



# Slipstream

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## **Fact Or Fiction?**

### **Did a German He 114B Floatplane overfly SA in 1940?**

Peter Ingman claims in an article appearing in the *Journal of Australian Naval History* (Vol. 8, No.2, September 2011)<sup>1</sup>, that a Heinkel He 114B floatplane was launched from the German raider, *Penguin*, and flew up Gulf St Vincent, then over Port Adelaide and Parafield Airfield in 1940. This claim, however, is not supported by the accounts provided by *Penguin* survivors in H. J. Brennecke's book, *Ghost Raider*; the interrogation of survivors of *Penguin* by the Royal Navy (RN) Intelligence Division (NID) October 1941; nor does it withstand analysis by naval personnel, experienced in naval aviation and seaborne tactics.

According to the accounts of the survivors, the German raider, *Penguin*, was on a clandestine mission to lay minefields along the east and southern Australian coast. Initially, the ship was equipped with two Heinkel He



**Map from Peter Ingman's article to the *Journal of Australian Naval History* of the alleged flight of the German He 114B over SA in November 1940**

114B floatplanes, but one was irreparably damaged after crashing into the sea on 26 August 1940, leaving only one aircraft<sup>2</sup>. In order to carry out his mission, Kapitän (Captain) Ernst Krüder, in October 1940, seized the Norwegian tanker, *Storstad*, sailing from North Borneo to Melbourne, renamed the ship the *Passat* and converted her to an auxiliary minelayer under the command of one of his officers, Kapitänleutnant (Lieutenant) Erich Warning and transferred 110 mines<sup>3</sup>. This action greatly enhanced Krüder's capacity to deploy mines in a minimum period of time thereby reducing the

chances of detection in what was an extremely hazardous, operation. Arriving in Australian waters, the Germans successfully laid a series of mines between Nelson Bay and Sydney. The *Penguin* then headed south where more mines were deployed in the approaches to Hobart while the *Passat* entered Bass Strait, across which she deployed a minefield, in spite of the treacherous weather<sup>4</sup>. *Passat* then resumed her voyage across the bottom of Australia to a point west of Perth, where she was to rendezvous with the *Penguin*.

Having successfully mined the entrance to Hobart, *Penguin* steamed westward around the southern most tip of Tasmania into a storm of typhoon strength. Unable to take evasive action or

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seek refuge in a safe harbour, she battled against tremendous winds and enormous seas for three days<sup>5</sup>.

Once the bad weather eventually abated, Krüder steamed towards Spencer Gulf, which he approached from the south-west<sup>6</sup>. During the night of 7-8 November, the *Penguin* laid minefields which extended from Cape Catastrophe on the west coast of Spencer Gulf to West Cape on Yorke Peninsula, and across Investigator Strait. As dawn broke the following day, the *Penguin* retraced her path, sailing westwards in the direction of the rendezvous point<sup>7</sup>.

In his article, Ingman argues that on 5 November 1940, the *Penguin* was south of Kangaroo

Island and launched her remaining Heinkel for a reconnaissance mission<sup>8</sup>. Yet, according to the survivors' account which forms the basis of *Ghost Cruiser*, the *Penguin* was well south of this position, and furthermore, there is no mention of the ship's aircraft being launched. In fact, given the detailed description of the poor weather conditions endured during the *Penguin's* voyage from Tasmania, the launching of the floatplane would have been extremely dangerous and only exposed the crew to unnecessary risk. Such an event, if it had occurred, would without doubt been mentioned in the survivors' account, on which *Ghost Cruiser* is based, and the RN interrogation reports.

Unlike the Japanese raid on Sydney Harbour, the *Penguin* had no intention of attacking shipping in Port Adelaide and therefore would not have risked sending an aircraft out to reconnoitre the area. The Japanese, at Sydney, needed to know if and what types of ships were in harbour; they intended to attack inside the harbour and such information was vital to their success.

Hence, they accepted the risk of launching an aircraft. In the case of the *Penguin*, there was absolutely no operational value in doing so. In fact, to do so, would have involved totally unnecessary risk and significantly increased the chances of being discovered. Had a German aircraft been spotted, the whole operation, reliant on stealth, would have been in jeopardy.

Successful completion of the mission relied on the Australians being unaware of the *Penguin's* presence, and Krüder would not have risked advertising this, by launching an aircraft. Furthermore, Krüder had no need-to-know specific details of any enemy vessels present in the area. He no doubt assumed there was such a presence and took action to minimise the possibility of an encounter. This he did, by sailing well south of the South Australian coast and then approaching Spencer Gulf from the south-west. At no time, was the



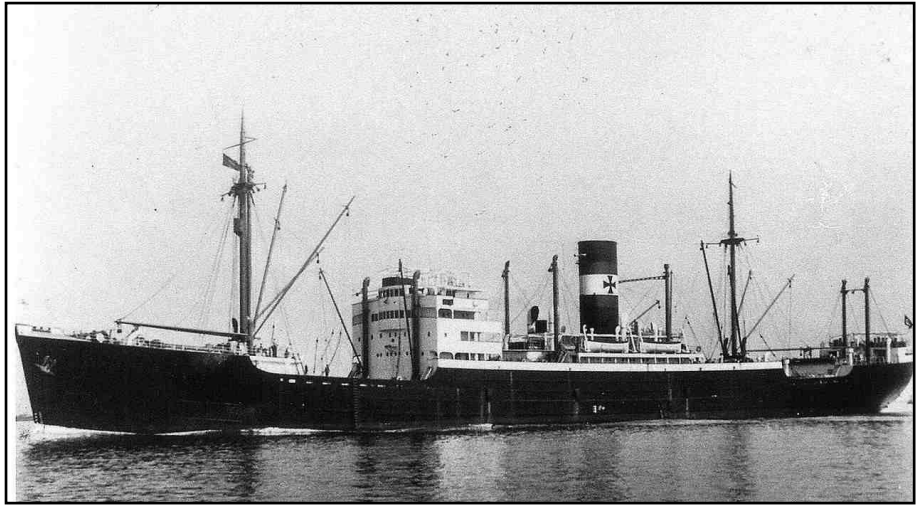
**Heinkel He 114B two of which were initially carried by the *Penguin* until replaced by one Arado Ar 196A**



*Penguin* in a position which was to the southeast and relatively close to Kangaroo Island, as suggested in Ingman's map<sup>9</sup>.

It also needs to be remembered that while deploying mines at Newcastle, Sydney and Hobart, Krüder did not launch his aircraft to reconnoitre the area. This, therefore, begs the question of why do so over the Gulf St Vincent area? There is no reason; in fact, such an action would only have exposed the mission to unnecessary risk. Having previously lost one aircraft, Krüder was very aware of the dangers in the launching and recovering of an aircraft at sea, even in relatively safe areas, let alone in hostile waters. According to German prisoners off *Penguin*, the Captain was not air-minded and, after losing an aircraft, refused for a long time to go to the trouble of manoeuvring the second aircraft from its position beneath the elevating platform to a position above this platform where the aircraft were stowed<sup>10</sup>.

Considering the absence of German evidence and the lack of operational need to launch an aircraft flight over Spencer Gulf, Ingman's claim must rely on the accounts of eyewitnesses to the event. The first eyewitness account is that of Ken Cain, son of the Cape Willoughby Lighthouse keeper, who claims to have seen the aircraft and that the



**German Raider *Penguin* (HK33)**

sighting was recorded in a log-book. This information was passed to Ingman, seventy years later, by Ken Cain's son-in-law, John Judd. However, the log-book in which the information was allegedly recorded has been lost. Hence the information could not be verified.

The second eyewitness account is provided by Gordon White, a farmer's son, working near the Parafield Airfield who was a keen aircraft spotter and familiar with the types operating from Parafield. However, White, according to Ingham, identified the aircraft as an Arado Ar 196 and not a Heinkel He 114B, which was the aircraft borne on the *Penguin* at the time. The two aircraft were noticeably different, the Arado Ar 196 was a monoplane and the He 114B was a bi-

plane. It was not until early 1941, that the *Penguin* was supplied an Arado Ar 196<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Ingman fails to cite the source of this information and it possibly can be dismissed as hearsay rather than solid evidence.

The third eyewitness, Reg Lawrence, a young farm worker, is quoted as having seen a grey coloured plane flying at a low altitude of just a few hundred feet, but no reference is made about the plane being German. Ingman's last piece of evidence comes from an Alan Killmier who recalls a discussion on talk-back radio, which he claims was probably in the 1980s, during which a woman from Largs Bay claimed to be a witness to the event.

While Ingman assembles four accounts by witnesses who claim to have seen an aircraft flying over Gulf St Vincent, Port Adelaide and Parafield, in 1940, he fails to explain why the plane was not seen by a larger number of other people. As he states, the weather at the time was "generally fine". Surely, this suggests that the plane was clearly visible as it flew along the gulf's east coast and then over Port Adelaide and Parafield Airfield.

Yet, there are no reports from the officers and sailors from the two naval vessels HMAS *Warrego* and HMAS *Swan* which were in the vicinity of the alleged



**Arado Ar 196A replacement aircraft for *Penguin* transferred by supply ship *Alstertor* in early 1941**

flight path at the time<sup>12</sup>; nor did any of the crews on the various fishing boats or merchant ships at sea in the area report the sighting of an unusual aircraft. Once over Port Adelaide, the aircraft would have been visible to hundreds of people such as wharfies, ships' crews and SA Harbours Board personnel loading and unloading overseas and interstate freighters around the harbour. Here again, there are no recorded sightings by any of those who were in Port Adelaide.

At the time, Parafield was Adelaide's main airport and very active with aviation operations of both a civil and military nature. Many of those working at Parafield would no doubt have had a very strong interest in different types of aircraft. Any unusual aircraft, especially if it looked German, would have created immense interest and been reported. Yet there is no account of anyone seeing such an aircraft from Parafield either.

The evidence provided by Ingman is not particularly persuasive, particularly when it relies partly on a missing logbook and an unknown caller to an unnamed



***HMAS Warrego at a mooring with boom out. The Warrego and its sister ship HMAS Swan were operating in the same area where the alleged flight path was supposed to have flown***

radio talkback program on an unspecified date and time, which was probably in the 1980s. History relies on solid facts. The accounts provided by the *Penguin's* survivors in *Ghost Raider* and the interrogation of survivors by the Royal Navy plus an analysis of the operation by former naval officers experienced in ship borne and naval aviation tactical procedures strongly indicate that it is highly unlikely that a German aircraft flew over South Australia in 1940.

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<sup>1</sup> Ingman, P., "A Secret German Flight Over South Australia in 1940?" *Journal of Australian Naval History*, Naval Historical Society of Australia, Vol. 8, No.2, September 2011 by Peter Ingman <https://www.saam.org.au/history-group/biographies/SAAM%20Profiles%20-%20HEINKEL%20FLIGHT%20OVER%20SA%201940.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Royal Navy CB 4051 Naval Intelligence Division Report 2437/41 October 1941 (Interrogation of Survivors from Raider 33 [*Pinguin*] and of other Raider Prisoners)

<sup>3</sup> Duffy, James P. *Hitler's Secret Pirate Fleet* p.112

<sup>4</sup> Brennecke, H.J. *Ghost Cruiser HK33*, William Kimber & Co. Ltd., 1954, p. 126

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135

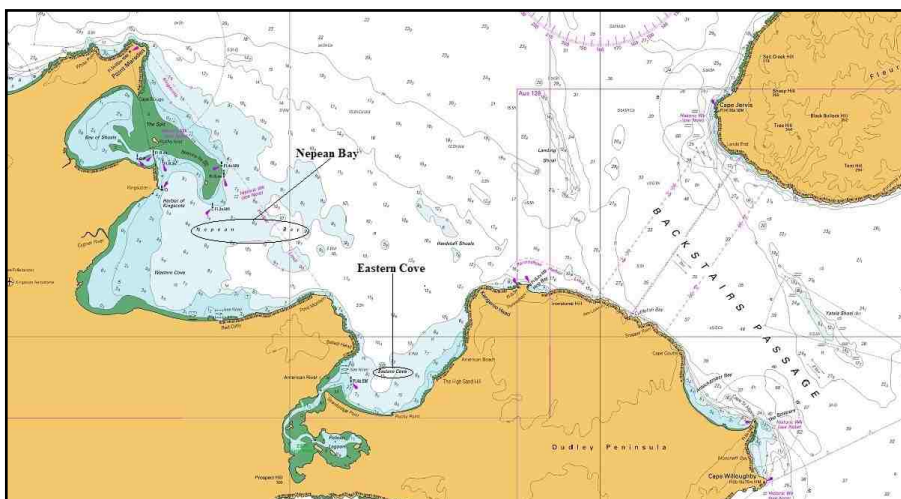
<sup>8</sup> Ingman, Op. Cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ingman, Op. Cit. Map

<sup>10</sup> Royal Navy NID 2437/41, Op. Cit. p. 1

<sup>11</sup> Royal Navy NID 2437/41, Op. Cit. p. 3

<sup>12</sup> Report of Proceedings for HMAS *Warrego* and HMAS *Swan* for November 1940. HMAS *Swan's* ROP is located at <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1072760/bundled/RCDIG1072760.pdf> and HMAS *Warrego* ROP is located at <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1073159/bundled/RCDIG1073159.pdf>



***Lower Gulf St. Vincent, Backstairs Passage, Nepean Bay and Eastern Cove —the area HMAS Warrego and HMAS Swan were on the 7/8 November 1940.***



# The Art of Deck Landing in the Old Straight Days



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05890.004

**By Norman Lee**

**Available on FAAAA website at**

**[https://www.faaaa.asn.au/  
landing-deck-aircraft-carrier/](https://www.faaaa.asn.au/landing-deck-aircraft-carrier/)**



In the old straight deck days, two people worked in unison to get an aircraft safely down on the deck; the pilot and the batsman, the latter was essential because the pilot couldn't see the flight deck over the aircraft's nose.

There were good batsmen and some less so. The epitome of the good batsman to me was Teddy Genge, one of our two batsmen on loan from the RN during the Korean War. Teddy stood rock solid on the batting platform and if he gave you a signal you knew that you had to respond quickly otherwise you would soon be in trouble.

The other batsman was Sid Richardson. Sid was a little generous with his correction messages, but nevertheless would get you down OK.

The down-wind leg was flown at 450 feet (the flight deck was 44 feet above the water). The drill was to aim to be at a steady 90 knots (in the case of the Firefly) at the 90 degree, being careful not to

trail which was caused by turning in too late. The result was that the batsman would disappear under the nose of the aircraft. If you waited until it looked right to turn in from the downward leg as per an air-field landing, it was too late as the ship had advanced by the time you got to the ninety.

You hoped to receive a steady roger (bats held out horizontally) as you reached that point which meant that your height, turn rate and speed were all correct, and from there you commenced a gradual reduction in height.

The signals were the high, (bats held up in a V), the low, (bats held down in a V), too fast, (right bat held out, left bat by the side), too slow, (bats brought together in front) and two others, the high dip which called for a small drop in height, (bats flipped up and down), and the low dip, (bats flipped down and up) which required power to regain the correct height. The dreaded signal was the 'come on', (bats brought together in a scooping up motion, sometimes with the batsman almost on one knee!) which meant that you were low and slow and required a power increase and attitude adjustment. (I got a 'come on' when doing my initial training in HMS *Illustrious* in the Irish Sea when my pitch lever slipped back, and I began to settle down towards the sea as the Griffon failed to respond to the demand for more power, a very exciting moment.)

Two signals were compulsory, the cut and the



***Fireflies over the stern of straight deck HMAS Sydney. A modification for an angle deck was never carried out in Sydney. The ship later became a Troop Transport and operated Wessex helicopters on runs to Vietnam***

wave off. The cut was given by the right bat being rapidly crossed over the batsman's chest; the wave off by both bats being waved together over the batsman's head.

One of our batsmen, having given you every signal in the book, and possibly twice over, would decide to curtail the approach and wave you off. Unfortunately, he caught me out twice by advancing his right bat much quicker than the left which looked like a cut. My poor Observer almost had a heart attack as the power was cut and then immediately poured on again.

The batsman's aim was to get you into an imaginary box from which a landing could be safely achieved. He would make the cut appropriate to where you were in the box. A little high and fast would trigger an early cut, the converse would mean a late cut.

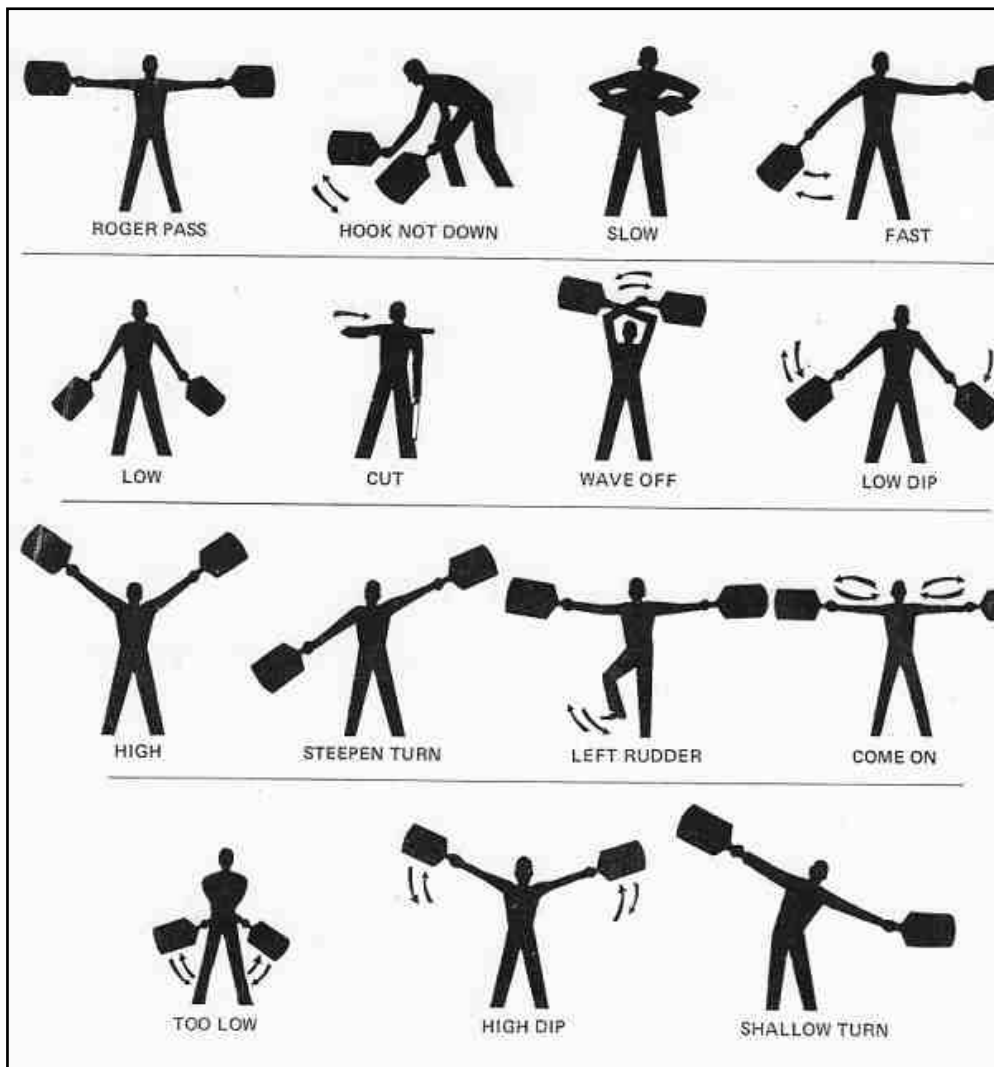
In the final stage of the approach as you were close to the rounddown, you would get a small flick of the bats to straighten up. With experience, you would reduce the power you were carrying to maintain the turn; just a tad to prevent a small climb developing, waiting for the cut.

Having received the cut, the throttle was rapidly closed and the nose was allowed to drop, which it did with the reduction in power, this gave you an instant view of the deck, enabling you to make minor adjustments in lining up, and to assess your height. This was the critical point of the whole of process of achieving a successful landing, the aim being to flare the aircraft into the three-point attitude, just over the deck, with zero vertical velocity. Done the properly, the result would ensure you hooked a wire.

The most common error was to fail to fully flare,



***Above left. The critical manoeuvre was flaring the aircraft to achieve zero rate of descent just above the deck, as this aircraft has done. Errors in flaring were the most common mistake, resulting in a bounce over the wires, or 'floating' over them. The result, more often than not, was entry into the barrier (above right). RAN images.***



**Batsman's signals as supplied by Fred Lane**

with remaining residual downward velocity resulting in a bounce and missed wires. Over-flaring could result in a climb and a possible float over the wires. If the speed was a little high this could result in a small climb on flaring, again causing the aircraft to float over the wires and into the barrier. This in colloquial terms was known as a 'full toss.'

Should the aircraft fail to hook a wire, or the hook bounce (an initial problem with Fireflies), it was into the barrier. The bounce problem was subsequently corrected with a mod which also made the hook lower much further. We had a few RN aircraft on loan with this mod which was apparent when forming up after a bombing mission, as you looked to see who were the lucky ones!

There were two barriers which were raised and lowered hydraulically to enable aircraft to taxi forward into the forward deck park.

The Firefly was fitted with a belly hook and the Fury with a sting. This meant that the Firefly could catch one of the later wires and stop short of the barriers (except 10 wire), but the Fury was not so lucky.

As experience was developed, a good barrier operator could make a quick assessment that a wire had been caught, albeit a late one and drop the barrier, this saved a few pilots from embarrassment.

My course mate and I did our initial deck landing in HMS *Illustrious* of WWII fame. My first attempt resulted in a bounce but fortunately I hooked a wire; this caused the aircraft to slam down on the deck resulting in slight stressing of the centre section. My mate, Blue got the cut and immediately flared with the result that he went full tilt into the barriers shedding his flaps, undercarriage, and airscrew. He proceeded up the deck, skidding on the fuselage, stopping just short of the port forward 4.5-gun mount. To both our surprise he received an above average for deck

landing. It was the first barrier I witnessed and, as outlined, it was a full bottle effort; the noise was remarkable!

There was no doubt that constant practise was essential to maintain a high standard of deck landing; this was proved during the Korean War when the work up was a disaster, but the subsequent two-ops-a-day resulted in few accidents.

When we moved to the angle deck life became a little less stressful: at least if you missed the wires you only hurt your pride as you bolted.

I deck landed the Gannet in HMS *Bulwark* and HMAS *Melbourne*, and the Sea Hawk in HMS *Centaur*, but unfortunately not the Sea Venom and hence cannot comment on it as a deck lander.

In conclusion, straight-deck landing was an art requiring very fine tuning of height and speed control, and once learnt resulted in a successful landing every time, as 255 accident free arrivals attested – although I must confess that I had the odd hairy arrival in the early days.

(Nat Gould's interview on straight deck landings can be seen [here](#). It's also available on the same FAAAA link)



# Medals Stolen and RSL Arranges Replacements

On 8 November 2020, Davidstown RSL President Paul Osborne presented Stanley Heares with replacement medals that were stolen; amongst them was a United States Navy and United States Marine Corps Commendation Medal.

Stanley was awarded the Commendation Medal for his actions on the early morning of 3 June 1969 after HMAS *Melbourne* and USS *Frank E. Evans* collided in the South China sea. His citation says: "he directed rigging of nets and a ladder between the two ships and was among the first to board USS *Evans*. He conducted an inspection of all compartments in this unfamiliar and darken ship to ensure that they had been cleared of all personal. He then assisted survivors to safety aboard HMAS *Melbourne*."

It was in late March 2019 that the USS *Frank E. Evans* Association received a query regarding 17 shipmates that were aboard HMAS *Melbourne* on the dreadful morning of 3 June 1969.

According to the communication it was believed they had been recommended for a Navy Commendation clear back in October 1970. However, they were never presented the medals because at the time



**Davidstown RSL President Paul Osborn (left) presents Stanley Heares with the replacement commendation citation**

Australian law prohibited Australian Military personnel from wearing a foreign country's medal.

The Association's immediate response was that it knew several sailors aboard HMAS *Melbourne* who had acted in a heroic manner during the recovery of USS *Frank E. Evans* sailors, but the Association was unsure of their identities.

Upon further investigation the Association learned that 17 of HMAS *Melbourne's* crew members had been recognised by the United State Navy and recommended for receipt of medals.

The plan was to present the medals on 3 June 2019 in Sydney, Australia. However, it was determined that three of the recipients had made plans to attend the 50th Remembrance gathering in Long Beach, California. Plans went in motion to present the medals at one of the evening banquets, but it was important for this to be a complete surprise! It stretched the Associations imagination on how to pull off such a presentation. The Association then requested Commodore Gabriel Varela USN to be the keynote speaker at the 3 June evening banquet and to present the medals.

For medal recipient Stanley Heares, it was an honour that his efforts had been acknowledged. He joined the Navy aged 17 in 1951 and was discharged 25 years later in 1976.

Stanley was the flight deck Petty Officer when the HMAS *Melbourne* collided with HMAS *Voyager* and Chief Petty Officer when the *Melbourne* collided with the USS *Frank E Evans*. He was one of the first to be promoted to the newly established Navy rank of Warrant Officer circa 1971.

He commenced employment with ALSCO Linen Service Company in Alexandra where he remained for 15 years before retirement. Stan in his mid 60's was then employed by the Leighton Contractors who built the eastern distributor. He remained on that project from start to finish for four years .

## **RAN Medal Recipients for USS Evans Disaster**

### **Navy and Marine Corps Medal**

LEUT Robert Burns  
AB Alan Evert  
AB Patrick Richardson

### **Air Medal**

CMDR Geoffrey Vickeridge  
LCDR Des Rogers  
LCDR Leslie Powell

### **Navy Commendation Medal**

CMDR Errol Stevens  
LCDR Colin Patterson  
LEUT James Buchanan  
CPO Stanley Heares  
LS Liam McDonald  
AB Lewis Farkas  
EM Wayne Baldwin  
EM Kerry James  
NA Ian Hartley  
NA Robert Winston  
OS Chris Harris



# Helo IFR

## (I Follow Roads)

I told my copilot I had vertigo  
and to stay on the instruments with me.  
His response was less than inspiring,  
"I...I... don't know where we... are."

---

*By the then LCDR Travis Peterson USN  
Article with permission of USN & USMC  
Aviation Safety Magazine 'Approach'  
May-June 2007*

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As many a helo driver has heard, IFR means "I follow roads." While there is some truth to this meaning, when you're in the middle of the ocean on a black overcast night 100 feet off the water, your instrument-flying ability will be tested.

However, on a beautiful, clear day, during a VFR low-level training, you are not thinking about needing those instrument-flying skills - you can always just follow the roads, right?

I was inbound to Kuwait in the mighty HH-60H, on a beautiful July day in the Northern Arabian Gulf. Sure it was hot, but the weather was CAVU (CAVOK?). I was taking one of the newer pilots for a low-level TERF (Terrain Following Exercise?) training around the Kuwait desert.

As we entered the training area, we descended to 100 feet, the normal altitude for these routes. I casually also noticed the sky to the north looked a little odd. We continued, hitting our check points as scheduled. I mentioned the next checkpoint was near an "armour graveyard" of sorts, left over from the first Gulf War. All the shot-up and captured equipment had been dragged into three large junkyards (for lack of a better word), one full of armour, one of artillery, and one full of all other types of vehicles. Needless to say the newer pilot wanted to see it.

We hit the next checkpoint, a road intersection by GPS, then took a little detour along the road to the junkyard. This point is where I had noticed the sky beginning to change colour from blue to a yellowish-grey brown, and it had become slightly darker. I said it looked like a dust storm was coming in from the north. As we followed the road, little did we realise how fast visibility was deteriorating.

In the next five minutes the visibility decreased to about three-five miles. The sky definitely became darker, too, but only as dark as the lightly overcast day. I knew we were approaching the junkyard. The GPS coordinates confirmed it was just ahead, but we couldn't see it. Had we been looking to the side, instead of ahead, straight down the road, we might have had a clue as to what really was happening.

The road was about to end and much sooner than I expected. What I had estimated to be about three to five miles visibility 20 minutes earlier quickly had deteriorated to about one-half mile in blowing sand.

I said "We should have seen the junkyard by now; visibility rapidly is going down". If nothing else, I am the master of the obvious.

When the road ended, I suddenly realised everything looked the same. I saw the ground, and I was just looking at the road. With all the blowing sand, though, the ground looked exactly like the sky: If any terrain features existed, they were invisible. Even the light level between the sky and ground looked the same.

Still not thinking IFR, 100 feet over land, in the middle of the day, I began a 180-degree turn to find the road and to regain my visual reference. I re-

member noting my heading and the reversal heading, then shifting my scan back outside to look for the road. Guess what? I never saw that road again.

Within 30 seconds, the radar-altitude alerter went to 50 feet. I scanned the radalt and saw it rapidly descend through 40 feet. During the next minute or so - I'm guessing, because survival mode kicked in, and time compression went into overdrive - I went through numerous episodes of vertigo and denial.

Events happened so fast. My mind was racing, filled with thoughts about survival, the fact that the ground approaching and that I needed power. I pulled the collective about three quarters of the way up but, I still was in denial about what was going on. Reversing radalt, I now was climbing. Thinking all was well, I shifted scan back outside; I needed to find the road.

The radalt went off again, so I shifted scan to see we were at 40 feet again and descending rapidly. I knew we needed more power because experience told me we should be climbing with the collective in that position and the torque near max.

For the first time, I scanned the attitude indicator and RMI. I was completely lost and confused. I was back near my original heading. The RMI continued rapidly left, with nose up, right wing down, zero airspeed, and descent with lots of power.

What I just wrote may make sense to you. But, when I was in the middle of the scenario, I had to decipher what the instruments were telling me, and the last hour of VFR seat-of-the-pants flying I had been doing didn't help. My body said we were in a left-hand turn. No one else in the aircraft had a clue. The two crewmen in the back were on the lookout for a road or junkyard. My co-pilot was now with me on the instruments, but as he had been navigating from the chart and visually, not at the controls, he was more confused than me.

I went back to the basics: Survival, more power, stop the rate of descent, level the wings, airspeed, I need some, altitude bottomed out at 20 feet.

If I still had been nose-high, I likely would have stuck the tail in the dirt. I nosed it over, and after what seemed like minutes, it began to register. The instruments looked better, and I was fully engaged. I was IFR, and the VFR training was over. Before long, I was at 50 feet, slowly climbing, accelerating and maintaining heading. Vertigo had set in bad, though, and I was beginning to fight myself. Trust the instruments, I kept telling myself, as I waited to hit the ground. The instruments told me that we were in good shape, but my head still was spinning.

I told my copilot I had vertigo and to stay on the instruments with me. His response was less than inspiring, "I... I... don't know where we... are."

As the gyro in my head began to cage, we were at 300 feet, 40 knots, accelerating and climbing. I asked my copilot if he was with me. He asked where we were going. Again, I scanned the instruments to see if I was messing up something else. I asked him to read off the instruments one by one and to tell me what he saw. He slowly caught back up with the aircraft and helped me confirm what I saw. The climb began to pick up as I felt the aircraft go through translational lift. OK, things were beginning to make sense again; all was returning to normal, although painfully slow.

He then asked me what was wrong. I wasn't completely sure, so I asked him if he knew what had happened. He said the radalt went off; now he was "Master of the obvious."

I asked if anyone in the crew had seen the road again; everyone said no. We were at 1,000 feet, 130 knots, and direct to the ship. I finally had time to think, and the vertigo essentially was gone. Still, I had no visual reference to anything, but there was a noticeable difference in light level from high to low. After some deep breaths and a little time, I was able to more accurately analyse what had occurred.

I asked the copilot if he knew what just had happened, besides the radalt going off. He said, "During your turn, you either descended, or a dune rose up to set off the alerter."

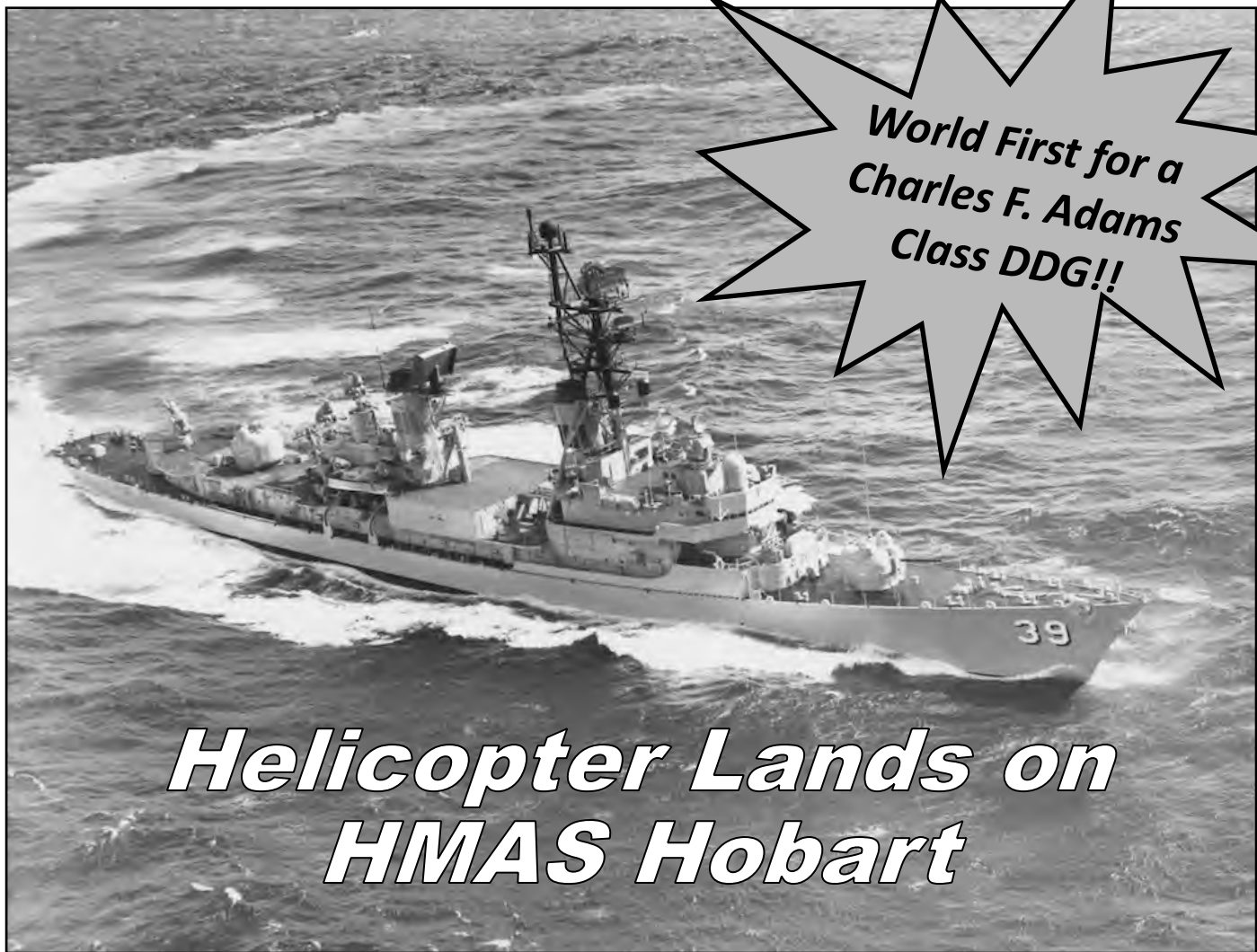
I replied, "I probably descended."

I then asked if he had realised we had stopped turning right: stopped forward flight, with the nose going left with a right bank; descending tail first toward the ground; and most likely were flying backward. I could see his eyes get wider through his dark visor, and his mouth was hanging open. His look indicated he may not have known of our predicament.

I really am not quite sure what had happened. The only way I can explain what all the instruments were telling me was, when I first looked at them, my brain did not process everything. I knew we probably were going to hit the ground hard, and it would be my fault. It's easy to second-guess what I should have done and when, after the fact. I was younger and less experienced. However, I have seen the mentality that led me into this trap result in many more mishaps since then. We, as naval aviators, continue to press, even when things are not going our way. Call it the desire to get the X, get-there-itis, or just not having the intestinal fortitude to call it off when you know you should.

There are times when you need to bring the "A game" and get the job done, but on this day, and on many others, a need just doesn't exist. Wait until another day to get the X. I'm just glad we're still around to see those days.





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**By John Perryman**  
**Available on RAN Website**  
**[here](#)**

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**T**hroughout history, seafarers have had to consistently use their ingenuity to improvise, adapt and overcome in the face of adversity. The very nature of ships is such that when they sail and the ‘umbilical cord’ connecting them to shore infrastructure is cut, they become dependant upon their own provisions and resources. Notwithstanding the technological advantages enjoyed today by mariners the world over, this truism remains.

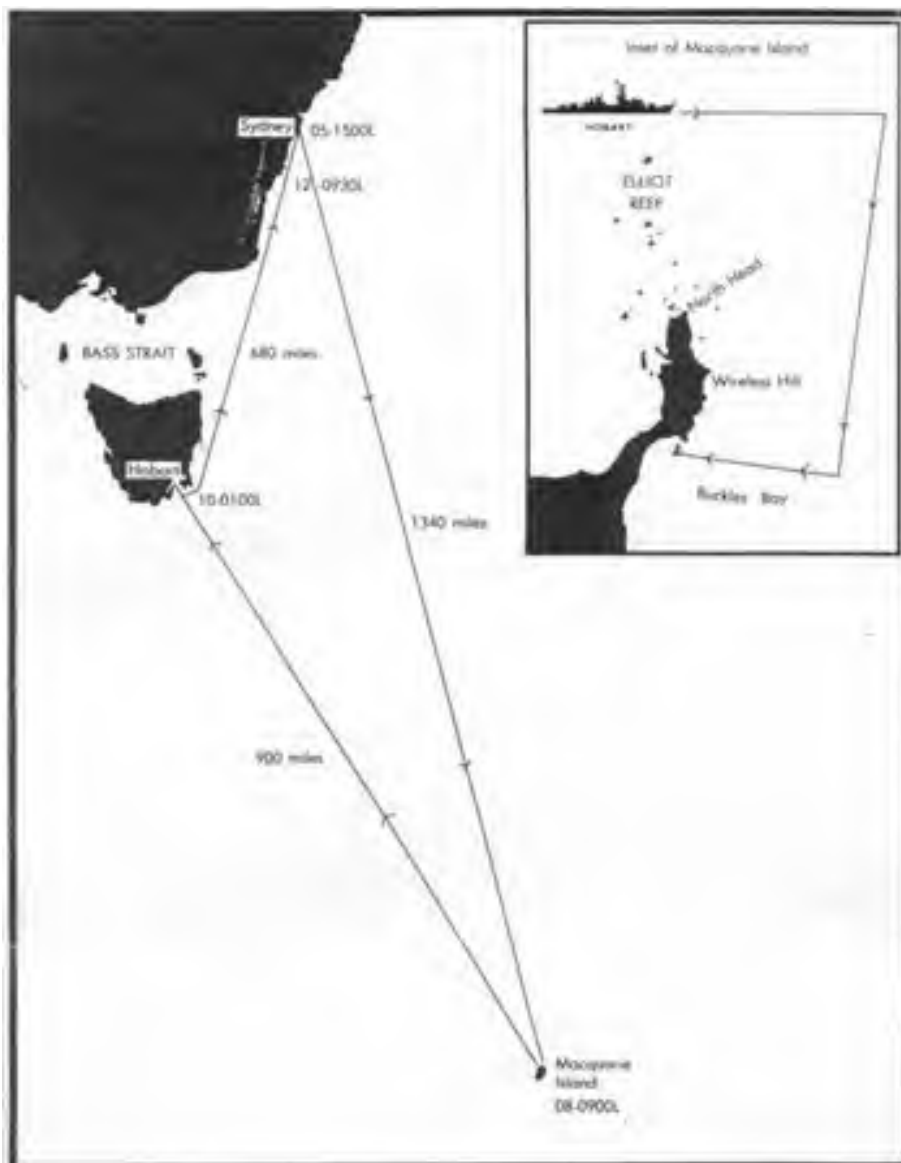
It was certainly the case in January 1979 when the Perth Class Guided Missile Destroyer (DDG) HMAS *Hobart* closed up at ‘flying stations’, and in a

world first prepared to land a helicopter onboard a hastily constructed helicopter pad situated on her quarterdeck. The story of this historic event is but one example of the type of initiative and resourcefulness displayed by officers and sailors serving in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). It remains a fine example of naval ingenuity.

On 4 January 1979, *Hobart*, under the command of Captain P. G. N. Kennedy RAN was berthed outboard of the destroyer tender HMAS *Stalwart* in Sydney, undergoing an Assisted Maintenance Period. With much of her machinery and vital equipment in pieces, and with many of her crew still absent on Christmas leave, the possibility of sailing within 24 hours seemed remote. However, when orders were received to standby to sail for an

urgent medical evacuation task at Macquarie Island in the Southern Ocean, the ship responded to the first of a series of obstacles that were to be encountered throughout the mission.

As further details of the tasking were received, the full extent of *Hobart's* mercy mission became apparent. It was learned that Mr Roger J. Barker, a biologist working as part of Australia's Antarctic Expedition on Macquarie Island, had fallen 200 feet down a cliff face while studying bird life, and that he had sustained extensive spinal and leg injuries. Although he had been recovered from the scene of the accident and was receiving first aid, it was clear that he required urgent specialist medical treatment and that he would need to be evacuated to the nearest hospital, some 900 miles to the north



**Chart depicting Hobart's mercy dash.**

west in Hobart, Tasmania. *Hobart* was consequently briefed to make preparations to steam south with all dispatch and evacuate Mr Barker from Macquarie Island to Tasmania.

The first of the obstacles that *Hobart's* command faced was to bring the destroyer to a state of immediate readiness for sea and the second challenge was to assemble a crew. A number of essential *Hobart* personnel were recalled from their leave, while other RAN vessels alongside Garden Island and several shore establishments contributed members of their duty watches to complement her depleted ship's company. A further obstacle was to restore vital machinery to

working condition. As this work went on *Hobart* fuelled throughout the afternoon and evening of 4 January at which time confirmation of the mission was received from Fleet Headquarters. With final preparations continuing throughout the morning of 5 January, *Hobart* sailed from Sydney at 1500, on one boiler and short 100 men from her usual complement of 333. As she made her way through Sydney Heads the second of her four boilers was brought on line with the remaining two being flashed up off Jervis Bay and Gabo Island respectively. With full power now available, *Hobart* proceeded with dispatch on the 1340 mile mercy dash to Macquarie Island.

In the meantime, the Antarctic support vessel *MV Thala Dan* was only twelve hours steaming from the port of Hobart. The *Thala Dan* was directed to put into Hobart, disembark her passengers and take on a helicopter chartered by the Antarctic Division to assist in the rescue.

The following day, *Hobart* established direct communications with Macquarie Island and a full medical update on Mr Barker's condition was received. Having fallen from the cliff face, Mr Barker had spent four agonising hours lying on his stomach trying to stop skuas from pecking at his injuries before he was rescued. Grave concerns were held for his well being and it was unclear what the best method of transferring him to *Hobart* would be, in light of deteriorating weather conditions at Macquarie Island.

On Sunday 7 January a three way communications link was established between *Hobart*, the *Thala Dan*, and the Macquarie Island base. Transfer options were discussed with the pilot of *Thala Dan's* small utility helicopter, Nigel Osborn who, as luck would have it, was an ex-Royal Navy pilot. It was agreed that a makeshift helicopter pad should be constructed onboard *Hobart* to enable transfer of the patient by air in the event that weather conditions at Macquarie Island were unsuitable for a boat transfer.

Throughout the day, *Hobart* found herself in rapidly deteriorating weather, with a fifteen foot swell running and the wind registering a constant force seven (28-33 knots). A number of her crew, particularly those who had been seconded for the voyage and who were not accustomed to the pitching and rolling of a DDG, experienced great discomfort as the ship steamed steadily south. In





***Thala Dan's helicopter on the makeshift helipad onboard HMAS Hobart***

spite of this, the destroyer's shipwrights, engineers and seamen commenced work on the construction of the helicopter pad on the port side of *Hobart's* quarterdeck, using only the material and expertise available onboard. By the end of the day they had skillfully assembled a stout platform and were reasonably confident that it would be capable of receiving *Thala Dan's* helicopter should the need arise.

At 0515 on Monday 8 January, Macquarie Island was raised on radar and shortly afterwards *Hobart* altered her course to pass between the Judges and Clerk Islands as she proceeded to rendezvous with *Thala Dan* in Buckles Bay. On arrival in Buckles Bay at 0854, *Hobart* anchored two and a

half cables to seaward of *Thala Dan* where an immediate assessment was made on how best to transfer the injured scientist. *Hobart* was rolling up to 12 degrees with the wind gusting between 30 and 35 knots, while the choppy sea state was estimated to be between three and four feet in height. Notwithstanding the shelter offered within the bay, it was obvious that it would be much too hazardous to attempt a boat transfer and risk further injury to the patient in such conditions. Thus the decision was made to transfer the patient using *Thala Dan's* helicopter.

Within half an hour *Hobart* was closed up at 'flying stations' and *Thala Dan's* helicopter was called in to at-

tempt a trial landing on the recently constructed helipad. The landing was timed to avoid periods of excessive rolling and at 0930 the helicopter landed safely on board the makeshift structure. With the trial complete attention now turned to the medical evacuation of Mr Barker, which began at 1002 following the passing of a heavy rain squall. Again the helicopter was called in and the transfer was successfully completed in approximately 60 seconds. With the patient and an Antarctic Division medical officer safely on board *Hobart*, the helicopter returned to *Thala Dan* with the distinction of being the first aircraft to land on board a Perth Class DDG.

*Hobart* weighed anchor with-



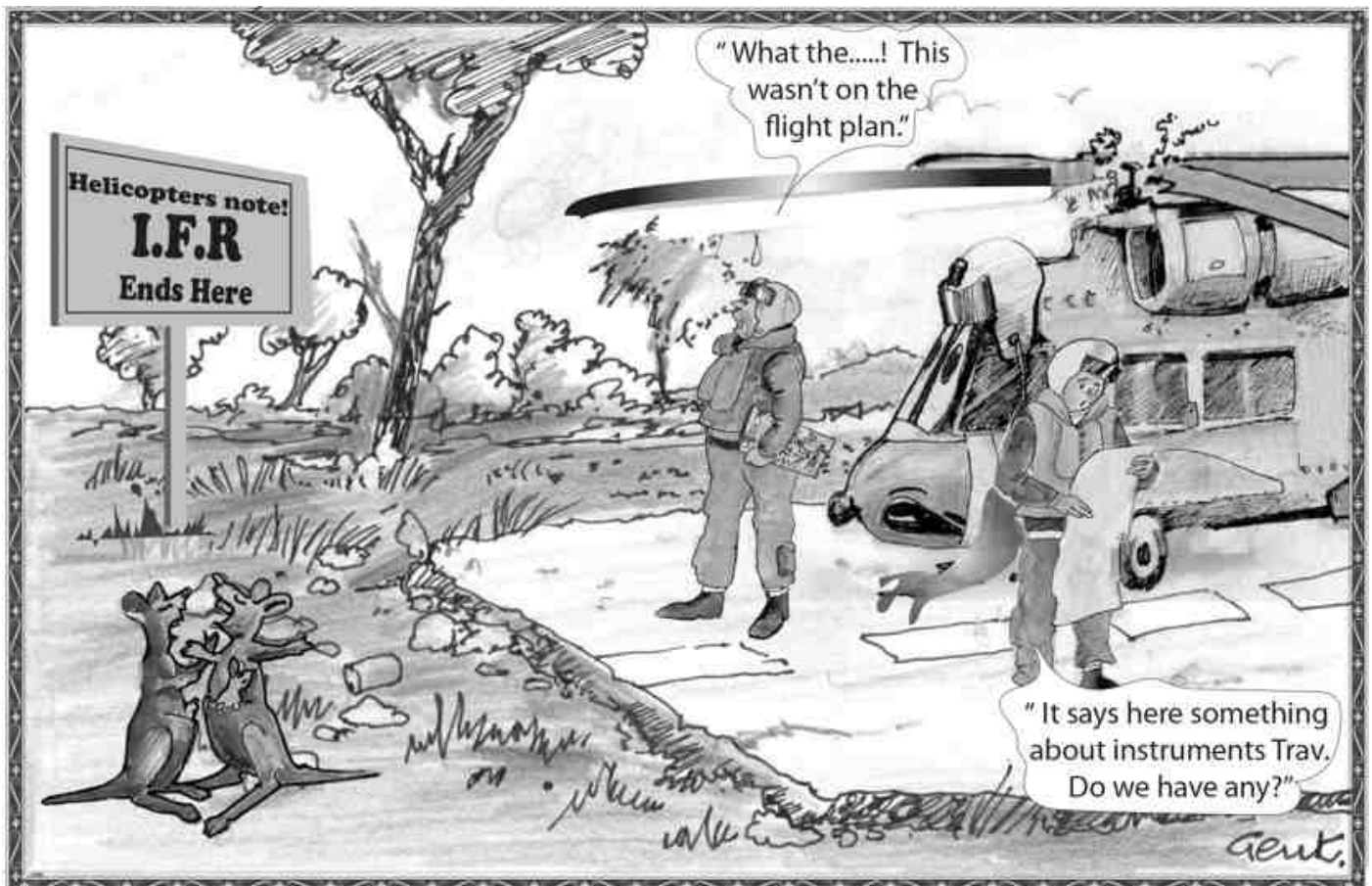
out delay and once clear of the island set course at best speed for the 900 mile voyage to *Hobart*. Mr Barker handled the rough sea conditions well throughout Monday 8 January and the forenoon of the following day; however, concern over a deterioration in his condition necessitated an increase in speed in spite of the weather. The Derwent River was entered at 2340 on Tuesday 9 January and *Hobart* berthed alongside Macquarie Wharf at 0115 on Wednesday morning, completing the journey in a record 39 hours. Shortly after berthing, Mr Barker was transferred to a waiting ambulance and taken to the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Throughout the transit from Macquarie Island to *Hobart*, it was reported that the injured Roger Barker displayed great courage and remained composed in spite of his terrible injuries. He underwent emergency surgery on arrival in hospital at Hobart, which sadly resulted in the amputation of his left leg. It was with deep regret that the crew of *Hobart* later learned that he lost his fight for life when he succumbed to his injuries in Melbourne on 8 February 1979. As a tribute to Roger Barker, the Barker Channel in the Vestfold Hills region of Australian Antarctic Territory was subsequently named in his honour.

*Hobart's* mercy dash in 1979 typifies both the character and compassion of the Australian sailor. Her 'scratch' crew's willingness to put service before self to assist someone in great need, coupled with their ability to improvise in the face of adversity continues to serve as a fine example of naval ingenuity.



**Captain P. G. N. Kennedy, RAN**  
**Later RADM**



# An Aerial View of Anti Submarine Warfare!!

*By Ben Patynowski author of the 'Submarine Hunter'. Ben has approved the FAAAA republishing excerpts from the book and pages not previously published.*

***This dramatic water colour depicting an attack on U-boat U-106 in the Bay of Biscay on 2 August 1943 was painted by Vic Johnson. The leading Sunderland DV968 / M of 461 Squadron RAAF crewed by Flight Lieutenant I.A.Clark, climbs away after his first run as RAF Sunderland N / 228 begins its attack. Both Sunderlands made second attacks to finally sink U-106***

The Fairey Gannet ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) Mk.1 aircraft in service with the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Australian Navy was specifically designed to guard the fleet and merchant shipping from attack by enemy submarines from below and on the surface of the ocean. Possessing internal ordnance of torpedoes and depth charges for anti-submarine warfare it also carried external ordnance of rocket projectiles and bombs, giving it a secondary role as a strike aircraft capable of destroying surface vessels and ground targets.

Given the benefit of hindsight from submarine warfare during World War One (WWI), the destructive power of the submarine and the means of combating it was largely ignored by the Allies prior to World War Two (WWII), especially so by the British, when ASW became an integral part of modern

warfare. Consequently the ability to counter the carnage wrought by the submarine was one of imbalanced expediency that cost dearly. Thousands of lives and material tonnage now rest on the bottom of the At-

lantic as silent witnesses to the folly of that complacency. The battle for the Atlantic was indeed one of the most crucial; loss of vital supply lines to Britain would have greatly influenced the outcome of



***Gannet armed with rockets prepares to attack***



that war. **Winston Churchill** himself would later declare *"the threat the U-boats posed in the Atlantic was the only thing that really frightened me during the war. On their defeat, hung the outcome of World War Two"*.

**Aerial ASW** and the development of Maritime Air Power in Britain between WWI and WWII was initially a low priority issue, rather than a dedicated force for the purpose of hunting and destroying enemy submarines. Although aircraft were regarded as a useful deterrent against submarines, mainly due to some limited success during WWI where the mere presence of aircraft forced submarines to submerge, their formation as an organised force was indeed fraught with controversy. The amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Aviation Service on 1 April 1918 led to the formation of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and became the world's first independent air force under the command of **Sir Hugh Trenchard**, with strong objection from both the War Office and Admiralty.

During the hard fought battle to regain some control of its air assets Admiralty was finally given control of its aircraft, and in 1937 the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) of the Royal Navy was created, albeit the aircraft it controlled had to be operated from ships. Land based ASW forces were still under the control of the RAF in the form of Coastal Command. For all intents and purposes



**ASW Gannets lined up with Sea Venoms on HMAS Melbourne**

the first true land based ASW aircraft to see operational service was the humble British designed Avro Anson Mk1, which made the first RAF attack on a German U-Boat in September 1939. The Lockheed Hudson, derived from the Lockheed type 14 Super Electra passenger aircraft operated in the USA replaced the Anson to become the first truly dedicated ASW aircraft, specifically adopted to hunt submarines and surface vessels, prior to the introduction of long range aircraft like the Wellington, Short Sunderland, Catalina and the very successful Consolidated Liberator.

At the outbreak of WWII the newly formed FAA was poorly equipped by comparison to Coastal Command, in 1939 it possessed 232 aircraft for surface attack on enemy shipping and the ASW role. The primary strike and reconnaissance aircraft being the famous Fairey Swordfish and the newly acquired Skua Mk II dive-bomber, other aircraft of note were the Blackburn Roc and Sea Gladiator. Anti-submarine operations were conducted by the Fleet Carriers HMS *Ark Royal*, *Hermes* and *Courageous* covering the north and south west area with Atlantic operations carried out by HMS *Furious*, *Glorious* and *Eagle* with HMS *Albatross* stationed off Aden.

**The Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm** came into being in 1948 with the commissioning of 805 Squadron (Hawker Sea Furies) and 816 Squadron (Fairey Fireflies) on 28 August followed three days later by the commissioning of the Naval Air Station, HMAS *Albatross* at Nowra on the NSW South Coast. The aircraft carrier HMAS *Sydney* was commissioned at Plymouth on 19 December. The Fairey Gannet aircraft was destined to replace the Fairey Firefly as the anti-submarine warfare aircraft in the mid 1950's



**Firefly on final approach**



# ***RN Naval Air Station Setup at Schofields during WWII***



*A Firefly Mk.1 of 1770 Squadron running up in front of Schofields Control Tower, Circa August 1945.*

## **Mobile Naval Air Base No. III**

*The MONAB story continues and is published in Slipstream with the permission of the Editor and Webmaster of the Royal Navy Research Archive, the website which is located [here](#). A direct link from within this site to the MONAB site is [here](#).*

*Each issue, Slipstream will describe different MONABs located within Australia over several issues with links to relevant parts of the MONAB story. . . . . Ed*

## ***Assembly and commissioning in the UK***

Personnel and equipment for Mobile Naval Air Base III began to assemble at Royal Naval Air Station Ludham, Norfolk UK the headquarters of the Mobile Naval Airfields Organisa-

tion (MNAO) from 18 October 1944. The unit was to form as a type A (Small) MONAB tasked with supporting up to 50 aircraft and was allocated the following maintenance components:

Mobile Maintenance (MM) unit No. 2 supporting Corsair Mk.II & IV, Hellcat Mk.I & II; Seafire Mk.III Maintenance Servicing (MS) unit; No. 3 supporting Firefly Mk.I Maintenance Servicing (MS) unit; and No. 4 supporting Seafire Mk.III (see MONAB components page for further details).

There were already two other MONABs on the station, MONAB I had begun forming in early September and MONAB II in early October; space was at a premium with over 1500 men, not counting the ship's company of the forming station, on the site.

Vehicles, equipment and stores for all three units had to be assembled, unpacked, checked, labelled and packed in preparation for despatch by sea. Personal kit issues

had to be made for each unit including Battle dress and 1937 Pattern Webbing for all personnel along with weapon training on the Sten gun. Additionally, all personnel were entitled to embarkation leave. This ideally should have been taken before reporting to RNAS Ludham but, rarely was, so this leave had to be included in the very short assembly timescale.

MONAB IV personnel began arriving at the start of November to begin assembly on the 15 November, but the overcrowding eased for a while when MONAB I departed for Liverpool a few weeks later. Stores and equipment were first delivered by road, followed by the personnel a few days later by train. The stores and equipment of MONAB II were also despatched to Liverpool in mid-November, but the personnel would follow later. Although not yet commissioned, MONAB III had sufficiently assembled its equipment and stores for despatch to the port of embarkation in early December. The vehicles and

equipment were transported by the unit's motor transport overnight on Saturday 2 December to Gladstone Dock, Liverpool for embarkation in the *SS Essex*.

A total of 89 prime movers and 25 trailers were involved in the move, which was made under the direction of the Air Engineering Officer. Sadly an accident occurred which killed Marine Joseph McShane and seriously injured two others.

### **Despatch overseas**

MONAB III commissioned at RNAS Ludham as an independent command on 4 December 1944, bearing the ship's name *HMS Nabthorpe*, Commander (A) E.W. Kenton in command.

The unit's stores and equipment sailed onboard the *SS Essex* on 16 December. The personnel of MONAB III, in company with those of MONAB II, embarked in the Troopship *Athlone Castle* for passage to Australia, sailing from Liverpool on 22 December.

All of the mobile units planned



***Seafire Mk. III '127/S' (probably PR295) from 887 squadron HMS Indefatigable, being manhandled off the soft ground besides the runway at Schofields—Circa June 1945***

had been allocated to the support of the new British Pacific Fleet (BPF) which was to begin operations in the South Western Pacific in early 1945. Australia was to be the rear echelon area for the fleet

and a number of the MONABs were to be installed there.

The *Athlone Castle* transited the Panama Canal to enter the Pacific, and arrived in Sydney on 25 January 1945. The personnel were disembarked to *HMS Golden Hind* and accommodated under canvas at Warwick Race course whilst awaiting allocation of an operating base and the arrival of the *SS Essex* which arrived at Sydney on 4 February.

### ***Commissioned at RNAS Schofields, New South Wales***

RAAF Base Schofields was chosen for transfer to the Admiralty on loan for occupation by MONAB III and the advance party arrived on the site on 5 February to find the station was still under construction. The following day the station readiness was reported as: one operational runway and one Dorland transportable Hanger erected by MONAB staff. The first week on the station was spent preparing the airfield for the arrival of squadron personnel and aircraft which were due with the arrival of the BPF later that month.

Disembarked Squadrons arrived at Schofields from the BPF on the 10 February; these being

### **Function**

The support of disembarked Squadrons, the provision of a Crew Pool & Refresher Flying School (706 Naval Air Squadron)

### **Aviation Support Components**

Mobile Maintenance (MM) 2,  
Maintenance Servicing (MS) 3 & 4

### **Aircraft type supported**

Corsair Mk. II & IV  
Hellcat Mk. I & II  
Seafire Mk. II & L.III

### **Commanding Officer HMS Nabthorpe**

Commander (A) E.W. Kenton 04 Dec 1944  
MONAB III paid off 15 November 1945

### **Commanding Officer HMS Nabstock**

Captain H.V.P. McClintock D.S.O. 15 Nov 1945  
MONAB VI paid off 09 June 1946





**Members of Maintenance Servicing Unit No.3 detached to RNAS Maryborough with 1770 squadron Fireflies. Lieutenant M. Romanoff is seated in the centre of the front row, CPO Hughes to his left. Leading Air Fitter (E) E. Chamberlain is standing far right**

887 and 894 (Seafire) Squadrons and 1770 (Firefly) Squadron from HMS *Indefatigable*. All Squadron personnel were accommodated under canvas, the station still having no permanent buildings. On 14 February the first flying accident occurred; LEUT F.C. Hurlock RNVR of 887 Squadron ground looped on landing Seafire PP928 and the undercarriage collapsed. The remaining elements of MONAB III arrived at Schofields on 18 February 18, the day RNAS Schofields was commissioned HMS *Nabthorpe*.

A second Dorland hanger was completed for workshop use on 23 February when 1840 (Hellcat) Squadron arrived on the station, disembarking from the escort carrier HMS *Speaker*. Further aircraft arrived a few days later when 1845 (Corsair) Squadron disembarked from HMS *Slinger*. No's 887,894 & 1770 Squadrons re-embarked in *Indefatigable* on 27 February relieving some of the overcrowding at the hastily prepared naval air station.

During the first week of March

the station's first resident flying unit, 706 Squadron, moved from RNAS Jervis Bay to RNAS Schofields. Its task was to operate a Crew Pool & Refresher Flying School and was to be a large unit with a total strength of 36 aircraft, equipped with six each of

Avenger, Barracuda, Corsair, Firefly, Hellcat & Seafire. 1840 Squadron re-embarked their Hellcats in *Speaker* on the 9 March and the Corsairs of 1845 re-joined *Slinger* two days later.

On the 18 March 1772 (Firefly) Squadron and 885 (Hellcat) Squadron two days later arrived from the escort carrier HMS *Ruler*. 885 stayed until 4 April before re-embarking in *Ruler*. There were four flying incidents during March: Seafire NF430 of the Station Flight, flown by SBLT G. E. Scott RNVR burst a tyre landing, ran off the runway and another Station Flight aircraft, Reliant FB611 piloted by LEUT H. G. Thom RANVR, taxied into an obstruction. On the same day Hellcat JV277 of 885

Squadron flown by SBLT R. B. Tucker RNVR, braked hard, and ended on its nose. Another 885 Squadron Hellcat, JW740 flown by SBLT W. G. Bowles RNZNVR had a repeat performance.

April was a quieter month,



**Aerial view of RNAS Schofields in circa June 1944**





**April 1945: Aircraft of the newly arrived 899 Squadron, tasked with training RAAF pilots who transferred to the RANVR in carrier operations**

with the departures of 885 squadron. The Fireflies of 1772 were the only front-line Squadron remaining. After completing their workup, 706 Squadron commissioned at Schofields on 10 April. Next to arrive was 899 (Seafire) Squadron which disembarked from the escort carrier HMS *Chaser* on the 23 April as a Seafire Pool Squadron. First of May brought 1843 (Corsair) Squadron disembarking from the escort carrier HMS *Arbiter*.

On 9 May HMS *Nabthorpe* celebrated VE-Day (Victory in Europe was declared the day before), a specially prepared Victory menu was served for the ship's company covering Breakfast, Dinner, Tea, and Supper. Part

of 1843 re-joined *Arbiter* on 20 May after nearly three weeks of flying training in which there were two incidents during this period. An explosion occurred on the 12 May after Corsair KD588 had been refuelled. An overflow of petrol had lodged in the side flaps after refuelling and had ignited on start-up, the pilot SBLT E. Barker RNVR was OK. On 14 May SBLT M.J. Rouse in Corsair KD601 selected the dive brake instead of the undercarriage with the resulting belly landing writing off the aircraft. Of those remaining at Schofields SBLT K.E. Vogan RNVR, was killed on 30 May when his Corsair failed to pull out of a vertical dive and crashed into a hillside near RAAF

Menangle. The only other incident during May involved Seafire LEUT I. L. Joly RNVR, which swerved off the runway on landing, and ran into a drainage ditch on the 28 May.

The second large scale disembarkation of Squadrons from the BPF began in June. 820 (Avenger), 887 & 894 (Seafire) and 1770 (Firefly) Squadrons arrived at Schofields from *Indefatigable* on the 5 June. 1834 & 1836 (Corsair) Squadrons also arrived on this date disembarking from HMS *Victorious*. For the next twelve days MONAB III (RNAS Schofields) supported nine Squadrons (two resident training Squadrons and seven front-line units), over 100 aircraft well in excess of its designed capacity of 50. Construction of the airfield and buildings was still not complete and so many squadron personnel were still accommodated under canvas. The situation was to get worse when work came to a halt, due first to heavy rains bringing widespread flooding and then further delayed when the Civil Construction Corps labourers engaged on airfield construction went on strike. The two Corsair squadrons re-joined *Victorious* on the 26 June relieving some of the overcrowding.

At some stage in June 899 Squadron was re-tasked. It had been drastically reduced in both manpower and aircraft after arriving on the station. Only the CO and four experienced pilots re-



**MONAB III mobile operations set-up: When first opened for flying there was no control tower at Schofields so the specialist vehicles of the MONAB were used during the construction programme**



**Group portrait of 12 former RAAF pilots, who were the first group selected for training as RAN naval aviators with the British Pacific Fleet (Fleet Air Arm), HMS Nabthorpe at Schofields NSW. Back row from left: ASLT Leslie John Norton of Sydney NSW killed in a flying accident at Schofields on 29 November 1945; ASLT Robert Lindsay Davies (later LCDR) of Adelaide SA; ASLT John Bradley (Jack) O'Connor of Yarrawonga VIC, formerly of 80 Sqn RAAF; ASLT Charlie Bowley who later crash landed, going over the side of HMS Indomitable but was recovered by following destroyer; A/LEUT Kenneth Brian Innes-Smith of Adelaide SA, formerly of 80 Sqn RAAF; A/LEUT George Edward Pagan of Damar QLD; A/LEUT Arthur John 'Nat' Gould of QLD, formerly of 2 Operational Training Unit (OTU) and formerly of 75 and 457 Sqs RAAF; A/LEUT Clifton Herald Gray of Dungog, NSW. Front row from left: ASLT George Firth Spencer 'Spanky' Brown DFC, (later LCDR) of Echuca VIC, formerly of 8 OTU RAAF who was killed in a flying accident on 5 January 1956; A/LEUT Roy Clayson 'Shorty' Carroll of Blackall QLD formerly of 1 Aircraft Depot RAAF; ASLT Philip Crothers of Northampton of WA, formerly of 2 OTU RAAF; A/LEUT Ian Sandford Loudon of Port Moresby PNG, formerly of 76 Sqn RAAF (AWM)**

mained. It became a Seafire Operational Training Unit (OTU) to train pilots for the newly formed Air branch of Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve. The trainees were all RAAF Spitfire pilots with 500 hours on the type who volunteered for transfer to the RAN, with a reduction of one grade in rank. Squadron strength was increased to 14 Seafires and No 1 RANVR conversion course got underway with instruction in naval flying and combat tech-

niques building up to Deck Landing qualification. Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings (ADDLs) were carried out at Schofields but Shipboard Deck landing Training (DLT), the final stage of the course, was carried out off the coast of Queensland, the squadron flying up to RNAS Maryborough from where they flew out to make their landings.

There were six flying accidents during June. On the 8 June Hellcat FN373

of 706 squadron, flown by SBLT J. D. Pywell RNVR, braked and the prop pecked the ground. On the 16 June another 706 Squadron aircraft, Avenger FN870 suffered engine failure after take-off but managed to return to the airfield for a bad landing, the pilot LEUT D. J. Holmes RNVR was OK. The 19 June saw LEUT R. Ward RNVR damaged the port well of Corsair JT632 of 1834 Squadron while conducting ADDLs. There were two more incidents involv-





***Life under canvas - personnel from disembarked squadron were accommodated in tents at Schofields next to the squadron servicing area on the eastern edge of the airfield.***

ing trainees on the Seafire of 899 OTU, both on the 20 May, SBLT J. P. Crothers RANVR in NN303 swung off the runway and nosed over, and LEUT C. H. Gray RANVR in NF507 made a heavy landing which caused the port oleo to collapse. Towards the end of the month LEUT H. H. Salisbury RNVR in Seafire LR789 of 706 Squadron made a crash landing when the starboard undercarriage leg stuck and would not lock fully down.

On 1 July, 820 Squadron departed, re-embarking in *Indefatigable*. The remaining elements of 1843 Squadron departed for RNAS Maryborough to await the return of *Arbiter* and the detachment on board. 887, 894 & 1772 Squadrons re-embarked in *Indefatigable* on the 7 July. In mid-July three of the Royal Navy's four new Light-Fleet Carriers arrived in Australia to join the BPF and Schofields was to receive No. 15 Carrier Air Group (CAG). 1851 (Corsair) & 814 (Barracuda) Squadrons disembarked from HMS *Venerable* on 21 July.

Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, the Commander-in-Chief. BPF visited Schofields on the 28 July as part of his tour of the support facilities in Australia. The 12 pilots of No.1 RANVR conversion course carried out their DLT sessions in the Fleet Carrier HMS *Indomitable* between the 24-27 July, all being

certified for Deck Landing after completing 10 landings apiece. The successful pupils received RANVR(A) commissions and were to form the nucleus of the Australian Fleet Air Arm. There were only two flying accidents during July both involving pilots from 899 OTU. On 3 July SBLT C. C. Bowly RANVR in Seafire NM998 swung to starboard landing, ground looped, causing the undercarriage to collapse and damaged the prop. On 28 July SBLT K. B. I. Smith RANVR in Seafire NF447 made a heavy landing with port drift causing the port undercarriage to collapse.

## ***Victory over Japan and the run-down to closure***

On 15 August the 15th CAG re-embarked in *Venerable* and the Japanese surrendered with VJ-Day (as known in UK and Europe) being celebrated at Schofields. It was also known as VP-Day (as known in the US and Pacific nations). The celebrations were only brief however as the fourth Light-fleet carrier HMS *Glory* arrived in Sydney on 16 August disembarking the 16th CAG of 1831 (Corsair) & 837 (Barracuda) Squadrons. They were soon followed by 880 (Seafire) Squadron which disembarked from HMS *Implacable* on 25 August.

Earlier on 13 August, 1790 (Firefly) Night-Fighter squadron disembarked from escort carrier HMS *Vindex*. There were two flying incidents in August. On 9 August LEUT P. F. McClintock RNVR in Seafire LR789 of 706 squadron burst the starboard tyre on landing causing the aircraft to swing to starboard and nose over. Two weeks later MIDN J. D. Hobbs RNVR suffered engine failure on take-off and aborted the run.

*Continued Page 26*



***Digging drainage ditches while MONAB III gets installed at Schofields. A Hellcat from 1840 Squadron sits on the hardstand***



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Graham Pring

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### More on Riveting Dollies

The stories of riveting dollies being left in aircraft (*Slipstream* March 2021 and June 2021 issues page 24) reminded me of some words of the Bob Dylan song “Blowing In The Wind”

*Yes, and how many times can a man turn his head  
And pretend that he just doesn't see?*

*The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind*

In 1975 as a Tracker pilot on 816 Squadron I was preparing to embark in HMAS *Melbourne* for a RIMPAC deployment. As well as the crew ASW workup there was the challenge of becoming deck landing qualified for the first time. So there was a lot of FCLP (Field Carrier Landing Practice or MADDLS – Mirror Assisted Dummy Deck Landings in older terminology). It was during one such session of FCLP that I detected that the ailerons felt unusual – not heavy or jammed, but a sensation of binding. I wrote this up in the TA-100 Maintenance Record after landing. Yes, it was another riveting dollie from Bankstown. Lucky there was not a jammed control.

Three dollies from the same place in three different aircraft types over an extended time period!

Makes me wonder how many more that there might have been.

Owen Nicholls

### Slipstream Suggestion

*Slipstream* has become a really good Magazine – ahead of what it was years ago. Really enjoy reading some great articles.

Could I suggest that you include your email address in the small segment you have each edition listing the closing date for contributions? I had a bit of trouble finding it by other means.

Owen Nicholls

*(Thanks Owen. Slipstream's current email address is located on the front page. However, your suggestion to relocate the email address in the closing date for contributions has merit. Members have told me they're having trouble seeing the 'underscore' between slipstream\_faanaa. . . . .Ed)*





## Letters to the Editor



### Fixed Wing Pilots Covert to Rotary Wing



Firstly I'd like to say how much I look forward to reading *Slipstream* every quarter. I always find it such a good read.

I particularly enjoyed Trevor Rieck's story 'RAN/RN Helicopter Instructor Exchange Program 1963 to 1996' in the June 2021 issue. I do, however, have a slight correction to the story in regards to Tony Reyne's time in 705 Squadron.

He converted several RAN Tracker pilots who had transferred to the RN, to helicopters following the scrapping of the RAN's seaborne fixed wing operations. With one Tracker pilot during a 'box-knocking' flight in winter off Cornwall and with all doors off, it started to snow and they decided two Aussies did not need to be there and headed home.

I was the student with Tony on this 'box-knocking' sortie. It was my first time winching over

water, and was very memorable. I remember the flurry of snow whipping around the cockpit as Tony said: "we might head home". I think the chief aircrewman was also very pleased with the decision. From memory we hover-taxied home across Loe Bar and over the airfield fence in zero visibility.

The Royal Navy had agreed to convert four RAN pilots and four (4) RAN observers to helicopters with a three year ROSO. We did not transfer, but it was not an exchange. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement as the RN FAA was short of aviators and rebuilding numbers post the Falkland War, and the RAN needed to convert fixed wing pilots to rotary. I was a HS748 pilot on VC851 and was offered the exchange at short notice due to one of the pilots developing a medical issue. After conversion half were posted to Sea King and half to Lynx as detailed below.

After OFT I was posted to 826 NAS B flight. The three or so years flying in the UK was one of the highlights of my career and a great opportunity for a newly married 22 year old. We returned to Australia in 1987 with a 5 month old, Nicholas, who was born in Treliske hospital.

The eight aircrew were:

LEUT Pete Brown (P) - Lynx  
LEUT Andrew Davis (P) - Sea King  
LEUT Dusty Miller (O) - Sea King  
LEUT Chris Porter (O) - Lynx

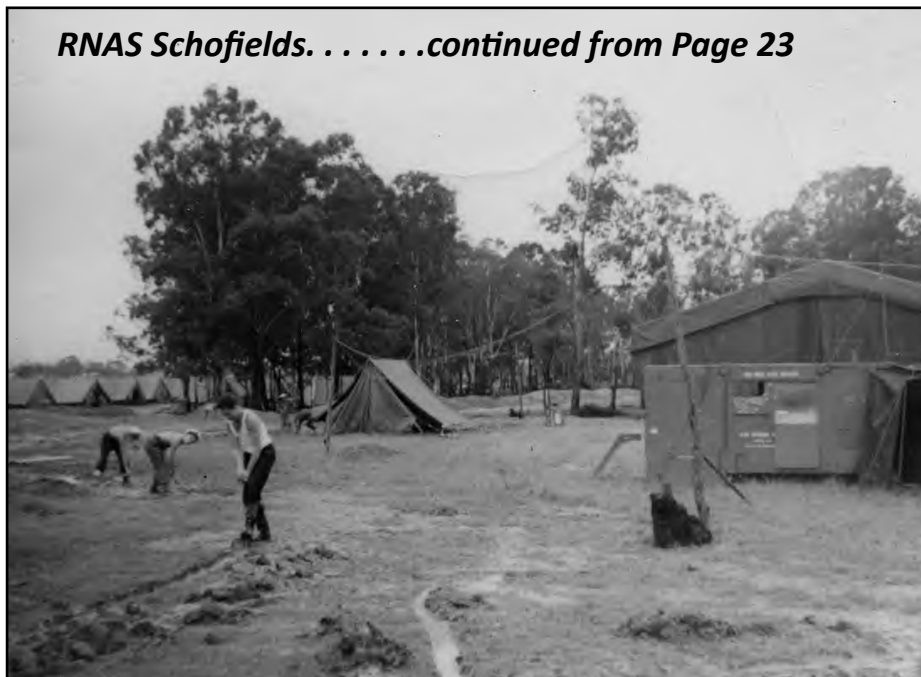
LEUT Tony Caladine (P) - Lynx  
SBLT Dave Milnes (P) - Sea King  
LEUT Neil McQueen (O) - Sea King  
LEUT Steve Elms (O) - Lynx

*David 'Fozzie' Milnes*



*Cartoon by Ian Hughes*

## RNAS Schofields. . . . .continued from Page 23



**Digging drainage ditches while MONAB III gets installed at Schofields. One Dorland hangar has already been erected**

As part of a rationalisation of training provision in Australia 706 Squadron departed for RNAS Maryborough, MONAB VI on 28 August. 1770 Squadron's Fireflies also departed for Maryborough the next day. The latter move was a strange one - MONAB 6 was not equipped to handle Fireflies so a detachment of 13 men was assembled from the 4 Officers, 16 CPOs & POs and 10 ratings of Mobile Servicing unit No.3 to travel to RNAS Maryborough. The detachment comprised of Lieutenant Romanoff, 1 Chief Petty Officer, 8 Petty Officers, two Leading Air Fitters and 1 steward. This party left for Maryborough by train, and was issued with equipment from MONAB 6 on reaching Maryborough.

On the first of September the 16th CAG re-embarked in *Glory*. Three days later 702 Instrument Flying Training & Checking Squadron arrived on the station as the new resident training unit. The squadron, equipped with Oxfords and Harvard IIBs, had formed and worked up in the UK at RNAS Hinstock, Shropshire, before its personnel were shipped out to Australia.

MONAB III (RNAS

Schofields) was already equipped with a mobile Beam Approach Beacon System (BABS) van but the Squadron's training equipment did not materialise so 702 focused on the instrument flying training. 801 (Seafire) Squadron disembarked from *Implacable* on 9 September. Two days later 801 Squadron absorbed the aircraft of 880 Squadron when they were disbanded at Schofields.

The pupils of the second RANVR conversion course flew up to RNAS Maryborough at the end of the first week of September to do their qualifying DLT in the escort carrier *Arbiter*, flying out to the ship in Hervey Bay commencing on 10-13 September.

Again all 12 pilots completed 10 landings each to qualify and receive their RANVR(A) commissions. Its conversion work completed 899 Seafire OTU disbanded on 18 September after successfully passing 24 RAAF pilots as qualified to carry out deck landings at sea. None of them reached the forward area in time to join a front-line Seafire squadron before the end of hostilities. Most then saw service in Seafire Squadrons in either *Indefatigable* or *Implacable* after the War. On the same day the squadrons of the 11th

CAG, (885 (Hellcat), 887 & 894 (Seafire) & 1772 (Firefly) disembarked from *Indefatigable*. 885 Squadron was disbanded on the 27 September.

**Re-organisation:** As part of a review of the naval air support in the Pacific theatre the Admiralty announced in October that four Mobile Units were to be disbanded in early November 1945, these were to be MONAB I, III, IV and VII; MONAB II, V & VI plus TAMY I would continue operations in support of fleet operations and the reception and disposal of aircraft arising from the disbandment of Squadrons as the BPF began to reduce its size. As part of this downsizing operations at MONAB V was to replace MONAB I at Nowra and MONAB VI would replace MONAB III at Schofields. MONAB VII personnel were to be redistributed to other units, many joining TAMY I.

### MONAB VI replaces MONAB III

MONAB III, HMS *Nabthorpe* was paid off at Schofields on 15 November 1945. RNAS Schofields was re-commissioned by MONAB VI as HMS *Nabstock* the same day. The units present at Schofields at this time were one resident unit, 702 Instrument Flying Training & Checking Squadron (5 Oxford & 3 Harvard), and five disembarked Squadrons, 801, 887 & 894 (Seafire), 1772 and 1790 (Firefly).

There was some reorganisation of equipment as unnecessary components were packed up, others were retained, for example support for servicing Firefly aircraft which *Nabstock* now inherited. 887 re-joined *Indefatigable* on 15 November followed by 1772 on the 18 November and 894 on the 23 November. All three Squadrons returned to RNAS Schofields on 22 December disembarking again from *Indefatigable*. The carrier also flew ashore 820 (Avenger) Squadron on New Year's Eve. There were three flying incidents during this period: On 29 November SBLT L. J. Nor-



ton RANVR of 801 Squadron was killed when his Seafire MkXV disintegrated in a dive; Avenger JZ712 of 828 Squadron, flown by LEUT R. New RNVR, swung on landing and stressed the airframe on 17 December; and Seafire L.III NN625 of 887 Squadron, flown by SBLT E.O. Atkin RNVR, crashed on landing when the starboard undercarriage leg collapsed two days later.

In the New Year 1850 (Corsair) Squadron arrived on 12 January 1946 having disembarked from HMS *Vengeance* with 12 aircraft. 1790 Night Fighter squadron embarked in HMS *Implacable* on the 16 January. Two days later the first of four squadrons arrived from RNAS Nowra as part of its rundown to closure. 706 Crew Pool & Refresher Flying squadron (2 each of Avenger, Barracuda, Corsair, Firefly, Hellcat & Seafire), were followed on 21 November by 723 Fleet Requirements Unit (eight Martinet & eight Corsair).

Next day 814 (Firefly) Squadron arrived followed by 1851 (Corsair) two days later. These collectively were the 15th CAG attached to *Venerable*. Both of Squadrons had been reorganised earlier in the month at Nowra. 851 being reduced to 12 aircraft and 814 had exchanged 18 Barracudas for 12 Fireflies. 814 was to work-up with their new aircraft in readiness to re-join the carrier. 820, 887, 894 and 1772 departed on the 31 January to re-joining *Indefatigable*.

January 1946 was a busy time with several front-line Squadrons conducting on-going flying training and working-up with new equipment resulting in seven flying incidents, two of them fatal.

On 4 January a 1790 Squadron Observer LEUT J. R. Oxley RNVR was killed when he fell out of Firefly MB501 over Quakers Hill Park on approach to Schofields while the pilot, SBLT R Roberts RNVR was conducting ADDLs; SBLT P. B. Clayton RNVR of 801 Squadron taxied his Seafire F.XV, SR580, into another



***A single Dorland hanger with workshops and tented squadron accommodation at the squadron servicing area on the eastern edge of the airfield. A number of Seafire aircraft are lined up along the taxiway***

801 Seafire F.XV, SR537, on the 6 November; the following day SBLT M. Reid RNVR of 702 squadron prematurely retracted the undercarriage of Avenger JZ709, causing it to collapse; and he had a second incident on 15 January. This time in Harvard KF519 of 702 squadron, he overshoot, landing and ground looped.

On the 19 January Seafire F.XV SR539 of 801 squadron, flown by SBLT R. A. H. Beaton RNVR dropped its starboard wing on approach and ran off the runway and the undercarriage collapsed; Firefly MB629 of 706 squadron, flown by SBLI G. R. Harrison RNVR, ran off the runway landing after the aircraft swung to starboard and the undercarriage collapsed on the hard ground on the 23 November.

While returning to Schofields on 31 January after a training flight over the sea to the south east of Sydney, Firefly DK480 of 814 squadron began to experience control problems, the pilot SBLT C. B. Ratcliffe tried to change course but found his rudder to be locked and the aircraft, which became more unstable could only fly straight. He ordered his navigator Petty Officer Airman E. M. But-

terworth to bale out just before the aircraft flipped onto its back and he then exited the aircraft himself. The plane fell to earth striking first the lift tower of the main building at Lewisham Hospital, Sydney before crashing into an old boiler house. Rescue workers found that the navigator was still in the aircraft when it hit killing two men working in the building.

In mid-February 812 (Firefly) squadron disembarked from *Vengeance* on the 12 February to join the other half of her Air Group, the 13th CAG. The 15th CAG began to embark in *Venerable* on 22 February when Corsairs of 1851 departed, followed by the Fireflies of 814 on 13 March.

Two days later 801 (Seafire) squadron disembarked from *Implacable*. The 13th CAG departed on the 19 March, re-joining *Vengeance*. 1790 (Firefly) squadron disembarked from *Implacable* on 28 March. There were only three flying incidents during February and March: SBLT J. E. Letham RNVR of 801 squadron taxied Seafire F.XV SR589 into a lorry causing damage to mainplanes & prop on 22 February. The other two incidents involved the phenomena known as ground



***Ratings of the HMS Nabthorpe station flight***

looping: Firefly MB635 of 814 Squadron, flown by SBLT G. S. Robson RNVR ground looped on landing on 9 March stressing the undercarriage; and Firefly MB508 of 837, flown by SBLT G. G. Pruden RNVR ground looped on take-off on the 16 March.

#### **Paying off**

At the start of April 1946 HMS *Nabstock* (RNAS Schofields) was the only MONAB still in operation in Australia. MONAB V had been paid off on 18 March followed by MONAB II and TAMY I on 31 March having transferred all remaining squadrons to Schofields. The last of these was 724 Communications Squadron which arrived from RNAS Bankstown on 31 March, equipped with Expeditors and Ansons. They had flown regular passenger and light freight services to other Naval Air Stations and cities in Australia. The last front-line units to depart, 801 & 1790 re-joined *Implacable* for passage to the UK on 29 April.

The last recorded flying incident took place on 12 April when Martinet PX197 of 723 FRU, flown by SBLT H. C. Stoke RNVR, swung off the peritrack and fell into a ditch while taxiing to dispersal.

HMS *Nabstock* was now scal-

ing down its operations. The whole of April and May were spent packing up the MONAB equipment and stores, along with preparing the airfield for return to the RAAF. Anything which was not to be kept for return to the UK was broken up and burnt in large bonfires on the airfield, the remains of these bonfires were then ferried out into the bush and dumped by the clean-up parties which had been drafted in to re-

place ratings who had been released for demob after February.

The second-line Squadrons 702, 706, 723 and 1724 were all disbanded at Schofields on 31 May before HMS *Nabstock* and MONAB VI paid off at Schofields on 9 June 1946; and Schofields was returned to RAAF custody.

#### ***Returned to RAAF Control & post-war operations***

On 31 May 1946, No.78 Wing RAAF headquarters and its subordinate units (75, 78 and 80 Squadrons, and No. 114 Mobile Fighter Control Unit (MFCU)) moved to RAAF Base Schofields and accepted responsibility for the station's running on 9 June 1946

In July No. 86 (Transport) Wing RAAF re-formed at Schofields and comprised of Nos. 36, 37, and 38 Squadrons, all flying Douglas C-47 Dakotas. The wing was augmented by No. 386 (Base) Squadron and No. 486 (Maintenance) Squadron, which formed in August when No.78 Wing headquarters moved to RAAF Station Williamtown on 1 August

No. 86 (Transport) Wing initially flew supply missions to the Australian-administered Territory of Papua and New Guinea, as well as three-times weekly courier



***Maintenance personnel working on Firefly Mk.I, MB521 of 1772 Squadron, at Schofields. Circa October 1945***





***Air Mechanics and Air Fitters of the Air Engineering Department with a Hellcat***

flights to Iwakuni, Japan in support of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. The Iwakuni tasking continued until December 1947, when the service was taken over by Qantas. At the start of 1948 the Wing was reduced in size when No. 37 Squadron disbanded in February. From mid-1948 No. 22 RAAF Reserve Squadron operated from Schofields equipped with P-51 Mustangs and Tiger Moths; it was to be a resident unit until March 1953 when it relocated to RAAF Base Richmond. No. 30 (Target Towing) Squadron also operated a variety of aircraft including Beaufighters, Beauforts, Dakotas, Wirraways, Ansons and Mustangs from Schofields at sometime during the period 1949 -1952.

No. 386 (Base) Squadron disbanded in March 1949 and reformed the same day as Schofields Station Headquarters. On 22 June 1949, No. 86 Wing, now comprising Nos. 36, 38 and 486 Squadrons, relocated from Schofields to RAAF Base Richmond.

Beginning In 1949 part of the camp was converted to house migrants, some 21 huts being outfitted as accommodation for 300 people, earning the site the title of the Schofields Migrant Hostel. This closed February 4 1951.

### ***Naval Aviation returns to Schofields***

In November 1950, Schofields was evaluated for use as the site of the proposed RAN Aircraft Repair Yard, following the formation of the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm on 3 July 1947. In January 1952, the RAAF transferred control of the base to the RAN, but remained in residence until finally withdrawing in September 1952. Schofields was temporarily under the control of RANAS Nowra, HMAS *Albatross* and the station was commissioned as HMAS *Albatross II*, RAN Air Repair Yard (RANARY) Schofields with a large number of RN officers and sailors supplementing the RAN Component.

On 1 April 1953, RANARY Schofields was commissioned as an independent command bearing the name HMAS *Nirimba*. This was a joint RANARY and technical training establishment for the RAN Fleet Air Arm. The Aircraft Repair Yard was short lived however, and was closed down in early 1955 and HMAS *Nirimba* and the airfield were paid off to "Care and Maintenance" status.

In September 1955, preparations began to re-commission *Nirimba* as the RAN Apprentice Training Establishment

(RANATE) for Naval Apprentice training. The establishment re-commissioned on 5 January 1956 as HMAS *Nirimba*, RAN Apprentice Training Establishment. The first intake of the Apprentices arrived in July 1956, with the last in January 1992.

HMAS *Nirimba* finally decommissioned on 25 February 1994, having trained some 13,000 young men and women from the RAN and other Commonwealth Navies, together with several thousand trainees undergoing other courses in her 34-year history.

In the dying days of the runways, the tiny Schofields Aero Club had the grand idea of hosting what was billed as Australia's first International Air Show on 8 November 1977. The Jubilee Air Show was a phenomenal success and attracted up to 300 aircraft and exhibits from around the world.

From that humble beginning the club staged shows again in 1978, 1979, 1983 and 1985. The club's expertise and formula proved so effective that it was tasked to organise the 1988 Australian Bicentennial Airshow at RAAF Base Richmond. So popular were some of these mid-80s airshows that police were forced to turn back cars in their thousands.

The show built a local and international reputation that attracted guests of honour such as Sir Douglas Bader and his wartime host Adolf Galland. Other notable aviators included Apollo 12 commander Pete Conrad, Kingsford-Smith co-pilot and Qantas pioneer Scotty Allen, as well as the legendary Chuck Yeager.

Today, the ghost of Schofields flyers are entertained every second year with the staging of the Avalon International Airshow under the same leadership even after 40 years.

Schofields (now titled Schofields Defence Depot) had one last major use. The site was chosen as a rehearsal ground for the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games held in Sydney.

# Homeward Bound!!



## NO 1 NAVAL AIRMAN RECRUIT COURSE DEPARTS THE UK (EXCEPT FOR 15 OF THE 57)

*SS Orontes 'Homeward Bound' from the UK*

*From the Booklet by Les 'Jukie' Matterson  
and other contributors from  
No.1 NAR Course*

The steamships *Orontes*, *Otranto* and *Maloja* sailed from London in late January 1950; *Esperance Bay* departed early March. Each vessel carried a passenger list comprising tourists, migrants and service personnel returning to Australia.

For the RAN personnel fortunate enough to return by passenger liner, the experience was vastly different from navy life at sea. There was an ocean, a ship and some familiar faces, but the comparison ended there. They were accommodated in four or six berth cabins as were many civilians who embarked for the voyage. Steward service was provided to maintain the cabins and laundry requirements. The food was excellent with a multi course menu

for all meals, a choice of dishes, generous portions and table service.

Entertainment at sea during the day consisted of walking exercise on the upper deck, playing deck quoits, deck tennis and swimming. There was also a library, movie theatre, card games, quiz sessions and ship band recitals. For later in the day a nightclub atmosphere existed at one bar location, and dancing and concerts were conducted regularly. The ships entertainment and recreation officer arranged a full programme for those who sought constant activity, and often pestered others who preferred a quieter existence.

The ships called at a number of ports throughout the voyage to load fresh provisions and allow passengers to proceed ashore to stretch their legs. Although all of the ships did not visit every port, the main stopover points were Gibraltar, Port Said, Aden, Colombo, Fremantle, Melbourne, Sydney and occasionally Brisbane. From London to Fremantle took about thirty-five days and a further six days to reach Sydney.

As each ship called at the home port (or the nearest) for RAN personnel on passage, they disembarked and reported to the local naval authority who dispatched them on home leave, after which they returned to join HMAS *Albatross*.

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on 1 December 2021**

**Slipstream email:  
[slipstream\\_faaaa@outlook.com](mailto:slipstream_faaaa@outlook.com)**

**21st Carrier Air Group formed in UK—Page 38**



## Sailors Killed in WWII Mine Accident Remembered



**CO NHQ SA CMDR Alastair Cooper with the granddaughters of Thomas Todd, Debra Filippona, left, and Michelle Bitmead at the memorial service.**

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*By Leading Seaman Jonathan Rendell RAN*

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**Two men believed to have been the first service personnel killed on Australian soil as a result of enemy action during World War II have been remembered.**

A memorial service was held on 16 July at Beachport for Royal Australian Navy Able Seamen Thomas W Todd RANR and William E L Danswan RAN, who were killed on 14 July 1941, near the South Australian town when a sea mine exploded while they were attempting to render it safe.

The mine had broken free from an enemy-laid field and was spotted about 12km off the coast of Beachport.

It was brought ashore for inspection by the two sailors and their officer-in-charge, LCDR Arthur Greening, with help from the crews of four fishing boats.

After the decision was made to destroy the mine, it was towed to a stretch of beach away from the town and the Navy three-man Rendering Mines Safe team began the demolition process.

Tragically, although 800m of demolition cable had been laid from the mine, the demolition charge exploded prematurely, with the two Able Seamen metres from the mine.

Both men were killed. LCDR Greening narrowly escaped the blast.

Eighty years on, the Robe and

Millicent RSL Sub-Branches came together for the first time, supported by Navy Headquarters – South Australia, to commemorate the tragic loss of the two sailors.

The service was held at the Beachport Mine Memorial. The granddaughters of Thomas Todd, Debra Filippona and Michelle Bitmead, addressed those in attendance.

“My father was only 18 months old when the explosion killed his father,” Mrs Filippona said.

She spoke of the challenges her grandfather’s death had presented for her family over decades, and of their pride in his sacrifice through service.

Commanding Officer Navy Headquarters – South Australia Commander Alastair Cooper also addressed those gathered.

“It was an honour to represent the Royal Australian Navy at the service,” Commander Cooper said. He reflected on the importance of the men’s sacrifice: “They were doing something that took courage in cold blood. They did it because it meant safety for the Beachport community,” he said.

“Their service had meaning, their action mattered, and that spirit of service and sacrifice is something we must seek to emulate.”

*(Able Seaman Thomas Todd RANR is known to be the first and only South Australian killed on South Australian soil by Enemy Action. It is also understood that AB Todd had never been outside South Australia. . . . .Ed)*



**Navy bugler Leading Seaman Musician Sean Hickey stands ready to sound the Last Post and Reveille during the memorial service marking the 80th anniversary of the Beachport mine explosion in South Australia.**

# Aircraft Operations off German Raider 'Penguin HK33'



*An Arado Ar 196A carried by 'Penguin HK33' after early March 1941*

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**Royal Navy CB 4051 Naval Intelligence Division  
Report 2437/41 October 1941 on Penguin  
aircraft operations as told by  
the surviving pilot**

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**P**enguin known as Raider "33" by the Royal Navy carried two He 114B aircraft, when she left Germany. These had folding wings and were housed in the cargo hold forward of the bridge. They were stowed one above the other, the upper aircraft being on an elevator platform which was raised and lowered by winches. When lowered into the hold the aircraft could be covered up. When the aircraft was being launched, the platform was raised level with the deck. The plane was then lifted by a crane, the cable of which was fastened to four eyes straddling the upper wing, and being the width of the fuselage apart. The aircraft was swung over the side and lowered to the water, the engine having been previously started. During the whole of the operation the aircraft was facing forward and could take off when released.

The aircraft were fitted with a BMW 132 engine having three-blades and variable pitch airscrews. They were originally fitted with a cannon in each wing, one machine-gun firing through the airscrew and one free dorsal machine-gun for the observer.

Two 110 lb. bombs could be carried horizontally in the fuselage, and were released by the observer, who had no bomb sight.

The fuel capacity was between 600 and 700 litres

of petrol, and flights were restricted to about four hours. The cruising speed was normally 155 miles per hour.

One aircraft was lost after about five flights had been made. On 26 August, 1940, soon after "33" had reached the Indian Ocean, two 110 lb. bombs were loaded into the aircraft, for the purpose of carrying out target practice on a barrel thrown into the water. No such practice had previously taken place. The cannon and bombs proved too much for the aircraft which, in perfectly calm weather, was unable to take off. It rose a few feet in the air and then crashed into the sea with the engine on fire. The crew scrambled out and were rescued.

As a result of this experience it was decided to take out the cannon and the front machine-gun from the second plane, in order to lighten it as much as possible. According to prisoners, the captain was not air-minded and, after this episode, refused for a long time to go to the trouble of manoeuvring the second aircraft from its position beneath the elevating platform to a position above this platform.

*Penguin* was sunk by HMS *Cornwall* on the 8 May 1941. When interrogated by the RN (NID), the surviving pilot, now a prisoner of the British declared that he was extremely surprised to receive a new Arado Ar 196A aircraft brought to Raider "33" by the supply ship *Alstertor* in March 1941.

This aircraft was used in preference to the He 114B and played a part in the capture and sinking of one of the last three of "33's" victims. It was alleged that, owing to the Captain's attitude, only 25 flights were made in all. In the case of the capture of *File-*



*ffell* on 20 August 1940, a message directing the ship towards the raider was dropped aboard the merchantman from the He 114B in a partially-filled sandbag containing a tin canister. This ruse was the invention of the Observer, Oberleutenant (Lieutenant) Mueller, who intended that the canister should give buoyancy if the sandbag missed the ship. Before this ruse was used on *Fileffell*, pilot and observer had practised dropping the sandbag on "33" with success. According to prisoners, one hour elapsed from the time it was decided to make a flight until the aircraft was in the air. No set searching plan was laid down, but the area covered was roughly quadrilateral, one side being formed by the ship. The first leg was anything up to 130 miles, the second rather shorter, and the third between 100 and 130 miles back to the ship. These patrols were carried out between 500 and 1,500 ft, according to visibility conditions. A hand camera was carried, but was only used on one occasion.

After the loss of the first aircraft, which was the only machine equipped with R/T apparatus, difficulty was experienced in communicating with the ship. The use of coloured rockets was finally resorted to, these being fired in groups of red or green up to five in number, giving the bearing and type of any ship sighted. There was great disappointment when the new aircraft arrived, and it was found that this, too, had no R/T apparatus.

An engineer prisoner stated that a trailing hook device was used against ship's aerials by raiders. This consisted of a length of thick flexible wire wound round spirally with a thinner strand giving a serrated edge. The whole is contained in a box which falls with the wire. The box cannot be taken in again,

so presumably the wire had to be jettisoned after use. In the case of the *Maimoa*, captured and sunk by "33" on 20 November, 1940, when successful use of this device was reported, the pilot stated emphatically that it was his own aerial which carried away that of the ship, and not the special device. The aircraft's aerial was stated to be 40 yards in length and carrying a heavy lead weight on the end.

The pilot of "33" appeared to be an exceptionally able and well trained man. He claimed that he had over one million kilometres flying to his credit. He was awarded the Iron Cross, 2nd Class, for his attack on *Fileffell*. In addition to the observer the ship carried a "ground" crew of five mechanics, only one of whom was saved.

*(Note: I'd like to express my thanks to the former senior Naval Officers with previous command experience either in shipborne and/or naval aviation tactics who provided positive feedback and encouragement in analysing the article on Page 1. Thanks is also extended to the ex-Instructor LCDR and former University lecturer in helping draft the challenge to the claim on Page 1.*

*My thanks would not be complete without acknowledging my appreciation to retired Commodore Hector Donohue, a leading authority on the German minelaying on the Australian coast in WWII who also provided several sources including the document "Royal Navy CB 4051 Naval Intelligence Division Report 2437/41 October 1941 [Interrogation of Survivors from Raider 33 [Penguin] and of other Raider Prisoners]". This document is the basis for the article appearing on Page 32 . . . . .Ed)*

## Obituary

### **Leading Seaman (Air Technical) Ray Allen Burt RAN (Rtd)**

**R**ay died on 8 June 2021 aged 78. In recent years he resided in the Sydney area.

Ray joined the RAN on 7 April 1963 at the age of twenty joining HMAS *Cerberus* as a Recruit Naval Airman. After his initial training he was posted to



HMAS *Albatross* in June 1963. On completion of training as a Naval Airmen Mechanic he joined HMAS *Melbourne* in December 1964. Upon leaving the ship in 1966, Ray was posted to HMAS *Albatross* where he served over the next few

years in various squadrons both at sea in HMAS *Melbourne* and ashore at HMAS *Albatross*. The Squadrons Ray served in were 723, 724, 805, and 805 B Flight.

He discharged on 31 May 1982 as a Leading Seaman Air Technical Aircraft.

Ray settled in the Nowra Area and became a member of both the RSL Sub Branch and the Fleet Air Arm Association (FAAAA). During this time he served on the NSW Division of the FAAAA as a committee member and also as Welfare and Pensions Officer. Ray also gave service to the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

"Fair winds and following seas Ray."

*Dick 'Pincher' Martin*  
*NSW Secretary*

# Skywest Aviation Performs Early Coastwatching by Civil Aircraft

By  
**Steve Chaplin**  
Ex-CPOWM



**Coastguard Rockwell Shrike 500S Aero Commander**

**M**y career in aviation didn't really start until I retired from the RAN in 1985, after 20 years full time service. Bearing in mind, my qualifications in the Navy were attributed to Weapons/Gunnery as a Weapons Mechanic.

Responding to an advertisement for an "Operations Manager N/W" with Skywest Aviation in very early 1988, I was pleasantly surprised to be accepted for the position and based in Port Hedland. Skywest Aviation was part and parcel of the TNT/News Corp empire at that time and

along with Skywest Airlines (conducting airline operations in Regional W.A.), we retained very close ties with the big brother in Ansett Airlines. Over the forthcoming years, my education within the Aviation fraternity was tutored at an alarming and equally exciting pace, which I rejoiced in.

## **Background:**

The Australian Bureau of Customs began using aircraft ad-hoc in the 1970s to monitor Vietnamese boat people.

- In 1980 a formal contract was

placed with HC Sleigh Aviation for a full-time coastal surveillance service along the eastern part of the north coast of Australia.

- In 1982 the Bureau of Customs became the Australian Customs Service.

- In 1982 Skywest Aviation was awarded a civil Coastwatch contract covering the coast from Geraldton to Darwin with bases in Broome and Kununurra

- In 1983 Skywest Aviation bought Townsville based HC Sleigh Aviation. HC Sleigh Aviation had a similar Coastwatch contract covering the coast from Bundaberg to Bamaga with bases in Townsville, Cairns and Bamaga (later moved to Horn Island).

- In 1984, the Skywest/HC Sleigh surveillance operations were extended to cover the coast from Bamaga to Darwin with new bases in Gove and Normanton.

- Skywest – through its acquisition of HC Sleigh also took on responsibility for Customs anti-drug surveillance operations with bases in Cairns, Darwin and Port Hedland and using three GAF Nomad N22L Searchmaster. Aero Commander 500S series aircraft were used on all Coastwatch surveillance operations.

Skywest Aviation held significant commercial charter contracts around Australia, with the major



**Australian Customs GAF N22L Search Master Nomad**



Aircraft	Type	Based	Operation	Engine Type
Shrike 500S	Aero Commander	Broome	Littoral Surveillance	Twin Piston
14 x a/c Total		Darwin	Littoral Surveillance	
		Horn Island	Littoral Surveillance	
		Townsville	Littoral Surveillance	
GAF Nomad	N22L Searchmaster	Port Hedland	Border Security	Twin Turbo Prop
3 x a/c Total		Darwin	Border Security	
		Townsville	Border Security	



**Amann Rockwell Shrike 680A Turbo Commander**

tender being "Coastwatch Australia". Operational Bases for Coastwatch were Broome, Darwin, Gove (Nhulunbuy NT), Horn Island (Thursday Island QLD), Townsville and Cairns. Overall Skywest Management was in Perth Head Office.

Coastwatch was originally run by the Federal Department of Transport on behalf of seven user departments. Coastwatch eventually became the sub-program of the Australian Customs Service (ACS) responsible for the provision of Australia's civil coastal and offshore surveillance and response service. This service comprised the patrolling, detection, identification, surveillance, interception, and deterrence of targets of interest to Coastwatch's client agencies. Coastwatch relied largely on the ACS, the Department of Defence (Defence) and external contractor resources to deliver these services.

Operational command for the Coastwatch contract itself was from Canberra and through the processes at that time, the operation was split into 2 x separate categories. Firstly, the littoral surveillance aspect of Coastwatch was managed and controlled by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Second aspect of Border Security was managed and controlled by Australian Customs Service (ACS).

Due to significant modifications within the Commonwealth of Australia's border surveillance and security, the Coastwatch operational management structure was amended in the late 1980's with the Custom's (ACS) taking complete control of both the littoral surveillance aspects and border security. Federal Police (AFP) took no further part within the aviation operations from thereon in.

### **1987 - Enter Amann Aviation:**

Given that Skywest Aviation ("Skywest") held the contract for the provision of aerial surveillance of Australia's northern coastline which was due to expire on 31 March 1987, The Commonwealth of Australia decided that it would not renew the Skywest contract and that it would invite tenders for the provision of the service for a period of three years. After a lengthy process it decided to accept the tender submitted on behalf of an unknown aviation company named Amann Aviation.

The Commonwealth gave notice of acceptance of that tender on 12 March 1987. The parties contemplated, at the time of acceptance of the tender, a preparatory period of six months.

On receiving notice of the Commonwealth's acceptance of its tender, Amann Aviation set about the acquisition and fitting out in the United States of fourteen specially equipped aircraft which it proposed to commit to the performance of its contract. This was not an easy task as finance had to be obtained and suitable planes located, purchased and modified. The aircraft then had to be flown to Australia, checked and certified as meeting Australian requirements. Delays inevitably occurred so that Amann Aviation took longer than was expected in assembling its fleet of planes. Amann Aviation did not disclose accurately the state of its preparation.

In the lead up to Amann Aviation actually starting the Coast-

watch Contract and of critical interest, was in the selection of their aircraft "type", being the Rockwell Shrike 680A Turbo Commander. Aircraft at the time in the Coastwatch operation, were the Aero Commander Shrike 500S, a piston engine aircraft.

Based upon the known factors from operational experience of the Aero Commander 500S that Skywest Aviation were operating, a number of senior flight management personnel hit the calculators and paperwork to determine what sort of operating parameters the 680 Turbo Commander could have over the 500S Shrike Commander in terms of operating costs, fuel burn, time on task, maintenance etc. Could the Turbo Commander actually "make money" in the role it was selected for?

As all accountants will dictate, the machine – at the end of the day – must turn a profit for the company turnover if it is to remain profitable and worth the investment and given the "type" that Amann Aviation had selected, the numbers (\$\$) provided didn't quite add up. Only time would tell !

### **Roll Of The Dice:**

So, on 12 September 1987, Amann Aviation commenced their very first Coastwatch flights, having received from the Commonwealth a programme of what was required for that day and for the ensuing days.

But unfortunately, Amann Aviation did not then have all its aircraft ready to perform its contractual obligations, nor did any of its planes then comply in every respect with the specifications prescribed by the contract for that Day 1 commencement of flights.

On Day 1 of operations, aircraft were tasked:

- Broome - 1 x a/c,
- Darwin - 1 x a/c,
- and
- Cairns - 1 x a/c

Regrettably for Amann Aviation, their first day on task was a fiasco, for out of the 3 x aircraft despatched for surveillance flights, none of the aircraft effectively commenced/completed the assigned missions. One aircraft didn't even get airborne due to significant technical problems and there was no back-up or replacement aircraft certified to fly, a second aircraft returned to its base as a result of yet again, technical problems, approximately half way through its surveillance operation and the third aircraft was reported to not have flown the specified flight plan route as assigned by the ACS.

As a result of these shortcomings, Skywest pressed the Commonwealth to terminate the Amann contract and reinstate it (Skywest) as the contractor. On 12 September 1987 the Commonwealth gave notice that it regarded the contract as terminated.

It had been apparent for some considerable time before 12 September 1987 that this would be so and it appeared to have been common ground that the Commonwealth had already decided to give immediate notice of termination of the contract upon verifying Amann's non-compliance with the contract.

Adding to yet more woes, Skywest Aviation had warned that, unless the Commonwealth acted promptly to terminate its contract with Amann Aviation, it (Skywest) would dispose of its own planes, with the end result that the Commonwealth would be left in a perilous position in which it was entirely dependent on Amann Aviation for the provision of coastal surveillance. Skywest Aviation thereby agreed to extend its operations, first to 30 June 1987 and subsequently to 11 September 1987. These such extensions were made necessary by reason of the shortness of time between the communication by the Commonwealth of its ac-

ceptance of Amann Aviation's tender and the date on which the Skywest Aviation contract was due to expire.

### **The Aftermath and The Final Stoush:**

Without repeating the exhausting lengthy legal and technical facets being reproduced here, the outcome of the Full Court of the Federal Court, His Honour overlooked the initial claim of some

\$AUS5 Million Dollars compensation based upon legal defence, that of the specified number of 14 aircraft which were required for the contract, only 7 aircraft were actually in Australia and not all of the aircraft had been approved and certificated for Australian operations.

In ruling, His Honour found that Amann breached the contract on 12 September 1987 in four respects:

1. *It failed to provide sufficient aircraft;*
2. *The aircraft provided were not then suitable for the work required by the contract to be undertaken;*
3. *The aircraft provided were not fully equipped in conformity with the contract; and*
4. *Amann failed to carry out all the scheduled flights on 12 September 1987.*

The breaches were not trivial and, with the exception of the fourth, they would have continued for some time.

His Honour awarded Amann Aviation the sum of \$820,000 (approx.) in compensation from the day of Amann Aviation inaugurating their contract.

However, His Honour then found Amann's claim must be reduced by one half to allow for the contingency of cancellation under Clause 2.24 of the contract, resulting *in* a net figure of \$410,000.





**Amann Aviation Mu-2 VH –NYM on 'display' in the open.**  
**Note: the condition —no props, only spinners and flat tyres**

Further legal arguments followed; however, the damage was done and with that, Amann Aviation became insolvent and was forced into liquidation. Insofar as the history of where the Amann Aviation aircraft ended up is shrouded in uncertainty – whether they were returned to the USA or sold off in Australia is unknown.

#### **Amann Aviation – In Memoriam:**

The only remaining historical item of Amann Aviation known to be in existence in Australia is a Mitsubishi MU2 in preservation.

Mystery surrounds the reasoning for bringing this particular type of aircraft into a coastal surveillance operation and from the statistics provided from the number of major fatalities around the world that the aircraft has been involved in, it is probably fortuitous that it never became operational.

This aircraft VH–NYM, was painted in Queensland with murals on each side at a reputed cost

of over \$40,000. It was flown to Darwin and later traded to Robert Amman, who proposed to use it as part of his Coastwatch fleet. After his company was declared bankrupt, the MU-2 was donated to the Darwin Aviation Historical Society, where it still remains on display to this day.

This twin turboprop utility transport was one of Japan's most successful post war aircraft types with over 800 examples being built. It first flew in 1963 and was powered by 2 Garrett Research turboprop engines developing 430Kw (575 shp) each. With a maximum take-off weight of 4,050 kg, it could cruise at 500 km/h and had a range of 1930 km with reserves. Unfortunately, the MU-2 was prone to a number of significant failures and fatalities, with one of the failures being on autopilot in icy conditions.

Mitsubishi established a production facility in the USA at San Angelo, Texas in 1967 and MU-2 aircraft were built there until the line finally closed in 1986.

(Steve Chaplin joined the RAN in April 1965 serving initially for 12 years as a Weapons Mechanic. At the end of his term Steve was serving at HMAS Creswell as PO i/c small boats, JB airfield as Security Officer and 2 i/c Beecroft Range. Following discharge he was accepted into the ACT Police at Jervis Bay for their marine section. Unfortunately, this did not eventuate due to a change in Government.

Steve then re-enlisted in the RAN for a further eight (8) years thus completing 20 years of service.

In 1988 he applied for a position in Skywest as 'Operations Manager N/W based at Port Hedland. Steve then moved to Darwin on promotion where he eventually became Regional Manager for Skywest)

**Next Issue:**  
**The History of Coastwatch**  
**and the role of Skywest**  
**Coastwatch Operations**



**Artist impression of a Sea Fury launched off HMAS Sydney in adverse weather during the Korean War**

With the departure of the last personnel to return home by passenger liner, the number remaining had diminished to 15 NAMs — the last of the 57 members who had trained in the UK. They remained at HMS *Daedalus*, employed on a variety of odd jobs until mid April 1950, when they were posted to HMS *Vulture*, RNAS St Merryn, to join

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**From the Booklet by Les  
'Jukie' Matterson  
and other contributors from  
No.1 NAR Course**

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the 21st CAG.

The 21st CAG was to form and begin its work up at *Vulture* prior to embarking in HMAS *Sydney* where work up exercises would be completed. *Sydney* then embarked the balance of Naval Air Branch personnel and aircraft destined for future service in the RAN and return to Australia. She already had delivered the first contingent of manpower and aircraft in May 1949 with the 20th CAG and was returning to complete the task.

Formation of a CAG required the assembly of aircrew, maintainers and other Air Branch categories together with aircraft, equipment and facilities. All of these entities had to be organised to

form an operational unit that could function reliably, smoothly and efficiently.

Two squadrons would constitute the basis of the new CAG: 808 Squadron equipped with 12 new RAN Sea Fury FBI 1 aircraft and 817 Squadron using 12 Fireflies Mk 1 and Mk 5 by arrangement with the RN for the duration of the





work up. The final outfit of aircraft for 817 would be 12 Fireflies Mk 6. However, these were ASW aircraft without gun installations and were deemed unsuitable for the work up which required an FB version with guns.

Squadron aircrew were a combination of RN and recently qualified RAN personnel. Similarly, about half the complement of Air Branch sailors were RN personnel who had volunteered to serve in the RAN for a period of two years: the remainder were recently qualified RAN personnel. Included in the latter group were the 15 NAMs from HMS *Daedalus* together with other RAN members, some of whom entered the Air Branch by transferring from a General Service category before retraining in the UK. Some were also from categories such as Safety Equipment, Ordnance, Aircraft Handler and Photography, who had recently completed training at HMAS *Albatross*.

The 21st CAG was commissioned on 25 April 1950 at a Ceremonial Divisions. As this is the date on which the Anzac landings are commemorated, the occasion was perhaps a little more significant for the RAN personnel.

Hangar space was provided and aircraft arrived to enable flying



**Aircraft on the flight deck of HMAS Sydney on transit to Korea**

operations to commence. As the months passed, teamwork was nurtured and developed to a standard where programmed flying progressed as planned. Eventually overall performance reached the stage at which the CAG could embark in *Sydney* to complete the work up. The latter aspect entailed the operation of carrier-based aircraft at sea.

*Sydney* had arrived in the UK during late July 1950 and had taken part in the work up by providing a deck at sea for deck landing practice (DLP). At the end of Au-

gust 1950 CAG personnel, aircrew excepted, departed *Vulture* to join *Sydney* in Plymouth. The CAG aircraft flew aboard as *Sydney* cruised in the waters off Plymouth. Deck landing practice was conducted for the next few days before sailing for the north of Scotland.

Constant practice was essential for pilots to gain and maintain the skills necessary to effect a safe landing on the straight strip of moving deck at sea. The combined efforts of the pilot and batsman guided the aircraft to the point where it could touch down and catch an arrestor wire. The batsman, an experienced pilot, was positioned port side aft on a small platform adjacent to the flight deck, arms outstretched to the side holding what resembled a table tennis bat in each hand. The bats were used to signal the speed, height and attitude of the approaching aircraft, directing the pilot to make corrections as necessary. If, at the last moment before touchdown, the batsman was not satisfied that a successful landing would result, he would direct the pilot to abort the landing by waving the aircraft around again for another approach.

A bad landing could result in the loss of an aircraft over the side, or it could crash into the barrier or island, or break through the barrier and damage other aircraft



**Firefly with wings folded on a grass dispersal area**



***Fireflies and Sea Furies being readied for another mission over Korea***

parked forward after previous landings. Such incidents occasioned a great deal of maintenance work in restoring damaged aircraft to a serviceable state.

In early September 1950 *Sydney* sailed west, rounded Lands End, passed through the Irish Sea and around the north coast of Scotland into the North Sea, finally anchoring off Invergordon. Flying exercises took place subject to the weather and often in very cold conditions, as the ship proceeded down the east coast of Scotland for a short stop at Rosyth, providing crew members with the opportunity to visit Edinburgh. After departing Rosyth, *Sydney* headed north again and flying continued with occasional interruptions due to rough weather. At the end of September, the ship retraced her course around the top of Scotland and eventually anchored off Bangor, Northern Ireland, allowing a short spell of leave in Belfast. The work up programme progressed with a series of anti-submarine exercises followed by the final stage which involved convoy escort.

With the work up completed *Sydney* returned to tie up alongside at Belfast before sailing for Glasgow in mid October. The Firefly aircraft flew off in transit for return to the RN. As intended,

the work up had achieved the objective of honing the skills of all personnel associated with carrier borne aircraft operations. Nevertheless, losses were experienced: An 817 Firefly lost its main undercarriage on the barrier while attempting a landing, crashed over the bow into the sea and sank. The pilot, picked up by the rescue destroyer (RESDES), survived with pierced eardrums, ending his fly-

ing career. Another Firefly was grounded because of a broken longeron sustained off the coast of Scotland. 808 suffered a barrier crash with one Sea Fury and a nose to tail taxiing accident on the flight deck with two others.

Before leaving the area, *Sydney* docked at Greenock, Scotland, to embark a large consignment of the RAN's new aircraft and equipment. With the hangar deck full of aircraft in addition to a large flight deck park firmly secured for the homeward voyage, it was evident there would be no flying on passage. After sailing from Scotland, *Sydney* set a course back through the Irish Sea and along the southern coast of England, calling at Portsmouth for a stay of several days before departing for Australia via the Suez Canal on 26 October 1950.

Enroute a short stop was made at Port Said before transiting the Suez Canal and moving on to Aden and Colombo where short leave was given to break the monotony of the voyage before proceeding to Fremantle. Hands were not idle between ports of call. The hangar bulkheads and deckhead were repainted during passage — no easy task with a full comple-



***HMAS Sydney equipped with Fireflies, Sea Furies and spares on its voyage to Australia in 1950***





**A Sea Fury with the 'Australian' roundel introduced circa 1956**

ment of aircraft that could not be moved. ETI instruction and testing was carried out for those not already qualified, and an Airman-ship Course was conducted for those aspiring to gain promotion qualifications.

The 15 Naval Air Mechanics were advised also that the RAN had adopted yet another revision of aircraft maintenance policy and decided to introduce a Pilot's Mate (PM) Category which involved a qualification for work in four trades, viz: A, E, L and O. They were given the option of retaining their single trade status or undertaking a conversion course to PM category.

The GP training already undertaken at RNAS *Bramcote* was taken into account and an abridged course was arranged and administered on board. The majority opted to do the course and were reclassified NAPM on completion. The aircraft patch denoting basic trade category on the right upper sleeve of their uniforms was retained and one displaying a horizontal two bladed propeller was added to the right lower sleeve above the cuff to denote the PM qualification.

In late November *Sydney* docked in Fremantle, after which she moved on for a brief stop at Adelaide in early December, an

overnight stay in Melbourne a couple of days later, then on to Jervis Bay (JB) on 6 December 1950. The aircraft were offloaded by lighter then loaded on to a semi-trailer flat top at Jervis Bay wharf and transported by road to *Albatross*. Much tree pruning was necessary along the JB roadsides before the semi could safely proceed with its cargo of aircraft, particularly Sea Furies with folded wings.

All remaining CAG personnel disembarked at Jervis Bay and joined *Albatross*. The ship proceeded on to Sydney. After the aircraft were safely stowed, personnel were dispatched on home leave. Some had earlier left the ship as she called at their home ports. The last members of the NAR 2, 3 and 4 group had finally returned home after an absence of almost 2 1/2 years.

## WANTED!

**'Slipstream' seeks to attain a reasonable balance covering all aspects of the FAA. Many of the stories are non-aligned to a particular group of members but provide applicable information to the whole membership.**

Stories from all branches are always of interest, so you might have a short story on something you've seen or heard; what it's like flying different types of aircraft; what it's like working on different aircraft; working in the Fire, Salvage, Met, SE, or Phot Sections etc; or a book you may have read might prompt you to write a book review etc. ALL Aviation branches of whatever rank held previously must have some stories hidden away? I'm always after stories!

Remember it's up to you to use 'Slipstream' to make others aware of your branch and experience in the FAA. Many may not know? Open debate and comment is welcome through articles and 'Letters to the Editor'.

## Helo Rotor Strikes Flight Deck—5 Killed

**A**n MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter's rotors struck the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* aircraft carrier before it plunged into the sea off San Diego on 31 August 2021, killing five crew members, according to the US Naval Safety Centre (NSC).

The NSC reported the helicopter had just landed when it 'experienced side-to-side vibrations' that caused the main rotor to strike the flight deck. The aircraft then rolled over the side of the ship.

The USN and US Coast Guard launched an unsuccessful four-day search and rescue effort that ended on 3 September when

the service declared the sailors dead. New details not only shed light on what may have triggered the incident, but may also help to explain how five other sailors aboard the carrier were injured, in addition to the five who were lost. Two of the injured were taken ashore for treatment while the other three had minimal injuries, the USN said.



# HMAS Ballarat on Deployment 'Up Top'



*Avionics Leading Seaman Aidan Muller proudly displays his Flight Deck Marshaller yellow shirt (colour for online subscribers only) on HMAS Ballarat's flight deck in front of the ship's MH-60R helicopter*



*Avionics PO Patrick Williams (L) and Airframes PO Andrew Booth of 816 Squadron's Flight 3 with HMAS Ballarat's embarked MH-60R helicopter during a recent deployment*



# Activities Planned for SA on Hold Due to COVID-19

**By Roger Harrison**  
**Hon. Whipping Boy. SA**

Without doubt, it is the 2020 year repeating into 2021 but with some modifications. Our cousins in NSW and Victoria not to mention Queensland, Oh! I just did, are all struggling to get this unseen enemy under control and I strongly expect we will have to deal with this crap for years to come. The once a year booster jab. So, to those of you doing it tough, we in SA extend to you all our collective best wishes and be safe.

As you can imagine, there has not been a lot of activity amongst the troops here as we push on into the August/September months. Our July meeting was postponed until 15 September but we did get around to a coffee morning gathering at Keswick Barracks on the 18 August. So apart from the Secretaries paper shuffling and her ability to get back into SA from Qld, all be it with a 14-day staying under the bed routine, no news to speak of.

History has shown that I can ramble on endlessly as our *Slipstream* editor, Paul Shiels keeps reminding me as he tries to reduce the word count to make it fit into his edition of the latest *Slipstream*. I am thinking I could alter the font size to make the SA edition look fully active over several pages, but I won't.

Marcus Peake's electronic *Fly Navy* magazine is a delight to read though. Makes me wonder just how universal the FAA has been throughout the ages. From the early 1914 Naval Air Service some of you may remember, to the current stage of development which none of us can truly follow. I mean, Drones! What next?

The state Presidents suggestion to revisit the planned trip to Kapunda is still in the melting pot as of August when this was penned. By the time this edition hits your desk or desktop computer, it was a goer/was cancelled not a goer/no interest at all. More on that news clip in the Christmas edition of *Slipstream*.

I will drive by and collect Paul Shiels, the *Slipstream* editor, for our September meeting as I have noticed he takes a great interest in general proceedings. Whether for future stories gathered in the after-meeting chatter over a couple of pints, or just catching up with state members over a lunch, or both. Either way, it is a delight to have him attend. He also has a real camera with him. Who does that?



Interesting read in the last *Slipstream* about the new construction technique in the manufacturing of the Fairey Gannet A.S. Mk 1 aircraft. Had a chuckle when I read that the special jigs used were to improve the aerodynamic envelope. I find the use of aerodynamic and Gannet in the same sentence, amusing. Having been involved with Gannet aircraft over several years and still retaining wire locking scars similar to the Wessex chopper scars, I can-not warm to that monster at all. When Gannet pilot Graham 'Beatles' Bailey was alive, I would collect him and bring him along to our FAAA meetings and on the drive in, I would quiz him about flying the Fairey Gannet either ashore or onboard HMAS *Melbourne*, and was surprised when he said he loved the aircraft. He said it flew smoothly, was responsive and had brilliant forward vision for that deck landing approach. Here I started to doubt his sanity, but he would not be distracted from his original statement. Was he correct? Members out there who have flown the Gannet, is he right?

That's it, time to shut the laptop down and get other things done around the house. Drain and refill the moat for a start as junk mail is still getting to my letter box.

Reminder, it has been over 20 years since 9/11 and the terrorist attack on US soil.

Interesting that an "AB Phot" was called an "AB Phot". Now it's an Imagery Specialist.

On behalf of the SA Division, I wish each and everyone of you out there in the real world, a safe Covid-19 free life. God knows we deserve it after Queen and Country

*Regards to all*  
*Roger*



**Morning Coffee L to R: Mike Cain, Ian McBeath, Ian Laidler, John Siebert, Trevor Grant, Roger Harrison**

# Moving Speech by CDRE Brett Dowsing in WA

By Sharron Spargo

Our division has had a busy August with our meeting at Jonny Fox's in Northbridge (previously Rosie O'Grady's) and various Vietnam Day commemorative services held in the metro area and throughout the state.

Commodore (Rtd) Brett Dowsing was the guest speaker at two services where he delivered a powerful address, some of which is reproduced (with permission) below.

"When a soldier goes to the front and kills his first enemy, he is afraid; really afraid, because to kill someone is terrifying.

But then he becomes used to it. War awakens a savagery in people.

## A North Vietnamese Army Commander.

*I just knew for sure I was going to die. It was liberating coming to that realisation – the fear then just leaves. I decided then that before it happens, I'll make it as hard as possible for those S-O-Bs before I go down.*

Almost exactly 49 years ago I was a 19 year-old midshipman coxswain on a Landing Craft in Vung Tau Harbour as we were transferring military equipment to the South Vietnamese forces from HMAS Sydney, and commencing the withdrawal of our commitment to the Vietnam War. Almost exactly 20 years ago, I was a 48 year-old Commander posted to the Australian Embassy in Washington DC when the four hijacked airliners were flown into the World Trade Centre buildings in New York, the Pentagon in Washington DC, and crashed into the fields of Pennsylvania.

The sentiments expressed above are very real. Some who experienced them talk about the brutality of war, the affects on those involved in this brutality, but most who have been involved in war say little or almost nothing about it. As a Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot once told me, 'I don't want to tell you what it was like – I'll have to remember it to be able to tell you. That's the insanity of it!'

During Australia's commitment to the Vietnam War, some 61,000 served in the area of operations – 521 were killed in theatre (with three still MIA) and some 3,000 were wounded in action. And since the end of the war, many have succumbed to PTSD and have tragically found life too difficult and have suicided – these too are casualties of the war.

The Vietnam War is part of Australia's history. It



is still highly controversial and questionable as to whether our participation was in the National interest. It was perhaps best summed up by the Australian commentator, Paul Kelly, when he said: 'The Vietnam War was a failed war, but with good consequences.'

As Professor Huu Ngoc, a veteran of Den Bien Phu against the French, and of the American War, expanded: 'Communism won the war but capitalism won the peace.'

Ladies and Gentlemen – today we remember those who were killed or otherwise injured doing their duty in the Vietnam War. We also remember the Veterans who returned from this conflict. I implore you to value our veterans, they need and deserve your respect.

Veterans – value each other; we are our own best supporters in remembering our mates' sacrifices.

Lest We Forget."

Our meetings continue to be well attended, although August saw some members succumb to the winter conditions, so our numbers were down slightly, which didn't seem to affect the enthusiastic discussions which some agenda items brought up. We plan to meet again in October, but of course that is in the lap of the Covid gods.

Our thoughts are with those in the East whose lives have been disrupted; for those members whose age is wearying; for those who are in hospital or otherwise unwell. We can only look forward to much better times.

Best wishes,  
Sharron.

## DVA Disability Pension Changes

**From 1 January 2022, pending the passage of legislation, the DVA Disability Pension will be removed from the income test for Social Security payments.**

This will simplify the way income support payments are calculated, indexed, and administered by DVA and Services Australia. The initiative will exempt the Disability Pension from the Social Security Act 1991 income test and the rent assistance test under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986.

As part of these changes Disability Pension will be re-named 'Disability Compensation Payment' to better reflect the nature of the payment.

Read the full story on the DVA website [here](#).



# Desalination Plant Delivered to Indonesia

By Captain Peter March

A Navy helicopter recently delivered a solar-powered desalination plant to the Balinese island of Nusa Lembongan where it was commissioned on 28 August 2021.

The plant was purchased by Surfrider Foundation Australia, with funding and support from the Australian Government through the Australian Aid Friendship Grants program.

The plant from MOERK Water Solutions has the capacity to produce 150L of clean drinking water per hour for 500 people each day.

In a show of cooperation between industry, government, the ADF and Surfrider Foundation Australia, the plant was transported from Australia using the combined capabilities of HMA Ships *Canberra* and *Anzac*.

Tom Wheeler, president of Surfrider Foundation Perth, said he was motivated to provide the desalination plant by the Indonesian community's interest in securing an innovative solution to local water and plastic problems.

"It was a wonderful experience to get to know the Nusa Lembongan community and discuss Australian water technology as a solution to the island's water and plastic problems," Mr Wheeler said.

"I was inspired by the community's interest in a solution that would not only meet their water needs and reduce the use of throwaway plastics, but also mitigate salinity intrusion, which small islands like Nusa



Lembongan increasingly face due to over consumption of aquifers and climate change."

The plant was transported in HMAS *Canberra* and delivered to Nusa Lembongan by the helicopter from HMAS *Anzac*. The last time *Anzac* was in Bali, she returned 20 Indonesian fishermen rescued from a trawler sinking 600 nautical miles west of Perth.

Indonesia's Defence authorities coordinated the clearance and delivery of the plant supported by staff from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.

Commanding Officer HMAS *Canberra* Captain Jace Hutchison said he was pleased his ship was able to take part in fortifying the relationship between Australia and Indonesia.

"HMAS *Canberra* is pleased to work in coordination with Indonesian authorities to deliver this life-changing initiative. We're happy to be involved in IPE21 (Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21), and the delivery of this desalination plant is a practical demonstration of our regional engagement during the deployment." Captain Hutchison said.

View footage [here](#) (online only)

## COVID Lockdown Cause for Cancellation of VIC Events

By Mal Smith

Greetings to all members from the Victoria Division.

Our thoughts are with those members in areas experiencing lockdowns and restrictions.

This will be the shortest Victoria report on record as absolutely nothing has happened since the last *Slipstream* issue. We have not been able to hold any meetings since Anzac Day. I have tried to keep members up to date with monthly newsletters as our last two General Meetings have had to be cancelled. Disappointingly we were also forced to cancel our Annual Dinner and Memorial Service at HMAS *Cerberus* for the second year in a row



due to COVID restrictions. These two events take a lot of organising and I can only hope for better luck next year.

Many members will know Life Member, long serving committeeman, former Firefly and Gannet pilot John Champion. John has had a few health problems in recent times and has decided to move to Albury to be closer to family. Should any member wish to contact John please contact me as I have his details. This of course means that we will not have the pleasure of John's company very often and we wish him the best in this new chapter in his life.

At this stage we are planning a Committee and General Meeting on Sunday 3rd October. This will be at our usual venue the Mission to Seafarers commencing at 1100. Hopefully this will go ahead but in this current climate nothing is certain.

Yours Aye  
Mal

# Turning into Wind Volume II

By CMDR David Bruhn USN (Rtd)

## BOOK REVIEW

**T**urning into Wind Vol II provides a constructive account of American, British, Canadian, and Australian light fleet aircraft carrier operations in the Korean War and/or beyond. The book is written by Commander David D. Bruhn USN (Rtd) the author of over 20 books and research series. This followed his service as both an enlisted man and as an officer between 1977-2001. He commanded two mine countermeasures ships USS *Gladiator* and USS *Dextrous* in the Persian Gulf before his retirement.

The author commences with a preamble, breaking down how the light fleet carrier was created. He states that President Franklin D. Roosevelt was not content with the completion timetable of the *Essex* class carriers, following the loss in 1942 of four of the five remaining carriers. As a result, Roosevelt ordered the conversion of the *Cleveland* class light cruiser hulls already laid down to produce light fleet aircraft carriers. These ships ended up earning more Battle Honours than the *Essex* class and were known as the *Independence* Class.

Bruhn further explains that the Royal Navy (RN) built ten *Colossus* class light fleet carriers during the 1940's of which four served in Korea. The RN had originally planned to build 16 of this class but the last six were modified and redesignated *Majestic* class.

Contributions by a variety of professionals on each of the navy's aviation histories adds to the accuracy of the book. It's interesting to note that most of these contributors are not naval aviators themselves. However, their study into each countries naval aviation histories is undoubtedly well researched. In particular, CDRE Hector Donohue AM RAN (Rtd) provides an excellent appraisal and a comprehensive overview of the RAN Fleet Air Arm (FAA) along with some of its FAA personalities. This includes the late CMDR Guy Beange DSC, RAN (Rtd) who won the DSC in Korea and later was CO 808 Sea Fury Sqn in HMAS *Sydney*; then CO of the Corvette HMAS *Junee*; and finally returning as CO 805 Sea Venom Sqn in HMAS *Melbourne*. He is but one example.

The first few chapters relate to the Korean War where the author goes into this conflict with very detailed information about the events, including the formation of Task Groups from the various nations previously mentioned plus NZ. His comprehensive explanation of the war, itself, leaves the reader in no doubt as to what North Korea was attempting to achieve. But he primarily concentrates on the six light fleet carriers that took part in this war, namely four RN, one RAN and one USN. He describes how all light fleet aircraft carriers rotated to ensure the Task Groups continued to destroy enemy targets on



the Korean peninsula; and to provide close air support for allied troops on the ground.

With regards Canada, at the outset the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service in WWI was important in the progression of naval aviation in that country. So much so, that the RN sought Canadian help in WWII to crew two RN escort carriers HMS *Nabob* and HMS *Puncher*, operating Avengers and F4F Wildcats. This further enhanced the RCN FAA development. Post-WWII, the RCN purchased HMCS *Warrior*, HMCS *Magnificent* and later HMCS *Bonaventure* from the RN. The book describes the operations of all these ships.

Following WWII, the author describes the aftermath on the *Independence* Class with USS *Bataan* the only type to serve in a later conflict. He further provides a thorough history of the remainder of the class, including spacecraft recovery in the Pacific.

The last few chapters of the book reflect on the establishment of the RAN FAA post-WWII and provide a meticulous insight from the start to the demise of the fixed-wing element of the RAN FAA.

Overall, an excellent read and well researched. I'd recommend this book to members. It's obtainable through Amazon [here](#)

Paul Shiels



## Dark Secrets

By Robert Hadler

This account of the murder of Stoker Jack Riley on board HMAS *Australia* in 1942 and the aftermath serves two masters. The book is impressively researched, footnoted, indexed and includes an impressive bibliography to aid further reading. It is a comprehensive telling of the major players' stories, adding much previously not published. However, a too considerable portion of his book is dedicated to portraying Riley's murderers as having been harshly and unfairly treated by the RAN and Commonwealth justice systems.

It seems to be the author's hypothesis that Stoker Riley's death was the cause of his shipmates' subsequent bad fortune rather than they, his. Despite the difficulty of "bringing events to life...to provide an engaging and compelling narrative..." Robert Hadler does so, unfortunately engaging in "...fleshing out the key events with some creative writing about the feelings and dialogue of the main characters." This attempt to meld fact, fiction and supposition diminishes the academic tone of the book and undermines a fair and balanced telling of the story.

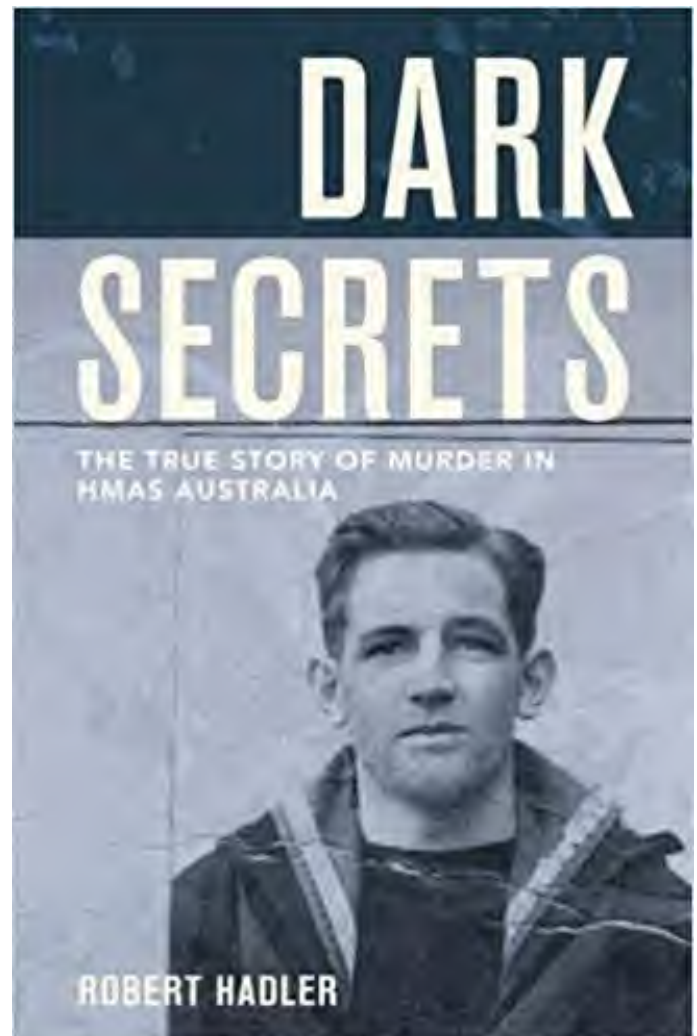
In March 1942, *Australia* was on a war footing at sea - 3 stokers, Albert Ronald Gordon, Edward Joseph Elias and Riley were up on deck for a break. Jack was found stabbed. He named Elias and Gordon as his attackers twice before he died.

Ordinarily the charges against Elias and Gordon would have been heard in an Australian civil court, but due to the war, expediency dictated an on-board trial. The President and members of the court were assembled from available senior officers, the prosecutor was *Australia's* Captain Farncomb and the 'prisoners' friend, Paymaster Lt Rapke transferred from Darwin to Sydney via Adelaide by rail then by ship to Noumea where *Australia* was alongside.

After many of the ship's company gave evidence, but without anyone raising the assumed motive - rumours of homosexual cohort Gordon and Elias were found guilty and sentenced to death. The author surmises- "Gordon and Elias must have been petrified at the thought that this fate was awaiting them." Similar references to thoughts, motives and actions are replete - fact and fiction clash rather than coalesce.

In a vein similar to the arrangements for the hearing on board, the murder, court martial and sentencing of Gordon and Elias are dealt within the first 72 pages of the book. Then, like Paymaster Rapke's long and uncomfortable journey from Darwin to the *Australia*, the reader is bumped and hustled between cities around the world, various Government bodies, supporters of both camps and stories of strangers confessing to the crimes. The book regales the hard upbringing and hard life at sea in war of Gordon and Elias in mitigation, as is their good citizenship after

## BOOK REVIEW



release. Eventually to serve life imprisonment, they were freed after eight years in gaol. Whereas Jack is literally and metaphorically cast over board- 'out of sight...'

Murder in wartime (the lead character in the television program "Foyle's War" saying) is still murder- what disconcerts in this account of Jack's is that Foyle's truism is diminished by the book's fictions- aided and abetted by its supposition.

One source cited by Mr Haldane is a paper given at a naval legal seminar in 1980. Commander A.L. Thompson's paper gives a precise account of the court-martial. He notes knowing nothing of Gordon's and Elias' afterlife. This book has well filled that void. Despite its shortcomings, both this book and the paper are worth reading.

*Author's note: Naval Legal Seminar 1980 Presentation Thompson, A.L.A, Forgotten Episode in Australia's Naval Legal History, Naval Legal Seminar, HMAS Encounter 25-26 July 1980.*

*'Dark Secrets' is available through Amazon [here](#)*

*Kim Harris.*

# Merchandise for Sale



PRICES	SHIRT	\$10
	CAP	\$5
	MUG	\$2
	CARRY BAG	\$1

SHIRT (CHILDREN SIZE – large only)	\$5
LANYARD	\$1
ASSOC TIE	\$25
POSTAGE	approx. \$10-\$15

Please contact Jock Caldwell via email [flynavy@shoal.net.au](mailto:flynavy@shoal.net.au) or phone/text to 0411 755 397, with your request, and address details. He will then get back to you with pricing and payment details (payment either via EFT or cheque)