



# FLYBY

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See our website [here](#)

A periodical of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia  
Edition 47, July 2021.



*The following article by Fred Lane, originally titled “Number 1 RAN Pilot’s Course in Korea” is reproduced with the kind permission of the [Naval Historical Society](#).*

*Although the story of the FAA’s involvement in Korea is quite well known, Fred tells many anecdotes not previously seen by us, which presents a more personal view of ‘The Forgotten War’.*

The story of the RAN’s first pilots course in Korea starts with a workup that began in earnest in late April 1951. The 21st Carrier Air Group had arrived at Nowra in December 1950. Even though the ‘CAG concept’ was being phased out, the 20th and 21st CAGs amalgamated to form a three-squadron (805, 808 and 817) Sydney Carrier Air

Group. The Number One Course pilots had been with 805 and 816 Squadrons also since December 1950 and had a summer cruise under their belts. The new sub-lieutenants from Number Two and subsequent courses dribbled in as soon as the training pipeline permitted and they quickly settled down. The Number One Course people welcomed the new pilots with the same enthusiasm the junior squadron lieutenants showed them, back in December 1950. Onerous nit-picking duties such as coffee-boat captain and transport officer were gleefully handed over to the newcomers.

With Captain **D.H. Harries** (later RADM, CB, CBE) in command, nearly all the senior non-aviation billets in HMAS *Sydney* were manned by RAN

officers. RAN aircrew filled 80 per cent or more of the squadron slots but, except for 805's commanding officer, all the senior air appointments (Commander Air, Operations Officer, Flight Deck Officer, etc.) were filled by RN officers on loan or exchange duty. The Air Group Commander was **LCDR M.F. Fell**, DSO, DSC, RN (later VADM, KCB, DSC\*), with **LCDR J.L. Appleby** RN (808) and **LCDR W.G. (Jimmy) Bowles** RAN (805) in command of the Sea Fury squadrons and **LCDR R.B. Lunberg** RN (817) commanding the Firefly squadron. The Carrier Borne Army Liaison Officers (CBALO or CBalls for short, e.g. **Major Hardcastle**) were seconded from Australian Army units.

Korea was the first, and only time to date, that fixed wing aircraft from any RAN aircraft carrier participated in a shooting war. The Hawker Sea Fury and Fairey Firefly were never ideal platforms for the kind of war fought in Korea. As a fighter, the piston-engined Sea Fury could put up only token resistance against the jet-powered MiG 15 in a one-on-one situation, so we tended to avoid aerial contact. The chief theoretical tactic was to try and suck an aggressive MiG down to low level and low speed. In Korea, MiGs could be seen from time to time, contrailing and ducking it out with USAF Sabres 20,000 to 30,000 feet above. Short of having to dodge drop tank and cartridge case showers now and then, they presented little threat in our lower-flying environment.

Compared with contemporary American aircraft, the Sea Fury had poor internal fuel capacity. To maintain a busy but comfortable one hour 30 minutes deck cycle, our Sea Furies carried two 45 gallon (170 litres) overload drop tanks. Underwing geometry with drop tanks limited the number and type of rockets and bombs that could be carried. A typical Korean load might be eight x three-inch (76 mm) 60 lbs (27 kg) warhead rockets in two tiers plus 125 rounds per gun for four 20 mm cannon. No napalm was ever carried by any RAN aircraft. Without drop tanks the Sea Fury carried a maximum 2,000 lbs (907 kg) of bombs, but this required a problematic deck cycle time of one hour or less.

In the RAN we liked to load our serious armament in a deliberate

distraction-free manner. Refuelled aircraft were spotted for start-up and we stopped all other flight deck activity. One hour deck cycle times sometimes rushed the armament handlers, a potentially dangerous practice, hence the preference for a one-and-a-half-hour cycle.

The single seat USN Douglas A-1 (AD, Spad) Skyraiders, with 15 external hardpoints, carried much heavier and more versatile loads, up to 8,000 lbs (3,600 kg) and included bombs, torpedoes, mines, big five-inch (130 mm) HVAR rockets and depth charges. Like the Sea Fury, they also mounted a handy brace of four 20 mm cannon. The F4-U Corsair also carried a more varied armament load than the Sea Fury, but it was no match for the Skyraider. American carriers operated both aircraft types in Korea. From a pilot's point of view, a single Skyraider could theoretically do more damage than a division of four Sea Furies.

Despite extra protection in the form of a heavy aluminum plate under the big oil cooler in the port wing root, Sea Furies were still susceptible to ground fire. Any hit in the big engine or oil cooler area typically reduced oil pressure to zero in seconds and in another 45 seconds or so the sleeve valve engine was guaranteed to seize or burst into flames. The main petrol tank sat between the engine and the pilot.

The original Australian Fireflies were the Mk VI versions, specialised for Anti-Submarine Warfare  
*(continued on page 7)*



## Around the Traps...



**Billy Huntress** was recently a recipient of the Australian Service Medal (CT) for his participation in Operation Bursa, and provided some good advice to anyone else on the South Coast who was looking to get their medal mounted:

"Last week I received the Bursa bar to my ASM, the next day...Friday, I dropped the medals in to Shoalhaven Trophy and Engraving to carry out the upgrade and also carry out clasp replacement...today, Tuesday, they called to advise me they were ready for collection, and at a very reasonable charge. So glad I didn't send them to Sydney, as in the past...no expensive registered mail and min 3 week wait, back in three days!

Couldn't recommend them highly enough...they are located next to the Red Cross shop in Schofield Lane, they used to be at the bus terminal. ✨

**Don Parkinson** recently posted the picture to the right on the "Friends of the RAN Wessex Mk31" Facebook page, with the following commentary: "Here is a page out of 827's (N7-217) TA100 I have kept all these years since 1968. I hope whoever has her could be interested. some names in the columns **John Sloan, Keith Green (RIP), Lou Luther (RIP)** Chief Air Fitter and a great cricketer **Kev Duffey**."

N7-217 was last sighted at the Queensland Air Museum at Caloundra and is the only known surviving Mk 31A model in Australia. ✨

## Air To Air Innovation

In a sign of the times the USN conducted the first air to air refuelling trial using an MQ-25 Stingray drone as the tanker on June 4.

The Stingray and receiving aircraft, a Navy F/A-18, took off from MidAmerica airport in Illinois. During the flight the Super Hornet approached the Boeing drone, conducted a formation evaluation, wake survey and drogue tracking and then plugged into the unmanned aircraft. It successfully transferred fuel from the drone's Aerial Refuelling Storey (ARS) to its own tanks. "This is our mission, an unmanned aircraft that frees our strike fighters from the tanker role, and provides the Carrier Air Wing with greater range, flexibility and capability," said Capt. Chad Reed, program manager for the Navy's Unmanned Carrier Aviation program office (PMA-268).

Testing will continue over the next few months to include flight envelope expansion, engine testing and deck handling demonstrations aboard an aircraft carrier later this year.

The MQ-25 will be the world's first operational carrier based unmanned aircraft, providing critical aerial refuelling and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities to greatly expand the global reach of the carrier strike group.

The photograph on the next page, courtesy of Boeing, shows the test. You can also watch a brilliant video by clicking on the link there. ✨

Aircraft Type WESSEX Mk 31A Serial No. N7217 Form A 700. (Revised 6/59) Part 3. (Helicopter) Page No. 17

SERVICING	CLEARANCE	PILOT'S	ENGINE	"OUT-OF-PHASE" TIMES				AIRFRAME HOURS		LANDINGS		UNLOADING CERTIFICATE		PILOT'S AFTER-FLIGHT REPORT		
				Starts or Shots	Sortie Time	Total Time	Sortie Time	Total Time	Time of Take-off	Sortie Time	TOTAL AIRFRAME HOURS	This Sortie	Grand Total	Equipment or Store	Signatures, Responsible rating	Purpose of Flight
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Click for Video



An F/A-18F Super Hornet connects with the refuelling drogue of a Boeing MQ-25 in a first-of-kind test in the sky over Illinois. The evolution demonstrated that the Stingray drone can fulfill its tanker mission using the Navy's standard probe-and-drogue aerial refuelling method. Boeing photo.

## MEMORIAL SERVICE – CHARLIE REX



A Memorial Service will be held at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Nowra on **30 July 2021** to commemorate the life of **Commander Charles R.R. Rex**, who passed away on 11 June 2020.

The service will commence at 1130am, and will be followed by a Wake at approximately 1300.

Please click on [this link](#) to indicate if you will attend to assist with catering and Covid tracing.

Flowers can be delivered to the Fleet Air Arm Museum, or if you prefer donations can be made to the FAA Museum. Contact the Manager on (02) 4449 2179 or email him [here](#). ✈

## † REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of **Eddy Bell**, **Paul Birkinhead**, **John Deering** and **Ray Burt**.

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.

We have also produced late Obituaries for the three **Vergeer** brothers and for **Peter Cobble**. You can see them by typing their surname into the search box on the home page of our website [here](#). ✈

## DO YOU NEED HEARING AIDS?

The Defence Force Welfare Association recently published an excellent article about hearing aids in their magazine "Camaraderie". You can read it [here](#).

Since the article was published, they have received feedback from veterans that improving access to hearing services is an issue worthy of advancing. Hearing loss is a significant occupational hazard for ADF members, and given the nature of service, that is unlikely to change.

The DFWA is therefore seeking feedback about your experience accessing hearing services, and your thoughts on the direction they should take. Let us know via their feedback form, [here](#).

Be sure to check out the follow up article, in the next issue of Camaraderie. ✈

## Defence Grounds MRH-90s...again



The ADF's Multi-Role Helicopters have been grounded 'as a safety precaution', according to Defence sources, 'for an issue relating to the application of the helicopters' maintenance policy and IT support system.'

The MRH-90, which replaced the Navy's venerable Sea Kings, features an advanced fly-by-wire design with an advanced avionics system to manage navigation and communication equipment. It has a full glass cockpit with five colour multi-displays to present data related to flight, mission, systems and maintenance.

But the 47 airframes, which are operated across both Navy and Army and cost around \$3.8b, have had a troubled history since their introduction some nine years ago. Problems have been experienced in main door fittings, in the general utility of the aircraft particularly working with troops in the field, with the cargo hook and with the supply and logistics support chain. In 2019 the entire fleet was grounded following an incident with tail rotor vibration, which required work on all aircraft.

Remedial work continues on the latest problem but it is not known how long the aircraft will be grounded. ✈

## Queen Honours Two FAAA Veterans



The Queen's Birthday Honours List in mid June brought well-deserved recognition to a couple of FAAA people, both of whom are members of the Association, and to whom we extend our warmest congratulations.

**Andrew Craig** was the recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to Veterans and their families, and **Paul Fothergill** also received the OAM for meritorious performance of duty in the recognition

of service for current and ex-serving members, as the Director Navy Honours and Awards. ✈

## AWM NEWS LETTER



The following letter has been received from the Director of the Australian War Memorial, which may be of interest to some readers.

*Dear Supporters,*

*It has been some time since we have welcomed many of you in person to the Australian War Memorial.*

*I am pleased that travel restrictions have eased across most of the country and we have welcomed visitors in strong numbers during the April Easter period. We certainly hope this continues, and with school students also returning, it is a welcome sight.*

*Anzac Day 2021 commemorations were held in accordance with a COVID-19 safe plan and the exemption granted by ACT Health. The ticketed Dawn Service and National Ceremony with veteran's banner march saw us welcome some 6,600 attendees. A welcome increase on 2020!*

*The Memorial's large scale digitisation project of national collection materials continues with collections such as Second World War official diaries, film and photographic negatives as well as private and official archival records now digitised and further collections to be completed over the coming 13 months.*

*The planning of three touring exhibitions is underway, to be displayed at galleries and museums around Australia. Art in Conflict; showcasing the contemporary official war art and commissions, will commence touring in Sydney in August. Ink in the Lines - Tattoos in the Australian Military will be on display in Wagga Wagga this November, the first of eight venues. Further, the engaging exhibition Action! Film & War will tour to four venues commencing in late 2022.*

*The Memorial's Development Project continues to attract strong media interest. The last but important approval process is for early works commencement with the National Capital Authority, which has recently been granted. The onsite changes this brings will be communicated soon.*

*A number of early approvals have supported enabling project works to prepare us for the Development. This has included the extended Poppy's Cafe carpark, installation of construction site sheds and temporary relocation or storage of some sculptures and other National Collection gallery displays including Anzac Hall prior to the forecast construction schedule.*

*Gallery Development within the expanded gallery space is the crucial aspect of the project to tell the stories of our modern veterans. Extensive national consultation on the approach to the galleries has been completed in recent months. The appointment of representatives to five advisory groups has commenced, to inform and advise the project in the months and years ahead.*

*A Development Project of this scale is all consuming, but our sights are firmly on why we are doing it. The Memorial is for all veterans of all generations, and those from more recent conflicts have earned the right to have their stories told here at the centre of the nation's commemoration of Australian sacrifice. We will continue to lead remembrance and understanding of our wartime experience - Our Continuing Story.*

*Matt Anderson PSM, Director. ✈*

## Website Update



Readers might remember that our website suffered a major technical problem last year, which has necessitated a complete rebuild. The damaged website has remained in commission although with severely limited functionality.

You could be excused for thinking the new work is taking an inordinate amount of time. This has been due to the laborious process of transcribing the many hundreds of pages of detailed text and photographs from one system to another.

That work is now complete, however, and the 'final draft' of the brand new website is expected by the webmaster any time now. He will check through every page and link to test functionality. Once that is done final sign-off will occur and, at a date to be decided, the "old" website will be scuttled at sea and the new one will replace it.

So, what will change? Well, firstly and most importantly, you will be able to access the new site exactly the same way as the old one. The 'feel' of the new site will be familiar too, with the same banners and menu structure, which has served us so well for the past six years.

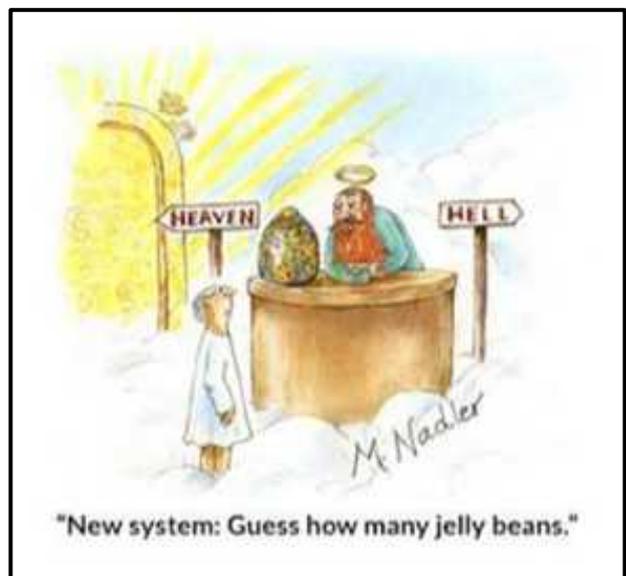
The look will be a little different. Professional designers put the ruler over the many diverse pages and styles used by the current webmaster, and, unlike him, they have been brought it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The way that buttons and links look and work will have a common feel right across the site, as will fonts and readability. Images, including the home page, will allow 'full width' views, and many of the old text links will be replaced by visual ones.

But it is under the hood that most changes will occur. We know that more than 50% of readers access the site on small-screen devices, so the new site will be fully scalable to phones and tablets. Better functionality will be provided by more up to date 'plug-ins' and pages should be much easier to produce with increased functionality of that aspect, in particular.

The adoption of modern practices should also make it easier for a new webmaster to take over when the time is right.

The developer suggests that the new site should be up and running by the end of July, but treat this date with a pinch of salt! We should have a better idea later in the month and no doubt the August 'FlyBy' will be informative.

Webmaster. ✈



## Four Months in Korea

*Continued from page 2*

with no cannon fitted. They were swapped on 27 September 1951, with 812 Squadron's cannon-bearing Firefly IVs from HMS *Glory* when that carrier and *Sydney* sat alongside a common pontoon dock in Kure, Japan. The Mk IVs carried four 20 mm cannon, like the Sea Fury, but they could also load a pair of 500 lbs (226 kg) bombs or 250 lbs depth charges without it affecting their fuel load or deck cycle time. The Fireflies typically bombed bridges and railway tunnels, while the Sea Furies specialised in rocketing and strafing lighter targets.

The Number One Course pilots in this Korean trip included **Ian Macdonald**, **Dick Sinclair**, **Ian Webster** and **Fred Lane**, all flying Sea Furies in 805 Squadron, with **Col Champ** and **John Roland** flying Fireflies for 816 Squadron. **John Roland** won the thoroughly deserved 'Sub-Lieutenant's M.I.D.' (Mention in Despatches) for his consistent ability to drop bridges and block railway tunnels. He also had one of the best deck landing records. Late in the piece, he had the most unpleasant experience of having his elevators frozen rock solid over enemy territory. His section successfully dropped a bridge span but a piece of shrapnel lodged in a vital hinge, jamming his elevators. By judicious throttle, elevator trim and other controls, he regained partial command of the aircraft and, instead of bailing out, staggered south towards friendlier territory. After finding that he could maintain a semblance of control after lowering his wheels and partial flap at a safe height, he made a very long and very gentle straight in approach to Kimpo airfield, near Seoul, landing successfully without further damage.

The workup included the usual Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings (ADDLS) as well as live armament training. CBalls **Major Hardcastle**, an armoured warfare specialist, was very popular. With never a PBI (Poor Bloody Infantry) in sight, his briefings would frequently be prefaced with, 'Gentlemen, the Queen of air warfare is the Fleet Air Arm. What is the Queen of the battlefield?' With one accord we would shout 'The tank corps.' 'Right. Your target for this sortie ...'. He taught us Naval Gunfire Support

and Army Artillery Spotting using a big roll-up canvas model. It took some time for we junior sub-lieutenants to take charge and get used to phrases such as 'At my Command' (i.e. You do what I tell you) when shooting with a ship commanded by a full four-ring Captain.

The usual deck landing accidents occurred during the workup, including one 808 Squadron Sea Fury flown by a young Number Two Course pilot that went half over the port side. Incredibly, an ordnance artificer was in a sponson checking a Bofors gun with a feeler gauge when this Sea Fury's port wheel came down, missing his head by inches and bending his feeler gauge. Of course, the artificer should never have been there during a land-on. The pilot, quite unaware of all this, scrambled out of his cockpit and, with his parachute pack still attached, ran up the 70 degrees sloping wing. He hit the flight deck, still running.

Racing forward he jumped from the flight deck into the starboard forward sponson, parachute and dinghy still buckled to his backside, a highly athletic and dangerous leap. From there he made



*The Sea Fury in the Bofors sponson. The aerobic performance of the pilot in exiting the aircraft was remarked upon for years afterwards.*



*"A Chance For Hope" by ex-Navy artist Darrell White, depicts the moment that Tracker 851 spots 99 desperate survivors aboard the boat Nghia Hung, which was built to carry 33. This painting resulted in the recent and stunningly successful reunion of anyone who was involved in the rescue. See page 17 for further details.*

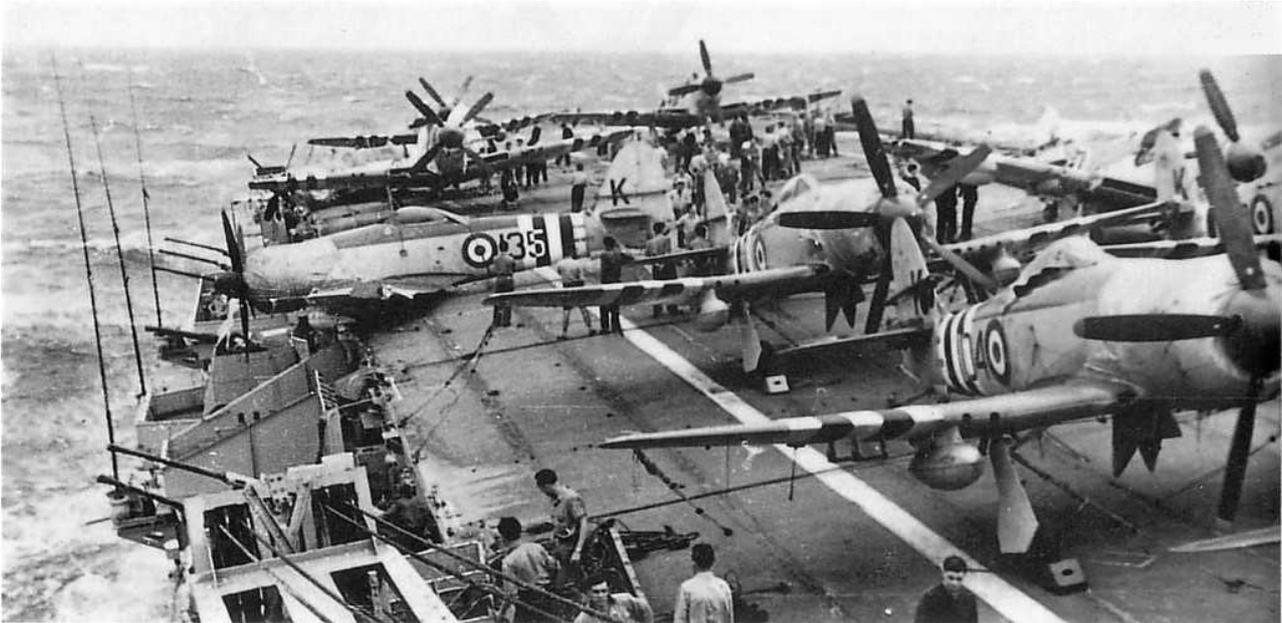
his way to the nearby sick bay and announced, 'I've just had an accident'.

On 3 May 1951, [LEUT Bob Barnett](#) of 808 Squadron was killed during the workup when he experienced an asymmetric RATOG (rocket assisted) launch. Only one side of his rockets fired and he ended up untidily in the sea just ahead of the ship. This was the last RATOG launch scheduled from an Australian carrier.

HMAS Sydney departed Australia 31 August 1951 and arrived in Japan 19 September. On our way north, there was considerable discussion about the ability of a pilot to survive a Sea Fury ditching. The big radial engine, it was argued, would drag the aircraft's nose down on first contact with the water, making escape problematic. Only one successful Sea Fury ditching had been recorded, and that from a clean *Theseus* Sea Fury, nine months before, off Korea. It was resolved to parachute out of the aircraft or force-land on dry land whenever possible. Then SBLT Ian Webster, from Number One Course, had a total sudden engine failure at 300 feet on the downwind leg. He had no option. He ditched not only with the big radial engine up front, but also downwind with his

flaps down and wheels half up. He certainly pitched upside down on water contact, but the aircraft steadied and he escaped using the standard emergency method. He climbed into his dinghy, but was not yet safe. The rescue destroyer came charging at him, full chat, over-running his dinghy and tossing him out. Some days we realise we should have stayed in bed.

There were no personal two-way radios in those days, so CBalls introduced us to a two-scarf system, one fluorescent yellow square panel, the other red, to communicate with the Rescue Combat Air Patrol (RESCAP) in the event of being shot down. This very simple system indicated many things, from 'all well' to 'I am under fire from this direction at that range'. It was adopted by the USAF while we were there. We could also drop lead shot-filled message bags with long streamers to people on the ground. One of these message bags probably saved the life of **LEUT Peter Goldrick**, 808 Squadron, on 5 January 1952. A ground fire bullet passed through the message bag that was stowed on the starboard side of his cockpit. The bullet then entered Peter's right arm about in line with his heart. Invalided home, we were dismayed to hear that his flying pay was



*HMAS Sydney was in Sasebo in mid October of 1951 but the break was rudely interrupted by Cyclone Ruth. The ship put to sea and at the height of the storm endured 45 foot waves and winds of around 120 knots. The following morning reveals the damage: one Firefly lost overboard and six other aircraft severely damaged.*

stopped from the day he was wounded. One or two terse signals later rectified this.

We learned our rules of engagement, what might be a genuine target and what must not be attacked. Ox carts, we were told, were legitimate targets. This was difficult for some of us until one ox cart blew up during a strafing attack, proving it was loaded with ammunition. Lighthouses were sacrosanct, including the one on the south shore of the Chinnampo Estuary from where an amazingly accurate machine-gunner plied his lethal trade. We avoided civilian targets, such as villages, unless briefed to attack a specific structure. In one railway bridge attack, a Number Two Course pilot, **SBLT Neil MacMillan**, saw his Firefly's bomb ricochet from a frozen embankment 500 meters or more away directly into a nearby peaceful-looking village. The pilot watched in horror as the delay fuse set off the bomb, only to see it followed by a huge explosion and many secondaries. The 'village' burned for days. It was a huge ammunition dump.

Special attention was given to escape and evasion procedures. All pilots carried revolvers and the Firefly observers had an Owen gun, so the training ranged from small arms handling to tips on how to navigate cross country to a couple of designated evasion points without stirring the possum. Special attention was given to POW behaviour. A very few American aircrew prisoners made all kinds of quite impossible 'confessions'. We were told we should be on our guard about this new 'brainwashing'

thing. The security people leapt on this, setting up virtual torture chambers to 'train' us how to resist. What a waste of time and effort it was. We had much more important lessons to learn, like how to improve our deck landing technique and how to deliver more and better armament on target on time.

*Sydney* started with a 13-day cycle, chiefly on the West Coast of Korea, that included a day self-replenishing at sea plus four days transiting back and forth for a five to ten days R and R in Japan. Our buddy carriers, the tiny escort carriers *USS Rendova* CVE 114 and *Badoeng Strait* CVE 116, kept enemy heads down when we were away. The major strategy was an *Operation Strangle* that aimed to halt all transport and other movement that might resupply the then static front line. It was never successful in that our front-line troops never reported the enemy short of any material and in any event night logistics transport was rarely intercepted. The enemy was also highly skilled in camouflage and rapid bridge repair. Good targets were very few, except during a couple of East Coast sorties. Once, the best part of a battalion of enemy troops was spotted reacting to deliberate misinformation about a projected amphibious landing. The rest of the time, *Sydney's* aircraft rarely saw an enemy soldier. Even when attacking a so-called 'Divisional Headquarters' no enemy was seen, yet spies ashore might credit us later with many dead and wounded plus considerable collateral

damage. After our departure, USN commanders convinced the Joint Operations Center to adopt a more aggressive posture, including destroying the North's hydroelectric infrastructure.

During the first of these R and R cycles, Typhoon Ruth descended on our supposedly typhoon-safe Sasebo harbour on 14-15 October 1950. Captain Harries wisely decided to go to sea, a good seaman's decision fully justified when, on our return, we saw an 18,000 ton supply ship up on the beach. It had dragged its moorings right through our anchorage. At one stage at sea we had revolutions for 14 knots, but made good only one knot. The wind broke our wind gauge but was estimated to be about 120 knots with seas 45 feet or more.

Five hundred souls perished ashore. Sydney lost one Firefly, the captain's jollyboat, a cutter and a forklift overboard. Four other aircraft stowed on the flight deck were seriously damaged. This aircraft damage was possibly due to the chocks not being battened, as they were in the hangar, where they remained damage-free. 'Expendable' non-seasick sub-lieutenants roped each other together in teams of five to eight to patrol the flight deck overnight, tighten loose engine and cockpit covers and adjust sloppy lashings. One Sea Fury came loose and its full drop tank landed smack on a deck edge bullhorn. The Tannoy promptly started sparking strongly while 130 octane petrol poured out all over it. Circuit power could not be switched off nor could this speaker be isolated. We had 10 fire reports at one time or another, but this is one fire that should have, but never did, happen.

Three pilots were lost, all from 805 Squadron. [LEUT Keith Clarkson](#), the Senior Pilot, was killed 5 November 1950 when he was caught in a flak trap strafing the only enemy truck we ever saw on the West Coast. Another aircraft circling his crash site at 3,000 feet was hit with a couple of 20 mm rounds some five minutes later. [SBLT Dick Sinclair](#), one of the Number One Course people, was killed baling out of his 805 Squadron Sea Fury 7 December. He was hit by flak northwest of Chinnampo and developed an engine fire. He was low, so he chose a not-recommended Me 109 'bunt' technique to exit the cockpit. He hit the taller



*Although the aircrew got most of the glory, it was the maintenance crews who were the unsung heroes. Working tirelessly to keep the Squadrons' aircraft serviceable, refuelled and rearmed, they endured sometimes appalling living and working conditions. Here, a group of them wear what they can to stay warm.*

Sea Fury fin. The ship ran a constant two-aircraft Carrier Air Patrol (CAP) and one Anti-Submarine Patrol aircraft during flying stations. At other daylight hours these aircraft might be ranged, ready to go, on standby. No submarine was ever reported and only friendly aircraft were intercepted. One CAP aircraft was lost when [SBLT Ron Coleman](#) disappeared 2 January 1952.

A dozen or more junior squadron officers slept in the 'Casbah' forward in two big multi-bunk cabins. The rationale, we were told, was that if all the rest of the officers were wiped out in the middle of the night by a torpedo aft, there would still be a few left up forward to sail the ship. Not that we knew much about sailing a ship. Furthermore, it may be argued that with the aft end blown off, there would not be much ship left to sail. But the Casbah developed a number of initiatives, including a Casbah Band that generated considerable noise but little musical harmony. The Casbah was also home for an amazing number and variety of Japanese toys, including half a dozen cymbal-playing somersaulting monkeys (for young relatives at home, of course). On the more serious side, we carried a long commando-like knife over enemy territory and were delighted to find a rare wooden door in the Casbah. It was an ideal target for late night knife-throwing practice. Then one sleepy fellow responded to what he thought was a knock on his door...



*Helicopters were still a novelty in the early '50s and RN sailors from HMS Theseus who had never seen one christened this HU-1 "The Thing". The chopper was transferred to HMAS Sydney and, flown by an American NCO pilot, subsequently performed one of the great rescues of the war when it plucked two RAN aircrew from under the guns of advancing communist troops.*

It was winter and the water was cold, with an unprotected body life expectancy of under 15 minutes. We were personally fitted with immersion suits. These were of the two-piece 'dry' variety, while the Americans chose the wet 'poopy suits' that would become popular with skin divers in later years. The dry suits depended on rubber seals to keep the water out and string undergarments to keep the body warm. One 808 Squadron pilot inadvertently left his immersion suit's urinating tube a bit loose one day. Of course that was the day he was forced to ditch and after climbing into his waterlogged dinghy he burst his fluorescent dye pack. The water leaked into his suit and he found, after rescue, that he had bright fluorescent yellow skin from the waist down. He was a sight to behold in the showers for days. There is no truth whatsoever in the rumour that he was raffled in a Japanese brothel later on.

Sydney, we were told, was the first aircraft carrier in Korean service not to accidentally taxi or push an aircraft overboard, typically over the starboard forward deck edge. Credit for this must go to Flight Deck Officer **LCDR Charlie Lavender** RN, who dreamed up the 'Lavender Line'. This simple dotted line, in the starboard forward deck park, was positioned parallel to the deck edge at exactly

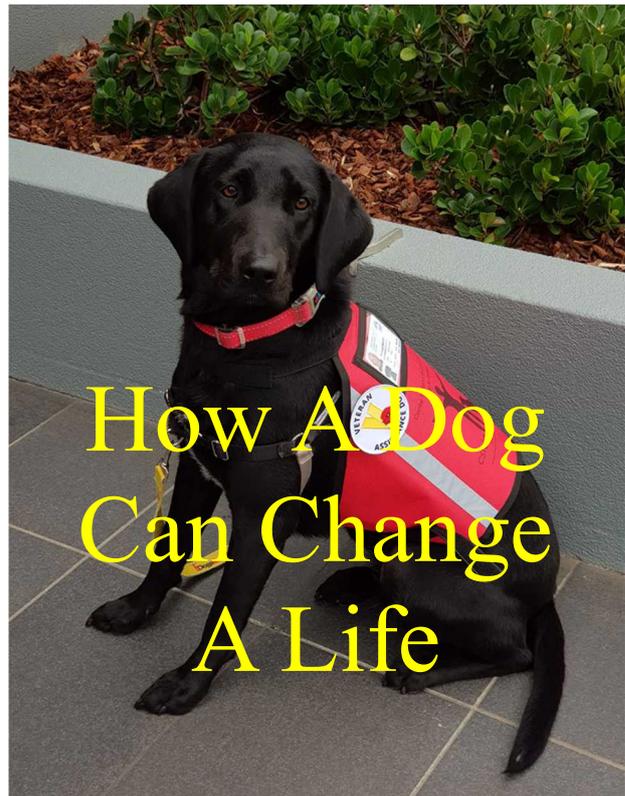
the width of the widest track of any aircraft on board plus one foot. Under no circumstances was any inboard wheel allowed to stray over this line.

We borrowed an RN Westland Dragonfly helicopter initially, before it was replaced by an identical-looking craft, a USN Sikorsky HO3S1. This chopper assumed the duties of rescue destroyer, but the latter was kept in hand just in case the helicopter was called away for a rescue elsewhere or it became unfit to fly. A similar helicopter was deployed to one of the islands nearer to the coast and it featured in a number of rescues of downed RAN aircrew. On 26 October 1951, **SBLT Neil MacMillan** and his Observer, **OBS1 Hancox**, were shot down during a railway tunnel attack near the Chaeryong-gang waterways. Sydney's borrow-ed USN helicopter, flown by **CPO A.K. (Dick) Babbit** and aided by a fortuitous gale-force tailwind, made what must have been the longest helicopter transit over enemy territory to rescue downed aircrew in the Korean War. Calculated at 120 nautical miles, this was in addition to a transit south to Kimpo airfield that Babbit made in gathering, then total, darkness. The RESCAP for this opposed rescue was provided by RAN Fireflies and Sea Furies and, for a brief period, Meteors from RAAF 77

Squadron. The HOS3-1 was not cleared for night flying. It had no instrument lighting. In his report, Babbit said that he used the dome light intermittently to check his instruments but 'flew by ear to maintain speed and engine R.P.M.' His total flight time was two and a half hours and he landed with zero fuel at Kimpo with the aid of hastily-ranged truck headlights.

The Number One Course pilots had suffered their first fatal casualty. They had experienced war. They returned to Australia to find they were no longer just wingmen, but suddenly section and divisional leaders. They had to make their minds up whether to apply for a permanent commission or remain on the Short Service list. **Scotty MacDonald** chose to serve out his Short Service commission and joined Qantas. In a very short time the others were dispersed to additional professional courses, such as Flying Instructor and Landing Signals Officer. **John Roland** became an LSO and served on loan as the ace RN Seahawk Squadron's batsman. For those who chose the permanent commission route, watchkeeping qualifications in a small ship also beckoned.

You can see the FAAA's factual account of our involvement in Korea [here](#). ✈



KODA, the first psychiatric assistance dog trained and delivered by Dogs for Life in Victoria, is helping turn her veteran's life around.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said the Government's Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program was changing the lives of veterans across Australia and having locally trained psychiatric assistance dogs in Victoria was a big win for veterans and their families.

"We continue to receive positive feedback on how this program is changing lives and making a difference for our veterans managing PTSD by providing comfort and reassurance," Mr Chester said.

"Since its launch in September 2019, the program has seen 29 dogs placed with veterans, with another 109 currently in training. We have received more than 270 applications from veterans to be part of the program and will continue to match dogs with their handlers as soon as they become available."

Working with specially trained dogs to assist veterans meet their daily challenges, Dogs for Life is one of the four contracted dog providers under the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program.

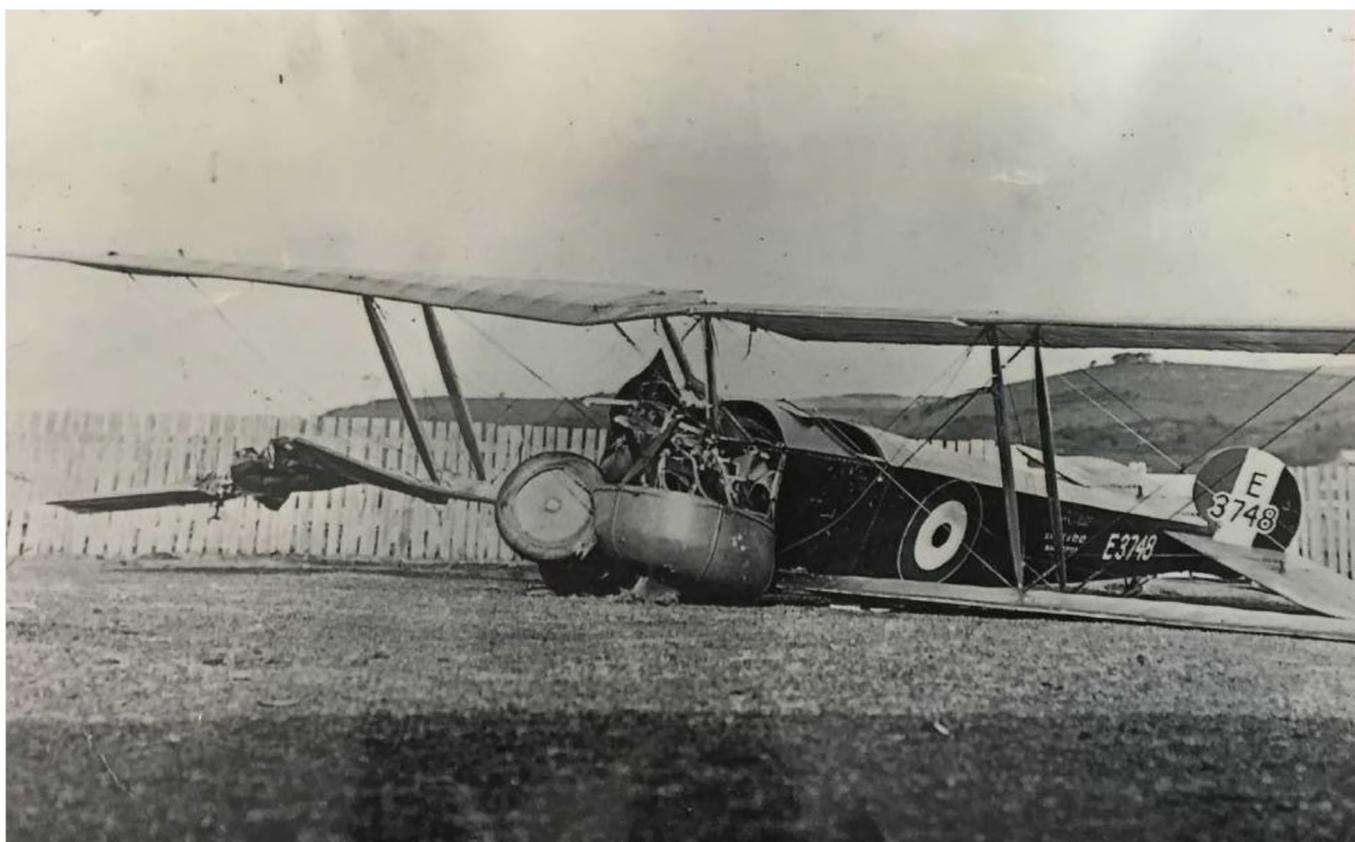
"She [Koda] draws my focus to her, relieving me of  
(continued on page 14)

Found on social media, this image of a Sea Fury was apparently taken at Broken Hill. Can anyone tell us any more please?



### MYSTERY PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Our Mystery Photo shows an aircraft which has come to grief on take off from Kiama. Can anyone tell the Editor anything about it (click [here](#))? Answers in the next edition of FlyBy. ✈



## Dog Can Change A Life (from page 12)

anxiety. She has opened up pathways to conversations I feel I've never had before. It's quite a life-changing experience for me," Koda's veteran handler said.

Working with specially trained dogs to assist veterans meet their daily challenges, Dogs for Life is one of the four contracted dog providers under the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program.

"She [Koda] draws my focus to her, relieving me of anxiety. She has opened pathways to conversations I feel I've never had before. It's quite a life-changing experience for me," Koda's veteran handler said.

Mr Chester said the highly trained dogs like Koda offer companionship, support and comfort, performing tasks to support their handler's clinical recovery.

"It's heart-warming to hear this feedback from our veterans about the difference their dogs are making," Mr Chester said.

"This is just one of the ways we are putting veterans and their families first, and I look forward to seeing more eligible veterans matched with their dogs."

DVA has also partnered with La Trobe University and Dogs for Life since 2018, matching 16 veterans with assistance dogs through a research trial.

"The Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program has been in place for 18 months, but we have been working with La Trobe University and Dogs for Life for longer on this important trial," Mr Chester said.

"The trial helped inform how we set up our program, and it continues to ensure we have our focus right.

"Dogs for Life is giving us both practical and long-term insights into how valuable these dogs are to veterans with PTSD."

To be eligible for the program, veterans must have a Veteran Gold or White Card, have a current diagnosis of PTSD from a psychiatrist and be engaged in treatment with their mental health professional for a minimum of three months.

Veterans currently accessing treatment for PTSD may wish to speak to their mental health professional to see if a psychiatric assistance dog would be a suitable adjunct to treatment. For more information about DVA's Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program visit the [DVA website](#). ✈

## 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.

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. ✈



"It's not lip balm—it's 'manstick.'"



Dear Editor,

I'm in Melbourne lockdown 4, now extended (4 ½?). I was rummaging in old boxes high in the wardrobe on the weekend and found the attached bits and pieces from the early 70s (see photo below).

Albatross, similar to the sponsorship of the social clubs (sailing, gliding, car, gun etc) Jock Campbell mentions in his letter published in the current edition of Fly By, also supplied the great majority of players in the local ARFC competition, certainly in my time. I can remember a few of the names in the attached team list on both sides.

Bomaderry Firsts - **E Callister**, an ex LJR in my intake (the 26th) who was commissioned and I believe died in service, **Bill Huntress**, then an EMAC with me on 725/817 whom I understand went onto bigger and better roles, **Laurie (truck) Alderton**, a MOBI AC who later went and played on the dark side for St Michaels Rugby League

team, my good self-listed above **G. Charles** who came from Swan Hill like me and had great skills and style in the forward line.

Seconds - **Don Sinclair**, who had the most beautiful kicking style (left foot like Royce Hart), **Mick Whittle**, another MOBI whose hair was the longest I've ever seen on a sailor and was in a local band, **C. Vergeer**, one of a 725/817 dynasty, **Glen Hawkins**, who knocked me out at Leeuwin in the windmill.

Nowra - my knowledge of the opposition is limited to: **Shane Verekeer**, I think he was a dentist on board and fixed my falsies many times, and **Daryl Nowark**, an EMAW. I'm surprised I didn't see **Larry Russell's** name in the Nowra list (the keg), or did he play for Albatross? I think he was also commissioned and got some gong.

Hopefully others will have better recollection than mine and memories will flood back. They certainly did for me. Playing at the 'Tross, Nowra, Wollongong and in the 2s at Creswell against the cadets - always hard to beat. Training on an 'oval' up near the officers' married quarters and then choir practice in the wets.

Kim Harris.

*By Editor. It's amazing how just an old piece of paper can evoke such memories. Anyone of that time will now be remembering the faces and the atmosphere prevailing at the time. Thanks to Kim for helping us remember.*

*Perhaps you have an old photo or program stashed away somewhere? If so, don't be shy – dust it off and send it in to me here, and I'll be happy to share it. ✈*

BOMADERY Vs NOWRA (Tigers) . . . . . (Blues)		BOMADERY(Tigers) Vs NOWRA(Blues)	
1st Grade		RESERVE GRADE	
		UMPIRE: L. COSTAIN	
<u>Bomaderry</u>	<u>Nowra</u>	<u>Bomaderry</u>	<u>Nowra</u>
J. Greenfell	L. Lenartowski	D. Sinclair	S. Myers
E. Callister (Vice Capt)	S. Verekeer	G. Hattrey (Vice Capt)	A. Bradshaw
K. Dry (Capt)	M. Mortimer	A. Coates	T. Wilson
G. Williams	M. Groves	J. Lambert	B. Phillip (Vice Cap)
V. Clark	C. Taylor	G. Taylor	G. Allen (Capt)
C. Summers	T. Carter	M. Whittle	J. Wright
K. Shea	P. Martin	A. Woods	I. Sargent
W. Huntress	N. Snashell (Capt)	R. Bobart	J. Jackson
D. Doolan	L. Fitzgerald	V. Formosa	Z. Hrycyk
C. Sumner	B. Boehm	C. Vergeer (Capt)	M. Mac Carthey
B. Tyler	M. Hatch	ALBERT	I. McNeil
D. Milne	A. Nowark	D. Fuller	C. 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
S. Keeling	A. Whiteman	K. Anderson	
F. Ogilvie	P. Stewart (Vice Capt)	G. Guthrie	



“Now hands up, anyone who was involved in rescuing these wonderful people in the South China Sea 40 years ago,” called out former Channel 7 foreign correspondent & reunion MC Ian Hyslop at the start of an amazing gathering of over 300 inside Hangar 1 at the HARS Aviation Museum on Sunday 20 June 2021, also World Refugee Day.

And a good couple dozen hands shot up, culminating a three-month search for the officers, air crew and sailors of the *HMAS Melbourne* and *HMAS Torrens* who rescued 99 Vietnamese men, women, children and infants from their drifting and broken-down wooden boat in stormy seas 200 nautical miles east-northeast of Saigon, today’s Ho Chi Minh City, on this day back in 1981.

Taking pride of place on stage left was HARS former RAN Grumman 2-SG Tracker 851 whose crew - represented at the Reunion by former Petty Officer & radar operator **George Casey** - spotted the distressed 13.7-metre *Nghia Hung* on its last patrol of the day off the *HMAS Melbourne* and touching off a massive rescue operation whose participants we tracked down for the Reunion.

Here above, the boat’s captain **Nguyen Van Tam** poses with **Captain C.J. ‘Chris’ Frost** of *Torrens* who was tasked with demolishing the boat as a hazard to shipping after the first charge left by the last boarding party who’d moved the refugees to the aircraft carrier failed to explode -- a truly brave act accomplished in the early morning hours after the *HMAS Melbourne* continued southwards to Singapore. Captain Tam had built the boat personally and flattered at hearing how tough it’d



*Nguyen Van Tam poses in front of Tracker 851 with Captain C.J. “Chris” Frost of Torrens, who was tasked with demolishing the boat as a hazard to shipping.*



*CDRE Vince Di Pietro AM CSC RAN meets Stephen Nguyen. Vince, then a LEUT, was flying one of Melbourne SAR Flight’s Wessex involved in the rescue.*

**Words by Carl Robinson and images courtesy of HARS.**

been to sink, just one of many shared anecdotes during the day.

On the other side of the stage before the show, the leader of the Melbourne Group 99 (MG99), as they were officially designated, **Stephen Nguyen** had a cheerful reunion with **Commodore Vince Di Pietro** AM CSC RAN Rtd who was flying Pedro 15, or Wessex 815, as plane guard off the *HMAS Melbourne* as Tracker 851 landed. He then flew the ship's doctor **John Anderson** (also present) over to the *HMAS Torrens*.

As a boarding party - represented at the Reunion by **Leading Seaman QMG Peter Evans** all the way from Perth, WA - headed through stormy seas towards the *Nghia Hung*, then LEUT Di Pietro flew ahead and hovered low over the stricken vessel until the Gemini arrived, an indelible memory for all involved.

Both 21 years old at the time, Stephen and Vince had connected by phone & email months ago and this was their first face-to-face meeting. It wasn't long before the old pilot slipped up the side of HARS own Wessex 832 - and our stand-in for Pedro 15 in a collection down in Victoria - to refresh his own memories of this remarkable long-serving workhorse of a helicopter.

Another memory of Pedro 15's low hover over the *Nghia Hung* came from co-organiser of the group's escape from Vietnam's northern Mekong Delta, **Tran Son** at right, with his son **Binh**, then only 13-months old. Vince clearly recalled Son standing atop the boat's cabin, a burning bin of oily rags beside him as a signal, rubbing his stomach in hunger and the other hand raised in help.



*CDRE Vince Di Pietro with Tran Son, far right, and his son Binh (centre), then only 13 months old. Vince clearly remembers Son standing on the boat's cabin with his hand raised, asking for help.*

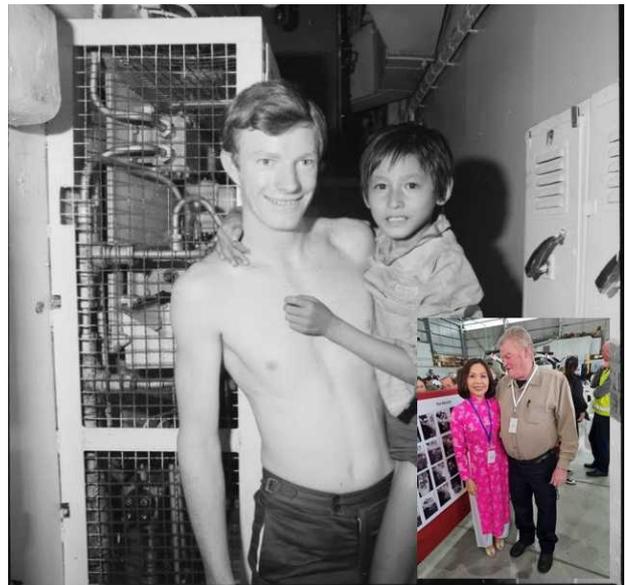


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL NAVYG1620/25

*Pictured aboard *HMAS Melbourne*, little Binh (in the pram) is now a successful real estate developer from Newcastle. Image AWM.*

Pictured here aboard the *HMAS Melbourne* after the rescue, **Byrne** - also known as Binh - is now a successful real estate developer on the Newcastle NSW waterfront and brought the two older men together to reminisce.

The day was full of many similar stories, helped along by a photo exhibition expertly organised by MG99er **Amy Dolan-Brown** and husband **Kevin**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL NAVYG1614/13

*Above. Allan Darby helping with one of the refugees. Unfortunately organisers have been unable to identify the boy in the picture. Inset. Allan 40 years later at the reunion, meets Binh's half sister **Jessica Chi Crosskill**, who was just 13 at the time.*

and which attracted and united the rescuers and rescued alike - and also providing a great prop for media coverage.



*We know the infant is Sinh, Captain Tam's youngest son, but we couldn't find the sailor here. Where is he today?*

### HOW WE GOT OUR ACT TOGETHER.

Of course, organising a reunion of this anticipated size - always estimated between 200 & 300 - was hardly an easy task and has been underway since shortly after the MG99 visited Tracker 851 back in mid-March after which the group decided to return to HARS for the 40th Anniversary of their rescue on 20 June.

As a US Vietnam War correspondent and inside Australia's Vietnamese Community since my arrival here in 1977, two years after the Fall of Saigon, and now as a still-recent HARS volunteer, I took on the challenge of juggling three balls in the air -- HARS & MG99 but most-importantly what I called, in my best Yank Accent, "Rounding up the Aussies" who participated in the rescue.

While MG99 had kept in touch with ship companies of HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Torrens* and holding two previous reunions, lastly in 2012, no one had ever gone looking for the sailors and air crew.



*The author of this article, Carl Robinson, with his wife Kim-Dung. He was instrumental in putting the whole thing together.*

Remarkably, I scored almost instant results by joining their Facebook Groups, even one for the RAN Band (unofficial) which turned up the Chief Musician on the *Melbourne*, **John Lennon** of all names, who couldn't come but shared his pictures of the refugees aboard the carrier.

And so, nearly every day over the past three months, I've had endless surprises -- another contact, new information and historical tidbits pulling the story and its participants together. Like a giant puzzle. Old School Journo. The RAN Sea Power Centre Historian office in Canberra was particularly helpful with Navy Lists, Reports of Proceedings and other information.

At the HARS Aviation Museum, Albion Park, I received considerable support from **Commander P.J. 'Pete' Cannell RAN Rtd**, who flew both carrier and land-based Trackers and Wessex in his navy career, whose military organisational



*One of the many planning meetings. Clockwise from left: Peter Cannell, Tim May, Carl Robinson, Ian Hyslop and Stephen Nguyen.*

skills were a crucial asset. My HARS YouTube Channel partner **Tim May** was constantly encouraging. As the Big Day approached, Stephen joined my old friend and now retired broadcaster **Ian Hyslop** as we hammered out final details for the Program which also included appearances by the RAN Band and Vivello, a chamber music orchestra from the the MG99's Second Generation, to say nothing of catering, drinks and merchandising. Other HARS members, such as Events Manager **Sherryl Sherson**, were constantly ready to assist, along with fix-all wizard **Jim Hayes** and on-top-of-everything **Keith Kilpatrick**. **Bob De La Hunty** and **Maureen Massey** were constantly encouraging and all volunteers increasingly curious and interested.



*844 was one of the stars of the show, and after extraordinary effort by the team, was able to do an engine run and blade fold on the day.*

#### **AND ABOUT THAT VERY SPECIAL GUEST WE WANTED.**

From our earliest planning days, we foresaw a key - and spectacular - role in the Reunion from the HARS Navy Heritage Flight (NHF) which includes Tracker 851, of course, with a highest hopes for a spectacular fly-past of Tracker 844 over the Reunion to re-enact the dramatic discovery of that drifting boat and its 99 occupants in the South China Sea 40 years ago.

And as the Wessex no longer fly, we also pencilled in a role for our Huey 898, but more as one of those "Sounds of Vietnam" for the rescued and guests. No real problems there with **Vic Battese** and crew totally on-side and ready to fly.

But as regular NHF newsletter readers know, Tracker 844 has been undergoing its 10-year service and experienced all sorts of time-consuming frustrations, mostly over entirely new sets of engine hoses. We really wanted this one!

But led by **Terry Hetherington** and the intense devotion of **Garry Holloway**, the 844 team over in

HARS Hangar 3 took on Sunday, 20 June 2021, as a deadline, their very own D-Day. Would 844 make the day? Everyone pulled together with important outside encouragement with a donation - flight or no - from MG99's own **Amy Dolan-Brown** and husband **Kevin** to cover the cost of fuel.

A hiccup or two. Sorry, no fly-past. Still too much for the Annual and up in the air. Engines? Well, maybe one on the day. And then finally, just last Thursday on a blustery afternoon, with **Steve McMahon**, **Owen Nicholls** and **Keith Boundy**, they were ready to fire up.



*CDRE Don Dezentje, centre, next to HARS President and Chief Pilot, Bob De La Hunty. Behind Bob is Vince Di Pietro and his wife Sandy and Captain Tam, to her left. Closer to the camera are John Ingram, then HMAS Melbourne's Supply Officer who unfailingly kept in touch with MG99, and Captain Mike Webster.*

## AND THEN TO THE MG99/RAN REUNION

After all the preparations by the MG99 group and assistance from so many HARS volunteers, and not least clearing our Lockheed Super-Constellation 'Connie' and other aircraft out of Hangar 1 on Saturday, everything was ready at 1300 on Sunday, 20 June. Chairs for 250. Lots more at round tables to the side. Big stage & lectern. Banners. Exhibition. Food & Drinks. The flags of Australia and Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Musicians. Ian Hyslop and myself on-stage with Pete Cannell prepping the 'talent' from Left.

To keep the reunion informal and relaxed, the focus was on the participants and highest VIP was keenly-interested **CDRE Don Dezentje** CSM RAN of today's Fleet Air Arm (FAA) at centre next to HARS President & Chief Pilot Bob De La Hunty. Closer to the camera are **John Ingram**, then *HMAS Melbourne's* Supply Officer who led the rescue and kept in touch with MG99 and **Captain Mike Webster**. (Behind Bob is Vince Di Pietro and his wife **Sandy** and Captain Tam.)

And a very special mention of **Gail Rooney** in black outfit, whose late husband Peter served on the *HMAS Melbourne* at the time of the Evans Disaster off South Vietnam in 1969 and who tirelessly runs the Facebook Group which helped



*A cultural & dance performance by the Vietnam Community of Australia (VCA) Wollongong Branch.*

me track down so many sailors, a good 100 or so participants and many of whom attended the Reunion.

After Stephen Nguyen's welcome, One Minute Silence and introduction of MC Ian Hyslop, Bob De La Hunty provided his own welcome to HARS with special mention to our volunteers who served in South Vietnam in military and civilian capacities.

And then before lunch, a brief aircraft display with a fly-past by Huey 898 and then Tracker 844 taxiing around from stage left and giving the rescued Vietnamese a sound memory of Tracker 851 who spotted them 40 years ago in the South China Sea - and a Wing Fold Salute. A wonderful round of applause all round.

And then the show continued through the rest of the afternoon with several highlights, here a cultural & dance performance by the Vietnam Community of Australia (VCA) Wollongong Branch which concluded with a rousing rendition of 'We are Australians' with the audience singing along. Smiles and even tears.

And then with our MC using his well-honed Q&A technique, we re-told the stories of the Rescuers and the Rescued, including RAN photographer **Rob Patterson** who took the most iconic images of the rescue such as this one with **John Tregoning** whom we tracked down for the 40th Anniversary Reunion.

And the final highlight and with Captain Nguyen Van Tam and Commodore Don Dezentze doing the honours, the painting which sparked the sequence of



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

NAVYG1614/01

*One of the defining images of the rescue was John Tregoning carrying a barely conscious woman aboard. (AWM image)*

events leading to the 40th Anniversary Reunion at HARS was formally unveiled.

Only last January, New Zealand-based former RANer and marine artist **Darrell White** approached his brother and HARS volunteer **Glenn** (left) for help on painting up a Tracker for



*Above:* Captain Nguyen Van Tam unveiling the painting which was the catalyst for this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary gathering. *Below:* The painting, flanked by RAN sailor rescuers Chris Hall (L), Jim Broomhall, Allan Darby, John Tregoning and Richard Burgess. They each received a print of 'A Chance for Hope' and a commemorative bottle of wine with the painting as label.



his work and we discovered the unknown story of Tracker 851 among our vast collection of military and commercial aircraft. Generously purchased on-stage from Darrell White by Sydney-based Vietnamese-Australian **Dr Brian Cung** and his wife **Tran**, the painting 'A Chance for Hope' was then immediately donated to the HARS Aviation Museum as a permanent exhibit next to Tracker 851 and formally accepted by President & Chief Pilot Bob De La Hunty.

Then at the end of a very long afternoon and much gift-giving from MG99 to the rescuers and sponsors, including HARS, a reunion image for all to cherish. A wonderful round-up of all involved.



*The Vietnamese rescued by Melbourne and Torrens were wonderfully represented by these five refugees who were among the youngest on board the Nghia Hung - like Thor Vo with glasses and in pram on-screen - who've all grown up Aussie with laconic senses of humour to match and downplay their wonderful career achievements.*

And, from me, a very special thanks for everyone at HARS and their tireless encouragement, help and hard work. As night fell and rain resumed, Hangar 1 was quickly back to its normal self again and aircraft wheeling back inside. A Great Job!

And for your information, media coverage was quite strong with segments on ABC and SBS



television news, an upcoming feature on Ten's 'The Project' and in another couple months, a very special episode of ABC's 'Australian Story.' The Sydney Morning Herald and Australian Community Media (ACM) newspapers such as the Illawarra Mercury, South Coast Register and The Canberra Times ran feature pieces on the Reunion. And keep an eye out for a recent Navy News!

*By Editor. Our thanks to Carl Robinson, Michael Hough and HARS for this article, which was a wonderful news story and well worth reproducing here. It was also long, so I've had to exercise editorial rights to shorten it by a few paragraphs and images. You can see the complete piece [here](#). ✨*

# HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RESTORATION SOCIETY

## How Can You Help Maintain our Australian Aviation Heritage?

Firstly, a reminder that HARS receives no Government funding, and it relies on contributions and sponsorship to continue to rebuild and operate all HARS airframes including the Navy Heritage Flight airframes.

If you are interested in supporting the efforts of HARS volunteers, a meaningful and very practical way you can assist is to donate some dollars by purchasing a HARS GIFT CARD or by making a specific \$A donation to HARS.

You can do this by clicking on the HARS website [here](#), or the HARS e shop [here](#), and please have your credit card details ready when you do! ✈

### Op Bursa update for FlyBy – 28 Jun 21

The next round of presentation ceremonies for the award of the Australian Service Medal with clasp Counter Terrorism/Special Recovery, for those who were involved in Operation Bursa, will be conducted as below (subject to COVID-19 restrictions):

- Nowra (Fleet Air Arm Museum) – Mon 16 Aug
- Perth (HMAS Stirling) – Mon 16 Aug
- Sydney (HMAS Kuttabul) – Thu 19 Aug
- Brisbane (HMAS Moreton) – Fri 20 Aug
- Canberra (HMAS Harman) – Mon 23 Aug
- Melbourne (Defence Plaza) – Fri 27 Aug
- London (Australia House) – Mon 6 Sep

The ceremonies are for those in Batches 1-3 who were unable to attend earlier ceremonies and recipients in Batches 4-6.

The Batch numbers are:

Batches 1-3 - email receipt/notification, eg "received and registered", before 28 Jan 21.

Batch 4 - notified between 28 Jan 21 and 14 Apr 21.

Batch 5 - notified between 15 Apr 21 and 28 May 21.

Batch 6 - notified between 29 May 21 and 29 Jun 21.

Batches 5 and 6 have been vetted by the Team and are in the final stages of processing through the Directorate of Honours and Awards.

If you are in any of Batches 1-4 and have not received your medal/clasp, notify the Op Bursa Recognition Team ASAP. The timeframe from getting your receipt notification until the medal arrives in the mail, is generally 6-10 weeks.

There are probably 200 or more people out there who haven't applied for their medal. We are still getting emails from people who have only just heard about this, through their mates. The Team needs your help to spread the word. **TELL YOUR MATES.** Jump onto Facebook, Instagram or any social media and tell people that you have received your ASM for Op Bursa.

Details of how to apply are [here](#). The Op Bursa Recognition Team is contactable [here](#).

Andrew Whittaker, CAPT RAN ✈



## Don't Miss Out!

If you maintained or flew Wessex or Sea Kings in support of [Operation Bursa](#) between 1980 and 1989 you may be eligible for the award of an Australian Service Medal (CT clasp)...but you will need to apply for it soon.

Find all the details on our website [here](#).

# HMAS SYDNEY MEMORIAL EVENT NOV 21

The **HMAS Sydney Association** is arranging a special Memorial event in November 2021, which is open to anyone who may have served on any of the HM Ships Sydney, or to any relative or descendent of the men who were lost on the Sydney II. If you are interested, you should register now. See our website page [here](#).

The event is to remember the 80th Anniversary of the loss of the Sydney and its crew in an engagement with the German Raider Kormoran which occurred on 19 November 1941, off the West Australian coast. The battle was brief and ended with the destruction of both ships. 318 of the 399 men aboard the Kormoran survived, but Sydney sank with all hands.

How a purpose-built warship like the Sydney, with its superior armour, speed and armament was lost to an armed merchant vessel has been the subject of much speculation over the years. Some of the questions were answered when the wrecks of the two ships were discovered in 2008.

Full event of the event will be provided, with updates etc, once you have registered (this doesn't commit you to going at this stage).

The original plan has had to be flexible in these changing times, and an update (as of June 2021) is as follows:

## Friday 19th Nov 2021

Live Stream Memorial Service from Mt Scott to Denham and a Ceremonial Sunset and RAN Band. You are strongly encouraged to bypass Geraldton and come straight to Denham

## Saturday 20th Nov 2021

Late afternoon Memorial Concert, consisting of (fingers crossed) John Schumann, Normie Rowe, local content and the RAN Reserve Band.

## Sunday 21st Nov 2021

Dawn Service Memorial March at around 06:00hr followed by a small sea service in the bay and farewell BBQ to close out the weekend.

All of the above is an outline only – you are advised to register your interest [here](#) to receive an updates on the event, particularly in these changing times.

None of the men aboard Sydney II survived that short and brutal engagement, but we who are left should never forget. If you served aboard any of the RAN ships named Sydney, or have any other particular interest in the event, please take advantage of this unique opportunity to remember those who were lost.

Point of contact is Adrian Burns. ✈



## HMAS SYDNEY MEMORIAL GOODIES

The special 80th HMAS Sydney II Memorial Event is coming up – if you have not already, read about it [here](#) and register your interest.

You can buy very smart clothing for the event, or just to commemorate the loss of

of that great ship: a community or memorial shirt, baseball cap or sweetheart pin.

They are competitively priced and are top quality. You need not be involved in the memorial event to purchase one. Orders close **31 July** so be quick. Click [here](#) to see the range and prices and to order one or more, and please note the Terms and Conditions.

## LAST MINUTE NEWS - EXCITING NEW BOOK LAUNCH!

Fleet Air Arm Association members, particularly those living in and around the ACT, are cordially invited to attend the launch of the book, "The Art of Sacrifice" at the Royal Australian Mint on 15<sup>th</sup> July.

Two of the featured portraits were commissioned by the Fleet Air arm Museum and now proudly hang in the main gallery of the Museum.

Flight Commander Robert Alexander Little RNAS was the highest-scoring Australian-born fighter 'ace' of World War 1 and he is commemorated in the FAA museum with the replica of his Sopwith 'Pup' fighter and with a display of his flying kit, miraculously recovered from a Queensland garbage tip in 2013.

Warrant Officer Ben Sime, MG, is currently the most highly decorated serving member of the Fleet Air Arm. His gallant actions in rescuing US Navy personnel, whose craft had been attacked by Iraqi terrorist insurgents in 2004, saw the humble and unassuming then Leading Seaman being recognised with the Medal for Gallantry.

Master of Ceremonies for the book launch will be Mr Terry Hetherington OAM, National Secretary of the Fleet Air Arm Association. Terry will be very pleased to welcome FAAAA Members and their guests to the event.

**Date:**

15 July 2021

**Time:**

5.30 - 8.30pm (to be confirmed)

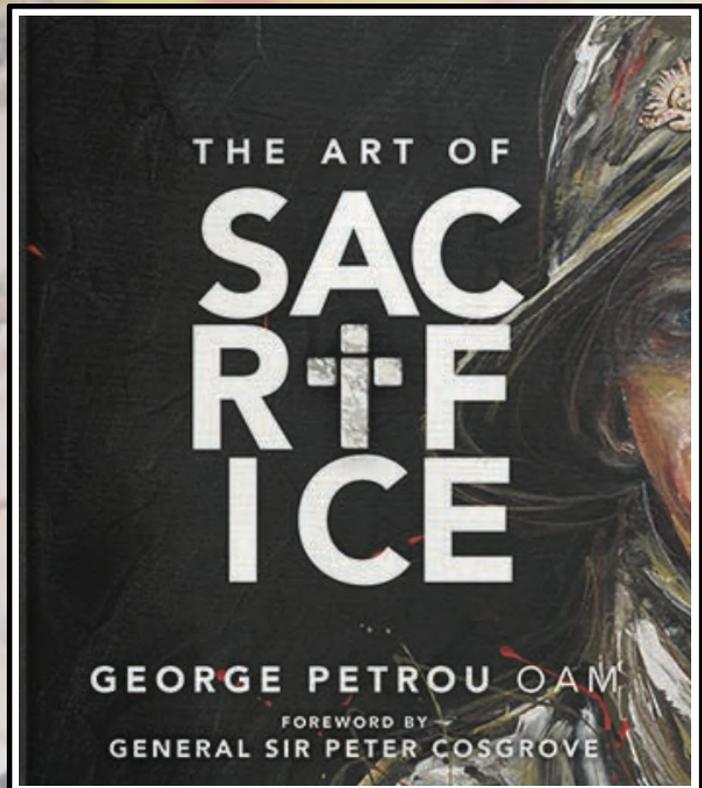
**Venue:**

Royal Australian Mint  
Dennison Street  
Deakin ACT 2600

**RSVP by:**

5 July 2021

For more information, please  
contact Richard Rolfe: 6281 1000  
Or George Petrou: 0427 777 185



*"...in over 70 portraits, 63 stories, 425 pages and numerous serendipitous moments, George Petrou explores the idea of valour, courage, bravery and of sacrifice. Using images of the past and stories of today, he connects the past with our present within a unique and powerful environment."*

# Membership

## How Are We Doing?



**Like every Ex-Service Organisation, we have been struggling to keep up our numbers over recent years. But an uptick in recruiting now offers a glimmer of hope...and you can help.**

The two graphs on this page tell the story. In the first, the dark jagged line is our recruiting achievement year on year since 2015. We generally welcome about 50 (ish) new people a year into the FAAA, except for 2019 which was a disaster with only 18 new folk. So far this year we have recruited 55, which is great.

BUT, the **grey** bars show the number of members who cross the bar each year – a depressing statistic that we hope none of us join. And the **blue** bars are people who decide to jump ship.

Add the two together and you get our total loss per year, which offsets the gain from recruiting.

The RED line on the second graph shows the overall effect: in 2015 we made a gain of 20 people. Since then we've had an overall loss of between 20 and 30 members per year. Not much, I hear you say? Well, it's enough to put us on a trajectory to oblivion in a few years' time.

But with an uptick in 2021's recruiting we might claw our way back a bit – **BUT ONLY IF EXISTING MEMBERS STAY WITH US AND NEW ONES CONTINUE TO JOIN**. So, if you are reading this please continue to support our Association by staying with us as a member, or by joining if you're not one yet. Details can be found [here](#).

