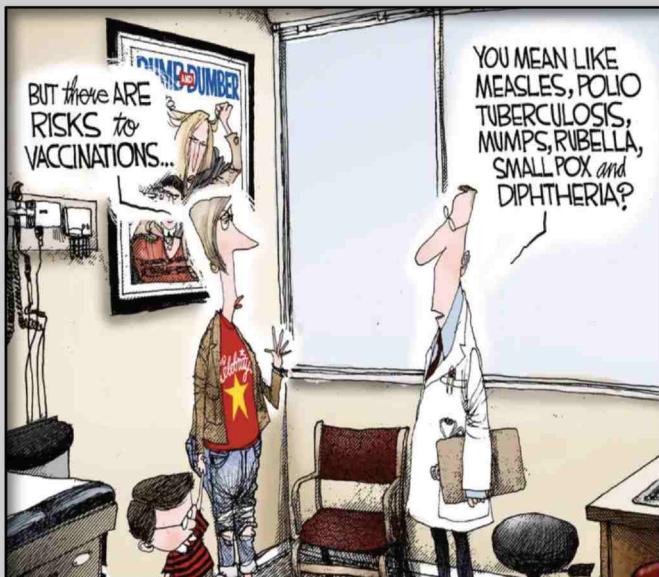
Even a year or so after the principal COVID-19 vaccines were developed, and despite millions of doses being administered world-wide, myths, misconceptions and conspiracy theories about them still abound.

FlyBy is not a medical journal, nor are we qualified to offer medical advice. But we strongly urge hesitant or anti-vax readers to study all the available literature, speak to your GP and make a properly informed judgement. Ignorance or mythology is no excuse when the stakes are so high.

Common myths are:

- Natural immunity is better.
- I can handle the illness without problem.
- Vaccines were developed too quickly.
- Vaccines contain toxins that can harm you.
- The vaccine will give you COVID-19.
- Aztra-Zeneca is dangerous
- Vaccines contain micro-chips.
- The side effects are really bad.
- I can still get sick so why bother being vaccinated.

One of the good sites to read dialogue on these perceptions can be found [here](#). There are plenty of others, and of course you should always speak to your GP if you have any doubts. ♠



Our New Website

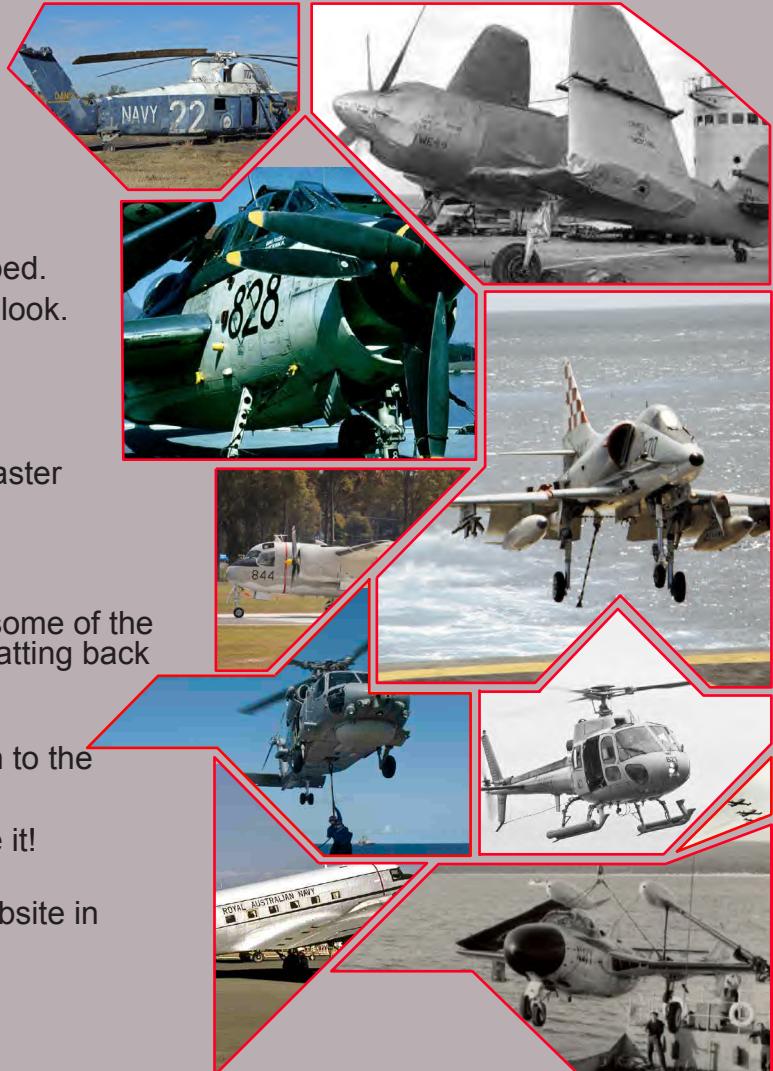
It's here at last! After nearly a year, our new website is to be launched in the first week of October. So, what do we get?

- All previous material has been transcribed.
- Same menu system, same feel, similar look.
- Now scaled for all devices.
- Better security.
- Capacity for full-width images.
- Huge potential for better, brighter and faster pages.

BUT...

- It's going to take a little while to tweak some of the existing forms, and bring the page formatting back up to scratch.
- People who were granted a log-in recently may have difficulty in logging in to the Members' area.
- The webmaster has to learn how to use it!

There will be a feature article about the website in next Month's FlyBy. ♠



FEEDBACK WANTED



Your views on this 'new look' FlyBy would be really useful to help shape how future editions are put together.

Comments on the design, overall look and content, and how you think it could be improved would all be welcome. Any constructive criticism would also be gratefully received.

Simply click [here](#) and let me know what you think. Editor. ♠

Exchange Service Recognised



By Graeme Lunn

The close ties between the RAN and the RN represented by exchange officers reflects a program that has existed for almost 100 years. Loan service was common from the first founding of the Royal Australian Navy in 1911 to fill the many appointments needing a depth of experience and expertise not yet developed in the young service. For example, when it was decided to build the seaplane carrier *Albatross* - laid down at Cockatoo Island in April 1926 - the Admiralty, at the Commonwealth Naval Boards request, extended the loan service of Engineer Captain (later Engineer Rear-Admiral) **Ernest Sydenham** RN, Director of Engineering (Navy), to keep his vital expertise on hand to oversee construction.

Exchange service was based on a different premise to that of loan service. That premise was enunciated in mid-1923 when secret Memorandum 221 on '*Empire Naval Policy and Co-Operation*' was sent to Australia by the Committee for Imperial Defence. This policy was for consideration and adoption at the forthcoming Imperial Conference in London. It recommended a distinct Dominion navy operating cruisers (built to

Recipients of the medal award in Australia House on 6 September 2021. Left to right: CDRE Holthouse (Head of Australian Defence Staff London); Graeme Lunn (ex RAN), Al Bucknell, Graham Abraham, Stan Burgess, Andy McKie, Keith Jones, CAPT Mandziy (Naval Adviser London). Other RN recipients of the ASM who were not able to be present were Paul Bennett, Kevin King, Dave Stanton and Phil Thornton.

carry one or more amphibians) and submarines with commonality to the RN in all areas of personnel, operations and equipment. To ensure this commonality, was the proposal for 'a free interchange, both of individuals and of ships' with the Royal Navy.

The Admiralty, overseeing a service of imperial reach, considered that in a small Dominion navy, serving on one station and with a limited number of ships, Dominion officers would become 'stale'. Australia was held to have the most advanced Dominion navy and the Sea Lords determined that the RAN was to be fully interchangeable in all respects with the RN. To help ensure this, a regular system of exchange was to be arranged in addition to the extensive years of training already undertaken in the UK by junior RAN officers.

The presumptive head of the RAN, Rear-Admiral **Percival Hall-Thompson** CB CMG

RN, had been seated at the Australian table with Prime Minister **Bruce** during the October 1923 Imperial Conference.

Hall-Thompson arrived at Melbourne's Navy Office 25 February 1924 on loan as First Naval Member of the Commonwealth Naval Board. To institute the proposals agreed by the Prime Minister he commenced the first five-year naval program to construct those aviation capable cruisers and advanced, against considerable resistance, a scheme to train naval pilots and observers. Admiral Sir **Victor Smith** AC KBE CB DSC RAN (an Observer) is the acknowledged Father of our modern Fleet Air Arm, but with these efforts Hall-Thompson (a Gunnery specialist), and his successor Rear-Admiral **William Napier** CB CMG DSO RN, became at the least the FAA's Great Uncles.

The interchange of ships was quickly entrenched. On 18 April 1924 *Adelaide* joined the flag of the battlecruiser *Hood* in Sydney for the remainder of the Special Service Squadrons World Cruise. In 1925 *Concord* accompanied *Adelaide* back to Australia as the first Royal Navy exchange cruiser, while *Brisbane* served with the China Squadron from February to August 1925.

The complexities of individual officer exchanges took longer to sort out because of Treasury intransigence. The financial conditions for interchange of personnel eventually adopted the Admiralty proposal that the host service would pay the individual. In September 1925 the Naval Board recommended for the Minister's approval the commencement of an exchange program of officers.

When *Albatross* was commissioned in 1929, two of her five Observers were RN exchange officers. Lieutenant Commander **George Deverell** RN (exchange for Lieutenant **Alfred Buchanan** RAN) and Lieutenant **Ian Elliot** RN (exchanged for Lieutenant **James Luke** RAN). Deverell was commended for his gallantry when his aircraft landed alongside the wreckage of a crashed Seagull in Norfolk Bay, Tasmania, and he rescued the seriously injured Elliot and his RAAF pilot. Tragically the TAG, **Donald McGowan**, was killed.

The RN/RAN exchange program has significantly strengthened the naval aviation capability of Australia since the 1920s. It is



One of the 'Great Uncles' of the RAN FAA Rear-Admiral Percival Hall-Thompson CB CMG RN

fitting that 2021 saw further recognition of exchange aircrew and their individual contribution to the foundation upon which today's Fleet Air Arm exists.

In October 2020 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Australian Governor General, approved the award of the Australian Service Medal with Counter-Terrorism clasp to eligible Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm personnel. With the welcome assistance of **Gill Kerslake**, an appeal was made in May 2021 through the RN Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association to contact those who had served on exchange with the Royal Australian Navy in the 1980s.

That appeal led to the ASM being approved for nine Fleet Air Arm pilots and Observers. On Monday 6th September five of these retired officers gathered with their wives at the historic Australia House on the Strand. At a formal ceremony they were presented with their medals by the Head of Australian Defence Staff (London) - see picture and caption on previous page.

Graeme Lunn was an Op Bursa captain and was instrumental in finding the RN exchange personnel involved in the Operation. He joined the Naval College in 1976 after Reserve service with Diving Team 6 in Melbourne. After leaving the RAN in 1988, he joined British Airways, serving for over 32 years and amassing 23,000 flying hours before retiring in August 2021. He now lives in New Zealand (see picture on page 23). ♠