

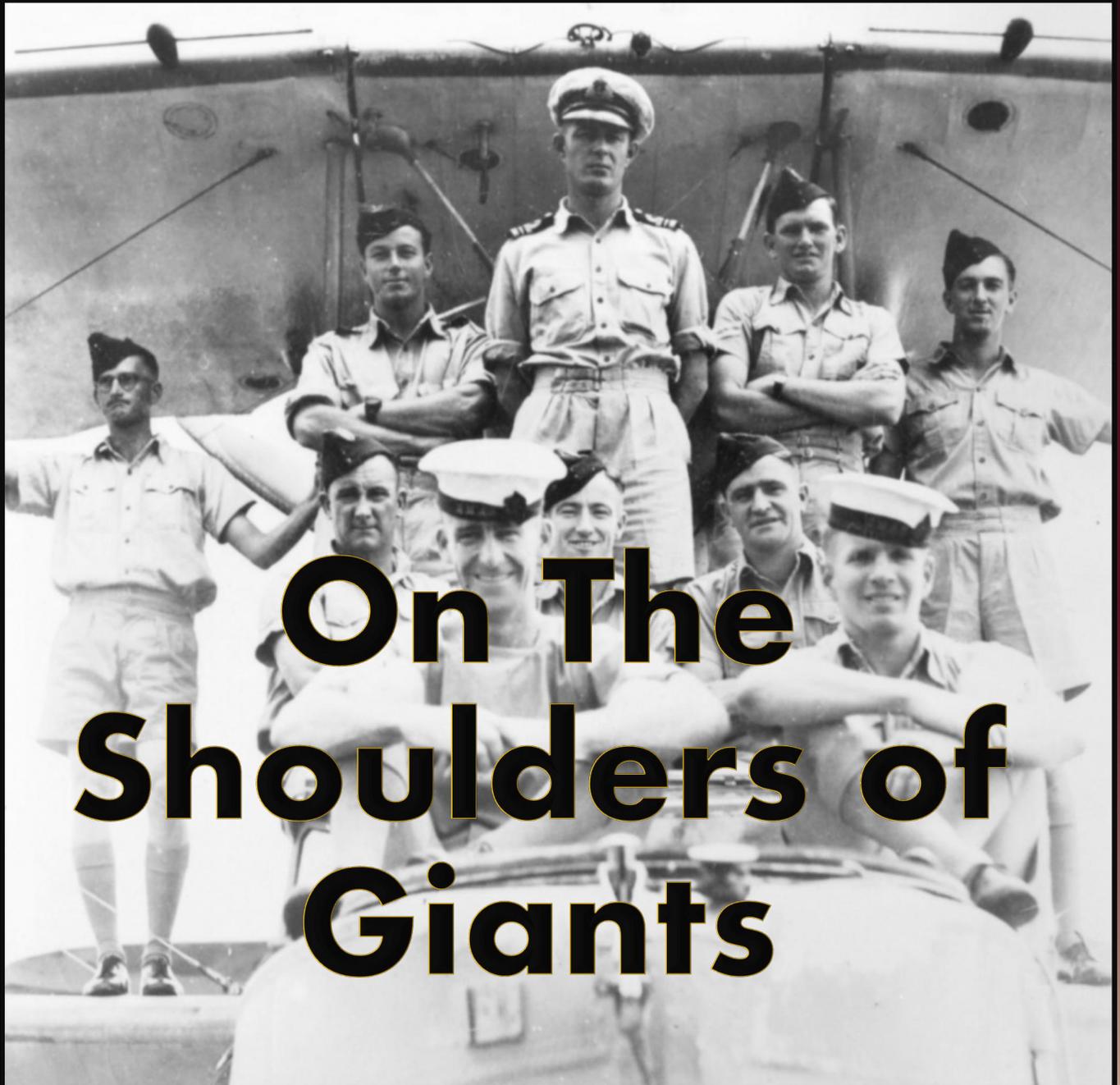


FLYBY

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A periodical of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia
Edition 48, August 2021.



On The Shoulders of Giants

Photographs such as this are regarded by some as simply museum pieces: faded images of individuals long gone, who served their time and moved on, and are now all in their graves. What should we care about them?

But every face here has a story, for each of them built a small piece of the fabric of today's Fleet Air Arm. The skills they brought, the mistakes they made, and the professionalism and pride they displayed are the very stuff of ourselves, and we should

remember them with pride. One such person is Lieutenant Commander **Harrie Gerrett**, stood in the rear rank, and **Graeme Lunn** tells his story.

*

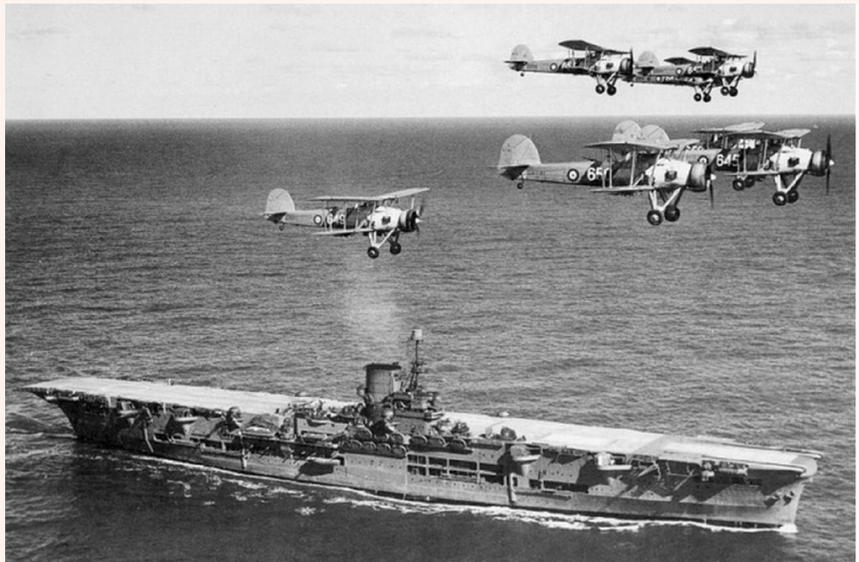
In 1930 Leading Telegraphist/ Air Gunner **Don McGowan** RAN lost his life when his Fairey Seagull III, from the Seaplane Carrier *Albatross*, entered a spin gunnery spotting. Crashing into Norfolk Bay (TAS) he became the first name on the Australian Naval Aviation **Roll of Honour**.

This Roll rightly restricts itself to casualties of flying incidents. Inevitably however this means that our collective memory for those whose naval aviation duties placed them in harm's way, and who died in the performance of that duty whilst not flying, fades with passing time.

Our modern Fleet Air Arm began in 1947, yet Australian Naval Aviation had already existed in several forms for 20 years. Coming after the Australian Aces of the Royal Naval Air Service in the First World War these early pioneers of naval aviation 'down under' are overdue for proper acknowledgement. One poignant example is Lieutenant-Commander Harrie Binns Gerrett (O) RAN .

Harrie was born on 5 November 1912 in the Kogarah Fire Station where his father was the Brigades District Officer. In January 1926 he entered the Royal Australian Naval College, aged just 13. Four years later he spent three months aboard the RAN's flagship *Australia* as a Cadet Midshipman and then, on graduation, a further eight months as a Midshipman. In those years *Australia* embarked a RAAF Seagull III, requiring a crane for launch as well as recovery. Later (in 1935) a catapult was installed. Captain Chalmers RAN reported that the 18 year old Harrie was still immature but foretold he would develop well.

As was usual for junior RAN officers, Harrie and his classmates did much of their training with the Royal Navy. Initially he joined the battleship *Royal Sovereign* alongside in Malta on 19 August 1931. Over the next several years Harrie also served in the destroyer *Basilisk* and another battleship, *Revenge*. In an attempt by the Admiralty to make junior seaman officers more air-minded Harrie and his course mates also had their first brief exposure to carrier naval aviation with 10 days in *Glorious*. After demanding courses at Dryad, Excellent and



A Flight of Swordfish fly over HMS Ark Royal, to which Harrie Gerrett (820 Squadron) had been posted as an Observer.

Greenwich he passed his exams for Lieutenant with average results.

Returning to Australia Harrie was posted to the destroyer *Waterhen* in 1934 and, by the end of that year, now in *Vendetta*, he had been awarded his Bridge Watchkeeping Certificate. Lieutenant-Commander Rosenthal said that he was 'loyal and reliable', an excellent Correspondence Officer, yet giving the impression of being somewhat 'off hand'. One saving grace apparently was that he was keen on sports with a marked preference for Rugby.

Not for him however was the standard specialisation in the Navigation, Gunnery or Torpedo branches. Harrie had applied, and was reported by his Captain as suitable, to specialise as an Observer.

A Minute from the Second Naval Member dated 24/2/37 was not encouraging stating that he was "Barely above average. The present intention is to consider him for the (O) course commencing in Oct if it transpires that *Albatross* is to commission in Jan 38, in which case we shall want every Observer we can raise. Failing *Albatross* commissioning it is the intention to consider him for Observer course commencing in April 1938."

In the event *Albatross*, decommissioned since mid-1933, was accepted by the Admiralty in 1938 as part payment for the new cruiser *Hobart* and sailed for England. A useful vessel in the coming conflict, but she was torpedoed off the Normandy beaches in August 1944 with over 100 casualties.

While awaiting selection for that longed for course, Harrie had a slightly more upbeat report from Captain Wilson RN whilst serving on the cruiser *Canberra*. Seen as 'an officer who shows promise of developing good powers of leadership and

influence. Rather slow to learn but keen and reliable. Good physique and good social qualities.' This possibly partly reflects his more mature and settled life having married **Virginia Maud Christie** in Sydney on 12 June 1937.

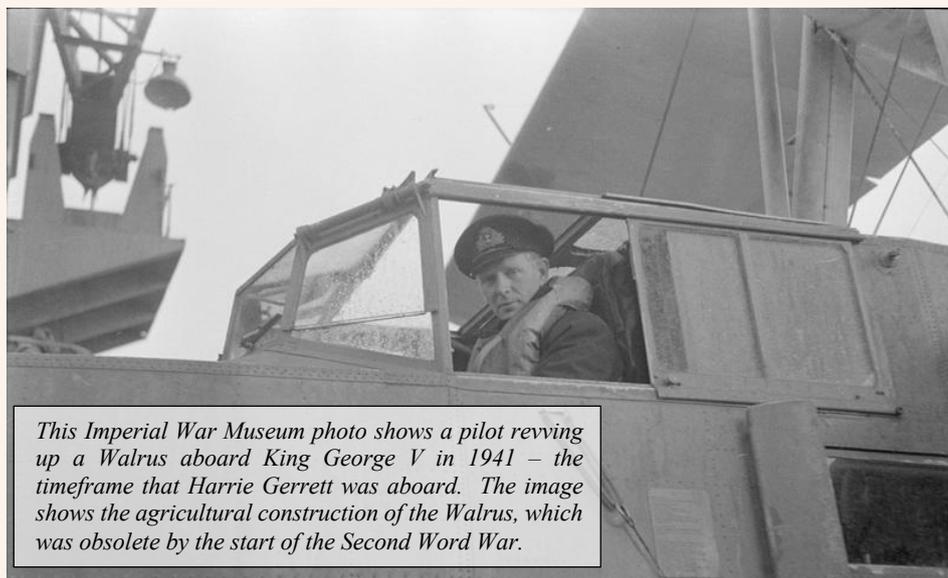
Finally selected to sub-specialise as an Observer Harrie sailed to the United Kingdom, a four-week journey in those days, on 10 September 1937. His Observers course took eight months from October 1937 to June 1938. On completion Harrie joined the 27,000 ton *Courageous*, a World War 1 battlecruiser converted in the mid 1920's into an aircraft carrier, for a consolidation cruise as an Acting Observer.

His initial assessment was not promising, finding him 'slow' and not showing 'much indication of being an efficient observer', but did caution 'that it was too early to judge.'

Harrie was then posted in November 1938 as commissioning crew to the purpose built 28,000 ton carrier *Ark Royal* for Acting Observer duties. Designed to carry 60+ aircraft in six squadrons he was there when the new carrier embarked her first squadron - the Swordfish of 820 Squadron in January 1939. Four months later Harrie was posted to that very squadron as an Observer.

With the commencement of the Second World War in September *Ark Royal* sailed from Scapa Flow. Harrie embarked onboard with 820 Squadron from *Sparrowhawk*, the Royal Naval Air Station in the Orkneys. It was an understrength squadron of 9 antiquated Fairey Swordfish Mark 1 aircraft who were to face the desperate rigours of that first year of hostilities.

After anti-submarine patrols in the Western Atlantic *Ark Royal*, with Force K, sped south in response to the threat from the commerce raider *Admiral Graf Spee*. She initially operated between Dakar and Ascension Island. Then further into the South Atlantic to the Cape, briefly into the Indian Ocean and west across to Rio de Janeiro by December. Off Dakar, searching for enemy merchant ships in January, the carrier headed for the Mediterranean via the United Kingdom and was at Malta by early April 1940. 820 Squadron disembarked to Dekheila Air Station at Alexandria, Egypt.



This Imperial War Museum photo shows a pilot revving up a Walrus aboard King George V in 1941 – the timeframe that Harrie Gerrett was aboard. The image shows the agricultural construction of the Walrus, which was obsolete by the start of the Second World War.

The Squadron hurriedly re-embarked as *Ark Royal* sailed with dispatch west past Gibraltar and then north when the Norwegian campaign started. Intense trying months in Arctic waters followed as *Ark Royal* sortied regularly from Scapa Flow to provide air cover for both the navy and the army. 820 Squadron, in addition to anti-submarine patrols and surface searches, conducted bombing attacks on shore targets such as Narvik and Vaernes airfield near Trondheim. During this hectic flying period Harrie was reported as 'an able and experienced observer' but Captain Power RN (a gunnery officer) thought he should put 'more effort into his general duties.'

After covering the withdrawal of troops from Norway, *Ark Royal* joined Force H out of Gibraltar. Following the French surrender Force H sailed to North Africa and on 3rd July 820 Squadron attacked French battleships with torpedoes and laid mines at the harbour entrance to Mers-el-Kébir. When Italy entered the war the Italian air base at Cagliari was also attacked.

Harrie's confidential report, after an intense 12 months of operations, noted that he had 'led a Squadron against the enemy with courage and ability.' Captain Holland RN, with his big ship background, also thought Harrie had become rather 'stale' and considered some time in a battleship would be just the thing! Stale or not Lieutenant Harrie Garrett (O) RAN was Mentioned in Dispatches on 4 October 1940 'for continued gallantry and devotion to duty and good service whilst serving in HMS *Ark Royal* in operations in the Mediterranean'.

Joining *Valiant* on 15 July 1940 to return to the UK the journey took longer than expected when the battleship was tasked to protect the old carrier *Argus* in Operation Hurry which resupplied Malta with 12 desperately needed RAF Hurricanes.

Eventually disembarking in Liverpool 12 August Harrie made his way to the Orkneys. Many months at *Sparrowhawk* for conversion and duties with 700 Squadron followed.

This squadron had a pool of 42 (eventually 63) Supermarine Seagull V's - the Walrus. 700 Sqn was the headquarters for all catapult aircraft embarked in battleships and cruisers and used *Pegasus* in the Irish Sea for catapult training. Harrie eventually embarked on the 42,000 ton *King George V* at Scapa Flow on 2 April 1941 as the Observer and Commanding Officer of the flight.



Although he was not in the famous Swordfish strike against the heavy Battleship Bismarck, Harrie Gerrett was aboard HMS King George V for the final destruction of the German vessel. It was one of the most famous battles of the second world war.

This meant that Harrie was onboard for one of the most famous naval actions of the war. *King George V*, flagship of a force which included her battleship consort *Rodney* and the carriers *Victorious* and *Ark Royal*, hunted down and destroyed the 50,000 ton *Bismarck* on 27 May 1941 in weather so appalling that seawater flooded down to her shell rooms.

That the battleships labouring 135 miles astern had been able to catch up with *Bismarck* was due to Harrie's old 820 Sqn in *Ark Royal* who, taking off from a deck pitching 50 feet, had managed the single torpedo strike on *Bismarck's* stern that caused her to slow and circle with a jammed rudder. Dangerously low on fuel *King George V* and *Rodney* immediately retired north as *Bismarck* sank.

There followed some welcome months of quiet for the ship and crew in Scapa Flow while the war's focus shifted briefly east during the initial German advance into Russia.

Harrie's confidential report in September 1941 by Captain Patterson RN stated that he was 'a good executive officer and an able Observer. While in

this ship he has had only one aircraft in his flight but he has kept this and his hangars in very efficient condition.' It was a sound send off for his return to Australia.

Harrie was posted to *Sydney* as her Observer but that posting was cancelled when *Sydney* was sunk with all 645 of her crew on 19 November 1941. Those losses included the Observer, Lieutenant Commander Jack Bacon RN, Flying Officer Ray Barry RAAF and all the RAAF Airmen of the embarked flight. Joining *Canberra* instead he spent three months on convoy escort duties to Port Moresby, New Zealand and Fiji.

On 26 February 1942, twelve years after he had first stepped aboard her as a Cadet Midshipman, the 29 year old Lieutenant Harrie Garrett (O) MID RAN joined *Australia* as her Observer. The RAAF had purchased 24 Walrus spotter/reconnaissance amphibians which, parented by No.9 Squadron RAAF, provided the flights for five cruisers and several Armed Merchant Cruisers.

Operating in the south-west Pacific, *Australia* played an important role in the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Solomon Islands campaign. Transferred to the United States 7th Fleet in February 1943 she supported amphibious operations in New Georgia, New Britain and Cape Gloucester. After ten months of naval Squadron (O) duties in addition to his shipboard Observer duties Harry was promoted Lieutenant-Commander on 16 September 1943.

Unfortunately for Harrie, the days of cruiser embarked flights was coming to an end. The RAN now operated in task forces with huge air assets from accompanying carrier groups, and there was little tactical benefit from carrying a vulnerable old Walrus. The aviation fuel stores had proved volatile with battle damage and the topside weight of the aircraft, catapult and crane was considerable. As the cruisers entered into refit, their catapults were removed and extra anti-aircraft mounts were fitted.

It was a narrowing field for RAN aviators in 1944 and, however good Harrie now was, he was not competitive against the likes of **Lieutenant Victor Smith** (O) RAN who had been a year junior to him at the naval college. Smith had also been aboard

Ark Royal (with 821 Squadron) during the Norwegian Operations and was still serving in her when she was sunk shortly after Harrie arrived back in Australia. Smith, who had been sunk twice and shot down twice, was now Air Staff Officer in the escort carrier *Tracker* and about to be promoted early.

Seeing the inevitable, Harrie was approved to transfer to general duties. Captain Farncomb RAN, leaving to command the escort carrier *Attacker* in the Mediterranean, recognised Harrie's feelings in his confidential report of March 1944 writing that he was '...disappointed at being unable to follow an Observer's career' but 'he would be suitable as 1st Lieutenant of a small cruiser in a few months time.' Time however was to be in short supply.

Australia reached Sydney at the end of July for a three week refit. Some 60 tons of top weight was removed including the Catapult and starboard crane and, where possible, Bofors anti-aircraft guns replaced the lighter Oerlikons. As soon as the work was completed *Australia* departed to Task Force 75, preparing for the assault on the Philippines. That assault operation commenced with the Battle for Leyte Gulf in October.

At 0605 on 21 October 1944, Trafalgar Day, Harrie was the Air Defence Officer manning the Director Controller above the bridge. A single engine bomber flew low along the port side where the AA batteries were not able to engage until the final moments. Clipping the forward funnel it crashed in a fireball against the tripod mast and the Director. Debris and burning fuel exploded down from the Director to the Bridge and B turret below.

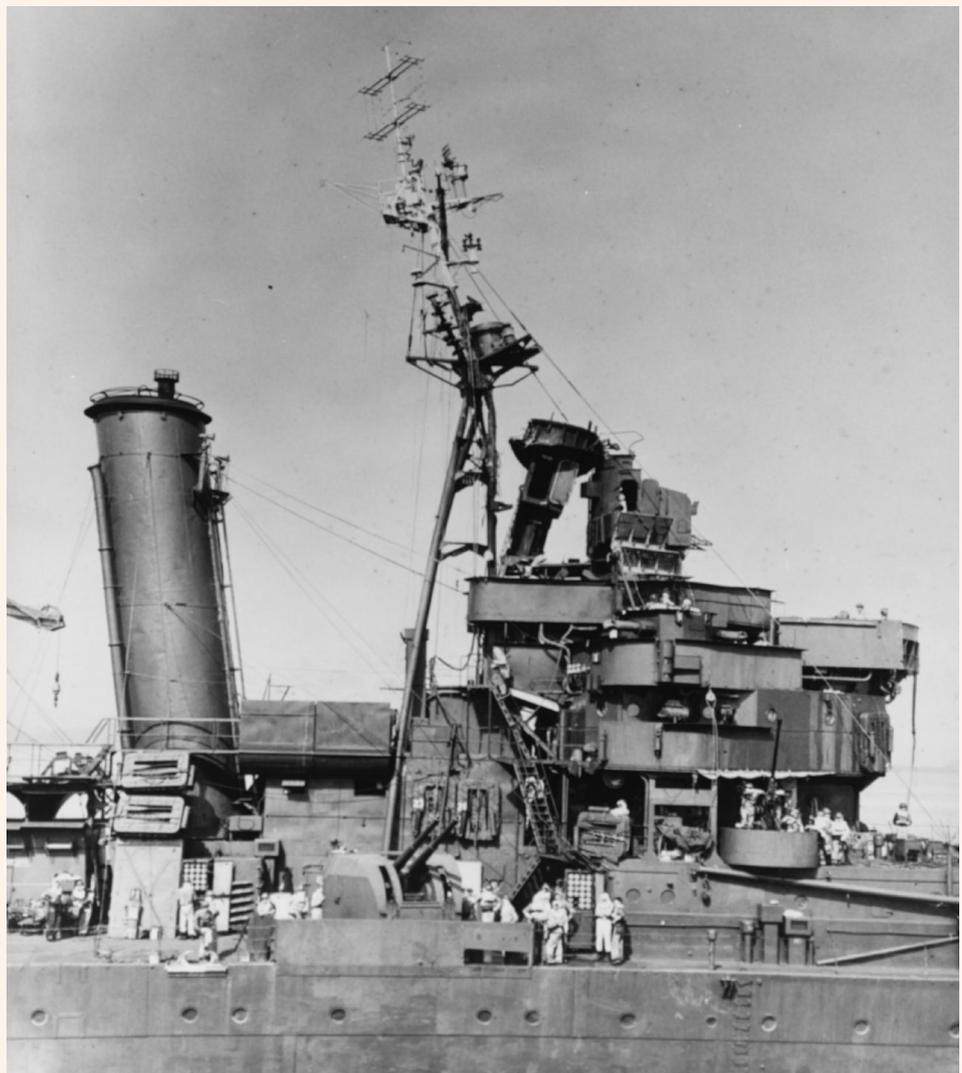
Harrie was badly burnt and mortally wounded, as was Captain Dechaineux on the Bridge below. Issuing orders for putting out the fires and telling

the men to keep calm, The Canberra Times recorded that:

"Mortally wounded the Lieutenant-Commander lay outstretched on the deck refusing medical attention while he gave orders to the fire-fighting parties. All agree that it was largely due to his appreciation of the situation that the fire was quickly controlled. Between orders he asked a seaman 'Did we get the plane?' Told that they had, he said 'That is all that counts'." He died aboard the ship two hours after receiving his wound."

As the damaged cruiser withdrew south to Manus Island the thirty dead were buried at sea and 39 of the 62 wounded were transferred to hospital as soon as she berthed. As the damage was repaired three additional Bofors and six more Oerlikons were also mounted.

At Navy Office the pencilled notation on Harrie's personal file was now followed in heavy black ink



The damage suffered by HMAS Australia in October 1944, when a bomber struck the forward mast and crashed into the Director Controller in what is believed to be the first Japanese suicide attack of that theatre. Both Captain Dechaineux and Lieutenant Gerrett were mortally wounded, together with 28 other members of the ship's company.

by the traditional D.D. (discharged dead) and 'Died of Wounds received in action'. In Sydney his wife Virginia, who had been hoping for his imminent return so they could celebrate his 32nd birthday together, was consoling their young daughters Carolyn and Rosemary. She received pay in lieu of his extended leave and a widow's pension of £10 per fortnight.

Harrie's name is inscribed, as are many other RAN names of those lost at sea, on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. If you are in Canberra at 22:33 on October 4 you will see projected onto the exterior of the Australian War Memorial the name Harrie Binns Gerrett. ✈

New Members

The following new members (and the State in which they live) have recently joined the Association. Welcome, and thank you for supporting the FAAAA.

Don't forget, if you are reading this and you are not a member you can easily apply to join [here](#).

Landon, Phil QLD
Dempster, Ronald QLD
Hicks, Murray QLD

Lea, Paul (Tanzi) NSW
Wilson, Ian NSW
Healey, Tony NSW
Niarchos, John VIC
Warden, David NSW
Smith, Jeff NSW
Intihar, Anthony NSW
Woods, Chris ACT
McConchie, Barrie NSW
Beldom, Andrew ACT
Dickfos, Steve ACT

You can access the list of all our members on our website, including their contact email (unless they have requested otherwise). The link is [here](#). You'll need to log on to see it, which means you must be a current member yourself. ✈

† REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of **David "Joe" Mumford** and **John Clayton**

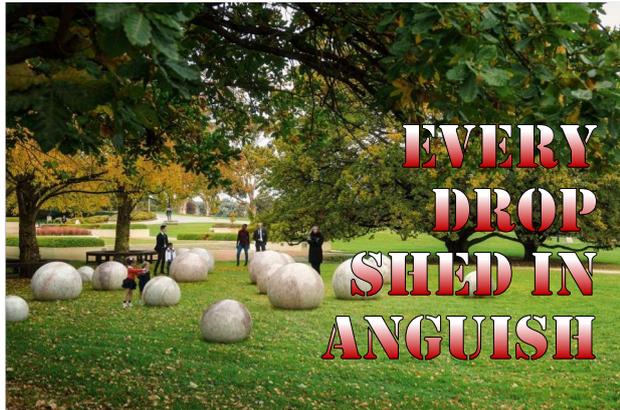
You can read a little more on our Obituary pages [here](#), and, if you are a member of the Association, you can leave a comment there if you wish. ✈



August's Mystery Photo

This month's Mystery Photo shows a military aircraft that has come to grief...but what happened to it, where it was at the time and how it got out of there makes for an interesting story. Can any reader enlighten us? Click [here](#) to respond.

Around The Traps...



The Australian War Memorial is commissioning a work of art to recognise and commemorate the suffering caused by war and military service. The sculptural installation will provide a place in the Memorial's Sculpture Garden for visitors to quietly grieve, reflect on their experiences, and to remember the long-term cost of war and service.

The intent is to provide a place at the Memorial for those who have experienced and witnessed the ongoing trauma that can result from service, and for Memorial visitors to reflect on this experience. Historically, this suffering has not been acknowledged. Attention is rightly given to those who died during war. However, those who survived and were left with mental suffering from wounds and injuries sustained in service, or exposure to intense trauma, dangerous or life-threatening conditions, often feel forgotten. By providing overdue recognition and understanding of the scars, both seen and unseen, it is hoped that this work of art will assist somehow in recovery.

Australian artist **Alex Seton** was unanimously selected by veterans and their loved ones to deliver this work of art. *For Every Drop Shed in Anguish*, a field of sculpted Australian pearl marble droplets, will be made by Alex Seton over the next two years and installed in the Sculpture Garden in 2023.

"It is hoped the sculpture will provide a point of connection to all who have suffered as a consequence of service, whether their own, or someone close to them," said **Matt Anderson**, the Director of the AWM. "Alex Seton's remarkable sculpture will recognise that the blood, sweat and tears shed in anguish, whether in training, deployment or operations was not in vain. The consequence of that service is rightly commemorated here at the Australian War Memorial where visitors to the Memorial will be able

to reflect upon all who have put service before self."

Ben Farinazzo, a veteran with PTSD, said "Every droplet has a unique shape, defined by its delicate surface tension, as if about to burst. Their rounded liquid forms suggest blood, sweat or tears — for every drop ever shed in anguish. Most importantly, when touched these forms reveal themselves to have an inner strength and resilience that provides hope and promise of healing."

If you, or someone you know requires support, please contact:

Open Arms: Veterans & Families Counselling 1800 011 046

Lifeline Australia 13 11 14

Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

Full AWM article can be found [here](#). ✈

Fort Rucker Anzac Day

Understandably, the traditional April 25th Australian ANZAC Day Memorial Day dawn service held annually at Fort Rucker, Alabama was modified this year due to the Covid. However, the attached video message from **LTCol Bartle**, Senior Foreign Liaison Officer, Australian Army, Fort Rucker displays his tremendous efforts in creating a classic virtual 2021 ANZAC Day ceremony in remembrance of Australia's ANZAC Day, as well as the 32 Americans and 5 Australian men lost in Vietnam while members of the unique US Army 135th Experimental Military Unit (EMU).

Our sincere appreciation goes out to Col Bartle, **Chaplin Crowley** and **John Crowley** for all their efforts and heart felt unified patriotism!

Fred Dunaway, 135th AHC (EMU), 1970-71

You can view the ceremony on YouTube [here](#). ✈

Wall of Service Update



Order Number 49 is now open for applications, with the following names on it so far:

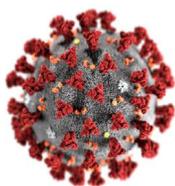
J.R. MACARTNEY R93356 POEAC Jul61-Jun73.
E.M. GANGLOFF S112549 CPOATA Jul72-Dec92
S.J. FLETCHER S125766 LSATA Oct79-May97
P. LEA O147812 LCDR Jun90-Dec11

J. NIARCHOS O42558 LCDR(AE) Jan62-Mar87
B.D. McCONCHIE A50134 LEUT Nov54-May58.
D.WARDEN S128583 LSATC3 Jan 80 – Aug 93.
C.J. TIETZEL R42885 WOATA Jan 64 – Jan 17.

For those who don't know, the Wall of Service is a unique facility which records the names of people who have served, or are still serving, in the RAN Fleet Air Arm. Members of allied Forces (eg RN) who were posted to an RAN FAA unit are also eligible. You can find more details [here](#), including how much it cost and how to apply.

We are starting to get close to putting the next order in to the Foundry, so if you want to avoid a long wait please apply now. ✈

Aircrew Reunion Postponed



The Aircrew Reunion which was planned for **22-23 October** at the Historic Aircraft Restoration Society at Albion Park Rail has been postponed until 2022 due to uncertainty about the current COVID lockdown and how long it may last.

This early decision was made to avoid any uncertainty as COVID continues to be detected in NSW and other parts of the country.

Once the situation stabilises next year the organisers will advise new dates. ✈

OLD BAR VN REUNION STILL ON

John Macartney, the organiser of the fabulous Old Bar Vietnam reunions, had a meeting with the local RSL and the Old Bar Public School in mid July, and the decision was made to continue with the plan to hold the Vietnam Veterans' day event on **16, 17 and 18 August** in Old Bar. You can contact the organiser [here](#).

It is hoped that the restriction will be eased by then and things might be "normal" but there will be contingency plans in place should they be needed.

All things being equal 723 Squadron will have an aircraft landing there at 1200 and the kids, big and small, can check out what a modern rotary wing looks like. Also, if the Dept of Education still has restrictions on who can enter school grounds, the Service can be held on the playing fields with the aircraft as the backdrop. If it rains, they'll move to the club.

So the long and the short of it is there will still be the Vietnam Veterans' Day at Old Bar, as advertised. ✈

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR CHARLIE REX DELAYED



A Memorial Service to commemorate the life of **Commander Charles R.R. Rex**, which was to have been held at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Nowra on **30 July 2021**, has been delayed to **Friday 10th September 2021** due to Covid restrictions.

Those people who had previously registered have been advised separately. If you think you'd like to attend on the new date and you haven't previously registered, you can do so [here](#). ✈

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Slipstream magazine is looking for short pieces telling us where ex-FAA members are and a little of what they have done since leaving the Navy.

And if that doesn't take your fancy, how about a short letter to the Editor telling him of a memory you have, a funny story, or just a bit about a particular event you remember in the Service.

It only takes a few minutes and you will be helping support the Association. Simply email the Editor [here](#) and he'll do the rest. ✈

STORIES WANTED!

The Editors of 'Slipstream' and 'FlyBy' are always looking for articles, stories or anecdotes to fill their pages and add interest and variety for their readers. Contact the FB Editor [here](#) if you can help. ✈



Dear Editor,

Regarding reminiscing by **Kim Harris** (FlyBy July 21 Letters to the Editor). I'm pretty sure **Ted Callister** didn't die in service – he's probably living in Victoria.

I know many of those names and anecdotes. I was at 816 & East Sale with Ted (748 course - & **Steve Keeling** was also on the list) & went to Moomba festival with him then. I also stayed at his parents place at Victoria Park that weekend – I even gave a signed reference for his sister to join the Services whilst there. I also went to see Collingwood play a practice match just down the road & later lent him my Collingwood boots for interservice (he supported St. Kilda).

The firsts and seconds of Bomaderry lists must be after I left in May 1976. I was a founding member of Bomaderry Aussie Rules - with **Bungy Williams** (deceased 2020) & **Con Vergeer** (deceased 2009). Con was 805, not 817 and his twin brother **Jim** was 817 (deceased 1991). Con was my best mate: I did a page for him on obituaries (& Jim).

I remember many of the names on that list. **Rexie Dry** – I managed to spill a goblet of red wine on his carpet at his new home, even through a canvas drop sheet. **Gary Rattray** still lives in Nowra. **Don Sinclair** - I talked him into joining Bomaderry when he came to 816 Squadron. **Graham Charles** – lent him \$500 to get married & probably stole 2 votes meant for him in when playing ruck rover to his ruckman in Shoalhaven comp.

Con Vergeer, stayed at his place at Nowra (patch) & his Bomaderry home and his parents place Medina/Bunbury numerous times. Steve Keeling, also talked into playing for Bomaderry – he was a great League player (centre) for St Michaels – used to give **Mick Cronin** (later Australia & Parramatta) a bath every time he played. Steve, wasn't interested in becoming professional (or getting hurt). **Jim Grenfell** (a red head). **David Milne**, knick-named "Little Rats" (after Gary Rattray). **John Ogilvie**, a great rover, and **Alan Coates**, whose wife was always burning out the clutch on their car.

Regards, **Robert Wood**

Thanks Robert. I also got an email from Duane Unwin pointing me in the direction of the history of the Albatross AFL Club, 1968 to 2015. For those who are interested, you can find it [here](#). Ed. ✈

Dear Editor

Good day all at FAAA Magazine. My Name is **John Benson**. I was an AVN at the time, and my father supplied new Goal Posts for the Bomaderry Oval, we had great times.

Our coach was **Maurie Northey** and I think we were pretty good team as well.

I am now a Flight Instructor with the Recreational Aviation Newcastle (RAN) So you can see once a

BOMADERY Vs NOWRA (Tigers) (Blues)		BOMADERY(Tigers) Vs NOWRA(Blues) RESERVE GRADE	
1st Grade		UMPIRE: L. COSTAIN	
Bomaderry	Nowra	Bomaderry	Nowra
J. Grenfell	L. Lenartoski	D. Sinclair	S. Myers
E. Callister (Vice Capt)	S. Verekeer	G. Rattray (Vice Capt)	A. Bradshaw
K. Dry (Capt)	M. Kottimer	A. Coates	T. Wilson
G. Williams	M. Groves	J. Lambert	B. Phillip (Vice Cap)
V. Clark	G. Taylor	G. Taylor	G. Allen (Capt)
C. Summers	T. Carter	M. Whittle	J. Wright
K. Shea	P. Martin	A. Woods	I. Sargent
W. Fumtress	N. Snashell (Capt)	R. Bobart	J. Jackson
D. Doohan	L. Fitzgerald	V. Fornosa	Z. Hrycyk
C. Summer	B. Boehm	C. Vergeer (Capt)	M. Mac Carthey
B. Tyler	M. Hatch	ALBERT	I. McNeil
D. Milne	A. Nowark	D. Fuller	G. Neville
G. McDonald	S. Young	D. Mitchell	P. Little
L. Alderton	G. Oxford	G. Clues	A. Jamonts
K. Harris	T. Mason	L. Kirkpatrick	R. Cooper
G. Charles	C. Golding	G. Hawkins	L. Husk
A. Keeling	A. Whiteman	K. Anderson	
F. Ogilvie	P. Stewart (Vice Capt)	G. Guthrie	



Fleet Air Arm Birdie, always one. I am trying to retire but as my wife asked that question my answer was when I cannot fly then I retire, but as I own my own aircraft that may never happen – lol.

I was interested in the Magazine part on the Bomaderry AFL footy club, and it brought back memories for myself.

I have attached a picture (above) I found looking through old photos. I'd be interested to hear from anyone who can remember any names in it. I'm in the front row sitting 3rd from the right.

I was just married and had a young son, but the best times was playing footy as we were all (or most) Navy as well.

I remember G Charles, and a few others - Leigh Costain and a Nobby Clarke,

Cheers, **John Benson.** ✈

Dear Editor,

re Fred Lane's article ["Four Months in Korea" FlyBy July21], number two course didn't "dribble in" from our training, and for the record, the first group of successful applicants to join the new FAA were put on one and two courses, simply by age, the younger ones on the second course.

I wish I had kept the letter from Navy Office which spelt this out.

Fred should remember "to have been first proves antiquity, to have come first proves merit".

Norman Lee. ✈

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank the FAAAA members who purchased a copy of my book, *Written in the Sky*.

Feedback has been very positive and with good sales to the general public, I am glad to have increased general awareness that it is not only the Air Force that operates warplanes!

Speaking of which, members may be interested to know about the Benalla Aviation Museum in Victoria. It is a small all-volunteer museum located at what had been one of the wartime Elementary Flying Training Schools. This was number 11 of 13 in Australia and at just this one airfield, 80 Tiger Moths were used for basic training of RAAF pilots to day and night solo standard prior to advanced training on Wirraways, Oxfords or Ansons.

The Benalla Aviation Museum's theme is military flight training. Unlike many museums ours is 'living'. We have an operational Winjeel, CT-4B, Nanchang and de Havilland Moth Minor, their pilots all formation-qualified. We also house a ground-running Tiger Moth, the only Fawcett 120 in existence, a Nomad (under restoration), a Vampire, and many other exhibits. Being ex-FAA, I have made sure to emphasise in our displays that the Air Force not only trained its own pilots, but those of the Navy and Army as well, assisted by Navy Qualified Flying Instructors.

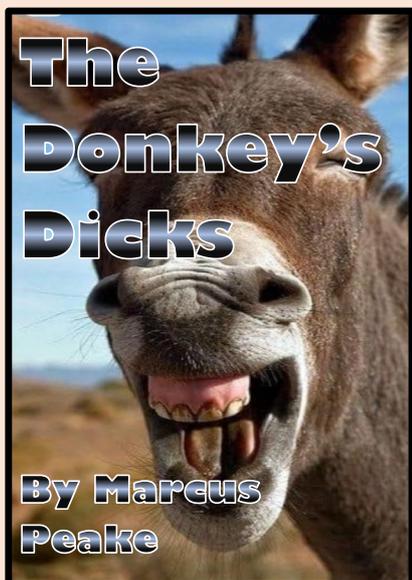
I have sent you a shot of the museum's 'Navy Corner' that you may wish to publish, which includes a



Tracker propeller and arrester hook (oh, for the rest of the aircraft to go with them...!).

Benalla is easily accessible off the Hume Freeway and our museum is open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 0900 to 1500. I am there most days and I look forward to meeting and hosting any FAAAA members.

Yours aye, [Mark Carr](#), 0448 114 148 ✈



I think the final straw in my decision to leave the RAN in 1981 was the sad story of the 'Donkey's Dicks'

In those days we used the old British Mk. 3 flying helmets which were comfortable but had a few major problems: they were heavy, the ear seals used to burst from

time to time and leak glycerine into and around your ears, and they had throat microphones which made it very difficult to understand what people were saying.

Anyway, one day it was announced that we were about to be given new American SBH-4 helmets which were lighter, more comfortable and - heaven be praised - used boom microphones just like everyone else in the aviation industry.

The new helmets duly arrived and were issued. The next day we went out to our Wessex and tried to plug them into the mic/tel leads, only to find the American plugs didn't fit the British sockets. Sacre Bleu! How the hell hadn't anyone figured that out!? The answer was to cut the plugs off our old helmets and splice them onto the new ones. That took a day or two.

So out we went to the aircraft again. Yippee...the plugs fitted! But there was a terrible squealing in our earphones...the impedance of the new helmets was different to the old ones and the system couldn't cope. Back to the drawing board!

The answer this time was to insert a little matching transformer between the helmet and the aircraft. This was about two inches long and bound in black tape, and it rapidly became known as a 'donkey's dick' - obviously a very small one! It plugged into

the mic/tel lead and the helmet plugged into it, and it worked! Hooray.

Unfortunately there was only one such transformer in the entire RAN stores inventory, but our wonderful long-suffering maintainers rushed down to Dick Smith's shop in Nowra in a Ute and were able to buy their entire stock - another six. And so we managed with seven of them for a few weeks until the stores system could get some more. This meant that, at best, we could only ever fly three Wessex. Sometimes, we flew more but the two pilots couldn't talk to each other.

Anyway, I resigned not long after that and found employment as Chief Pilot for the National Safety Council (Victorian Division). Talk about going from the sublime to the ridiculous! It was run by a guy called **John Friedrich** who later turned out to be a fraudster, borrowing millions of dollars from various Banks by pretending to have containers full of expensive equipment (which were actually empty). I looked back on the days of the Donkey's Dicks with affection.

Actually the NSCA was a really great job (until the wheels fell off), but like any employment it had its moments - like the extraordinary story of when I discovered how narrow the margin was between good and evil...

But that's a story for next month's issue. ✈

**Looking
for
Tracker
Experts**

#FLYTHEDAMNPLANE

We've been contacted by a Melbourne-based company called "Big Radials", which you can find [on line here](#). Basically, they're a software mob creating aircraft for the new Microsoft Flight Simulator (MSFS). Earlier this year they released their P-40B Tomahawk sim to rave reviews, and they are eyeing up the next project - the Grumman S2 Tracker.

If you've ever wanted to [help](#) put a legendary aircraft into MSFS, here is your chance! Big Radials is asking if anyone who maintained or flew the Tracker could contact them to provide technical or operating advice.

Frankly, we're not sure what's involved but anyone interested might like to ring Bradley on 0405 771 890 or email him [here](#). You might even get your name on the credits!



Last Month's MYSTERY PHOTO

We asked readers if they could tell us anything about the incident above, in which an aircraft came to grief in Kiama, NSW.

The accident occurred on Saturday 14 August 1920, at Chapman Point, next to the historical Hartwell House, on the corner of Bourrool and Farmer Streets. For those that live there, that's probably the site of the current sports oval.

The plane was an AVRO type 504K bi-plane E3748, piloted by **Lieutenant Rees** and his passenger mechanic **Sergeant Cathcart**.

The pair were on a South Coast promotional tour for the Second Peace Loan, but had decided the weather was not suitable for joy flights.

Rees would have delayed his take off due to the fierce wind gusts, but he was expected at Jamberoo.

At 2pm, as the plane rose into the air, a blast of wind struck it and it crashed down onto its nose, destroying the engine completely.

The men suffered bruises, abrasions and were treated for shock.

Within half an hour the photographer, Samuel Cocks, had his photo of the incident on full display in his shop window – no mean feat in those days!

The wreckage was taken to Point Cook where it was found to be beyond economic repair and was subsequently scrapped. ✈

What Were Peace Loans?

Wars are expensive. Public debt rose from 75% of GDP in 1913 to 123% by the end of the First World War, which makes the current rate look a little better.

The Government raised taxes to pay its bills, including for the huge burden of war disability pensions. Federal income tax was first levied in 1915/16.

Another source was the **Peace Loan** system, similar to the War Loans of earlier years, whereby individuals or entities could loan the government money in return for guaranteed interest payments.

A total of three such Loans was commenced in August 1919, and individual subscribers received a small metal badge in recognition of their support of the Government.

Each Loan set a target sum and was closed when that figure was reached...more or less. For example, the third and final loan of 1921 was known as 'The Diggers Loan' and had a target of £10m, which it exceeded by nearly £100K. ✈



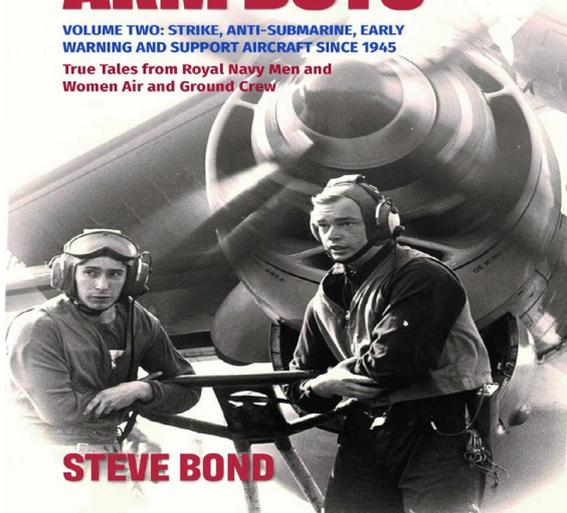
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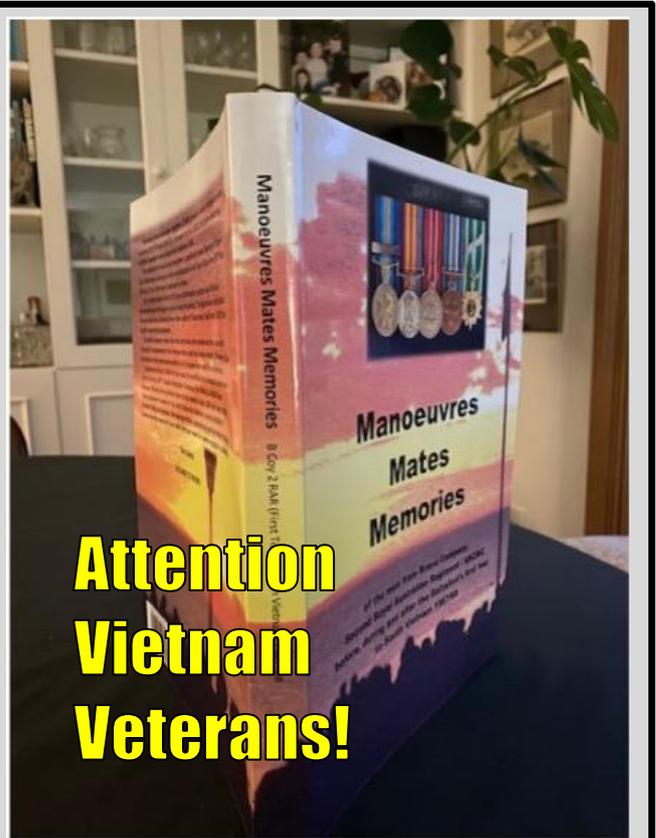


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Attention Vietnam Veterans!

A new book by Geoff Brewer contains a collection of “before, during and after” stories and anecdotes of B Company’s first tour to Vietnam in 67/68.

Entitled “Manoeuvres Mates Memories” it is a great collection that is unique to B Coy, including a section about the soldiers who flew as door gunners with the 135th AHC.

Copies are \$50 each plus \$10 postage. Contact Geoff [here](#), or ring him on 0410 149 188.



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Check out the Fleet Air Arm range at her [website](#) or speak to Kate via her email [here](#). ✈



Ray "Beachball" Godfrey sent this photo in and asks if anyone can help identify any details about it...i.e. what Squadron, date/year, who was serving in it at the time – in particular, who was the CO and the American Exchange Officer? You can send your answers to the Editor [here](#), and he'll pass them on. ✈

Op Bursa Update 26 Jul 21



Regrettably, due to the recent COVID-19 Delta outbreaks, most of the next round of presentation ceremonies to present the Australian Service Medal for Operation Bursa have had to be postponed.

Those ceremonies going ahead as planned are:

- **Perth** (HMAS Stirling) - Monday 16 Aug.
- **London** (Australia House) - Monday 6 Sep.

While there are at present only limited COVID-19 restrictions in the Shoalhaven, it is considered prudent to postpone the Nowra ceremony. Additionally, border restrictions and the volatility of State Governments has resulted in the postponement of those presentations in Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne. Sydney, of course, is a no-go.

Hopefully, we will be in a position to do the ceremonies later in

the year. Advice will be issued on new dates as circumstances change.

In the meantime, TELL ALL THE MATES YOU SERVED WITH to apply. Jump onto Facebook, Instagram or any social media and tell people that you have received your ASM for Operation Bursa, and where they can go to put in their own applications.

Details of how to apply can be found [here](#), or you can contact the Op Bursa Recognition Team via the email address [here](#).

Andrew Whittaker, CAPT RAN ✈



HMAS Moreton (Brisbane) - 4 May 2021

ACT Division Social



The Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia ACT Division will hold a social get together at the **Canberra Club, 51 Blackall Street Barton ACT** on **Friday 20th August 2021** commencing from 1630. The Club is located in the old Rugby Union Club (RUC) premises in Barton. A map of the club location is attached [here](#).

FAA Association members and other FAA / ex-FAA personnel are more than welcome to attend the function.

A sign-in sheet will be at the Club front reception desk for attendees to sign as they enter the club. Remember to use the ACT COVID-19 Check-in App when entering the venue.

Hope you can make it along, noting it has been some time since we all got together due to recent COVID-19 restrictions.

Any questions can be directed to the ACT President, John Schonberger, [here](#). ✈

DVA Moral Injury Survey



The Department of Veterans' Affairs has contacted a company called Phoenix Australia to conduct a survey seeking the

thoughts of any veteran who may have been subjected to Moral Injury.

'Moral Injury' refers to witnessing or experiencing acts that conflict with your deeply held moral beliefs, values and expectations. The study aims to develop a tool to measure moral injury, so military care providers can better identify and support Defence Members impacted by these experiences.

The survey, which will only take a few minutes, is on-line, anonymous and easy. You'll be helping to build mechanisms to help veterans, so you may wish to assist.

Click [here](#) to be taken to the relevant page. ✈