



Slipstream

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Ready for Lift Off

MALLOY heavy-lift drones line up on the flight deck of HMS *Prince of Wales* as the Royal Navy hosted the Future Maritime Aviation force, designed to show the Senior Service's intention to harness new technology. First published by RN Navy News September 2020 [here](#) and published in *Slipstream* with permission of the Editor Lorraine Proudlock (Continued Page 3)

Pictures by
LPhoto Dan Shepherd RN



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Royal Navy to Ramp Up Use of Drones On Future Operations



Malloy Aeronautical heavy-lift drone on HMS Prince of Wales with under slung torpedo
Picture: LPhot Dan Shepherd RN

The Royal Navy (RN) has shown its clear intent for greater use of autonomous and uncrewed technology in future operations.

HMS *Prince of Wales* provided an impressive setting for the Future Maritime Aviation Force Accelerator Day, bringing together experts from the RN, Ministry of Defence and industry to meet and discuss the vision for drone operations.

It comes as the RN seeks to develop and invest in the latest technology bringing new, world-beating equipment to the frontline quicker.

BRIG Dan Cheesman and Chief Technology Officer for the RN, co-hosted the event with CDRE Nick Walker, Deputy Director Naval Aviation, and called on attendees to consider how technology and innovation could transform the way the RN operates in the skies now and into the future.

The Future Maritime Aviation Force, BRIG Cheesman said was also about seeing how the service could build-on and gain advantages from the pace of technological development already underway in the commercial sector.

“The aim is to transition rapidly from what we have now to whatever we want in the future,” he said.

“We live in an exponential world of technological change and if we can integrate the latest tech and get in on operations, it will deliver battle-winning advantage. Specifically, getting that technology onto ships like HMS *Prince of Wales* would be a game-changer.

“We are working in collaboration with companies like the ones at this event to understand how they can help us move faster.”

BRIG Cheesman added it should be delivered in weeks and months, not years and decades.

The work of the RN’s NELSON digital accelerator lab supports this idea.

They have continued to develop the “plug in and play” MAPLE system that when integrated on RN ships, will simplify the process of accessing and using autonomous and uncrewed technology.

It comes as the pace of external technological change is creating both opportunity and threat.

Placing technology forward, into the hands of those on the frontline is increasingly important in maintaining operational advantage.

Within the RN and across defence, real progress has been made: exploring the application of technology at pace through accelerators, prototyping, experimental programmes and new delivery entities.

Trials earlier this year in Norway saw the MAPLE system used



Two drones on display ready for the Future Maritime Aviation Force Accelerator Day on HMS Prince of Wales

on HMS *Albion* and last year HMS *Argyll*.

Going forward, all RN ships will possess open architecture, fully-networked, organic crewless aviation systems.

This year the RN has been tasked to further experiment with new technology, new processes, and new ways of thinking to deliver an increasingly lethal, available, and sustainable mass and reach.

2021 has been earmarked the Year of Experimentation (YX21).

First Sea Lord, ADML Tony Radakin, announced 2021 as the Year of Experimentation to rapidly accelerate new capability across all RN domains and to support joint and coalition ambitions.

These experimentation events will build upon the lessons from exercises *Commando Warrior*, *Information Warrior* and HMS *Prince of Wales* will be an experimentation platform, experimenting with drones both underwater and airborne.

“In the next five years drones will be a part of our defence inventory.”

This year of experimentation seeks to accelerate significantly the RN’s understanding of crewless technology in advance tactical scenarios, the use of digital tech-

nologies and delivery of ‘Apps’ to the war-fighter.

With a range of scalable experimentation and demonstration events throughout the year in the UK, and alongside industry and allies, YX21 is unique and at a scale not seen before.

CDRE Walker supported the importance of the speed of introducing new technology.

Speaking aboard HMS *Prince of Wales* at the Future Maritime

Aviation Force industry day he said: “When we have drones and other equipment routinely embarked on ships, that’s when we really start to understand what they can do and get an idea of what we can achieve.

“We have to do it safely, in the right way and coherently, but I want to see the type of kit on display today on frontline operations within the year.”

YX21 presents the RN and wider defence with opportunities to drive forward the experimentation of innovative, technological solutions intended

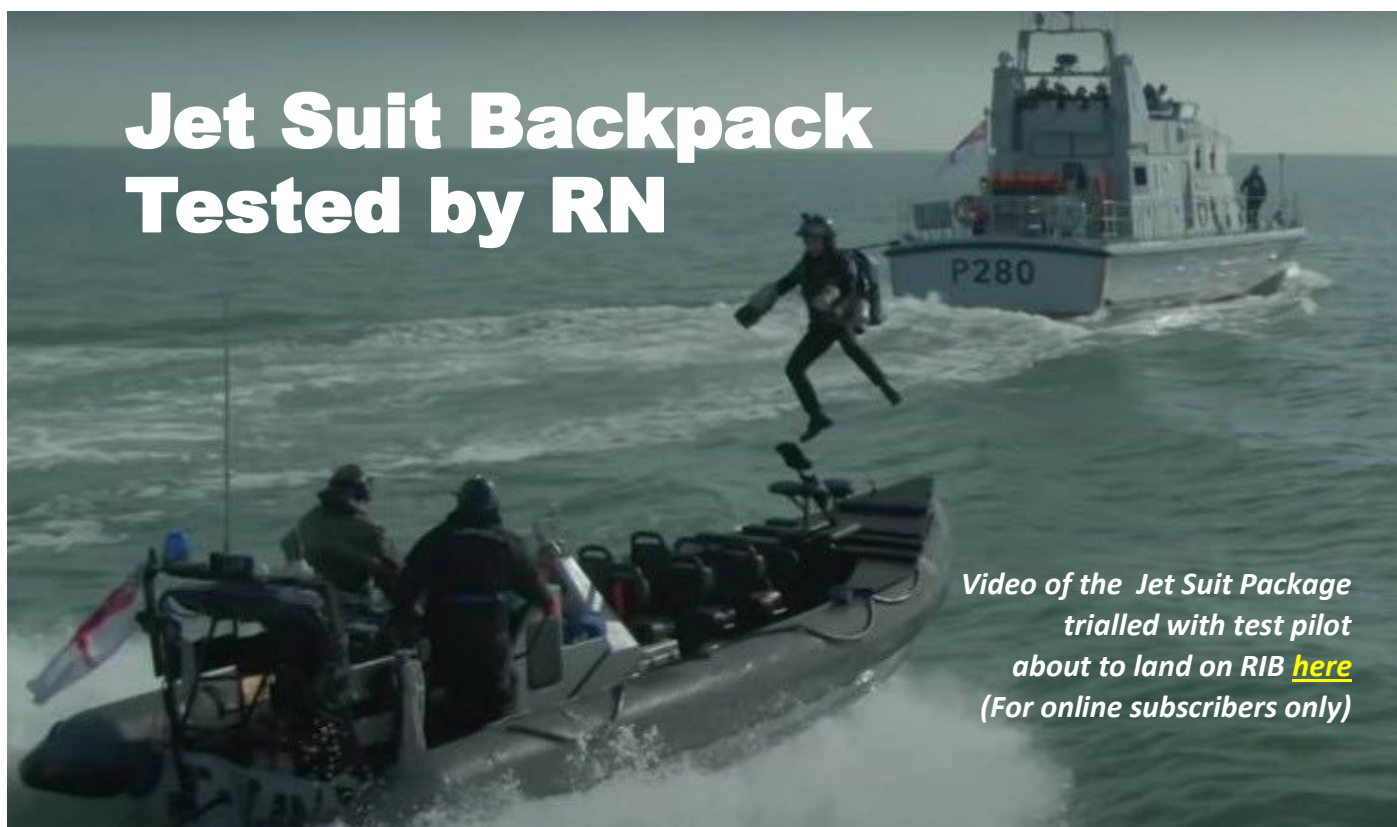
to build towards the Transformation priorities: Operation Advantage in the North Atlantic, Carrier Strike, Future Commando Force and Forward Presence through enhancing and proving technology and innovative enablers.

It will have a game-changing effect to accelerate the RN’s drive towards remotely piloted vehicles and un-crewed capability within the next five years.



A helicopter drone aboard HMS Prince of Wales

Jet Suit Backpack Tested by RN



Video of the Jet Suit Package trialled with test pilot about to land on RIB [here](#) (For online subscribers only)

**Naval News October 2020 from
UK Navy Forces
Maritime Defence Industry**

According to a video released by British Company Gravity Industries, the Royal Navy recently conducted tests with a combat assault team equipped with Jet Suit backpacks, designed by Gravity Industries, to determine if soldiers equipped with that type of equipment could

be used to rapidly swarm and board ships.

Richard Browning the inventor of the Jet Suit backpack, test pilot and former Royal Marines Reservist has conducted tests over the sea with fast patrol boat HMS *Dasher* to test his jet-powered bodysuit over the water for the first time.

During the test, Richard Browning took off from a PAC-24 Fast RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) to arrive by air onto *Dasher*. The same day, the Gravity Industries

team has also conducted another scenario with the take-off of three pilots from the RIB boat performing an assault and landing exercise onto *Dasher*. Both trials were successful.

The trials proved that the suit works over a large body of water and that the pilot can land and take-off with relative ease from boats or ships moving at speed.

These different test flights were followed by 47 Commando (Raiding Group) of the Royal Marines exploring Future Commando Force concepts using multi-pilot launches from a RIB boat.

The Jet Suit pack incorporates five miniature jet engines, each providing 22 kg of thrust, with two mounted on each arm and one in a backpack. It allows the pilot to achieve vertical take-off and control their direction and speed of flight by using their arms. The suit comes with a helmet that displays fuel levels, safety performance indicators, and Wi-Fi for ground monitoring.

Equipped with the Jet Suit backpack the user can take off from anywhere without any preparation. It can fly at a maximum speed of 50 km/h and can carry enough fuel for about five to ten minutes of flight.



A Royal Marine in Jet Suit Backpack departs HMS Queen Elizabeth on a demonstration flight. Video [here](#) (online subscribers only)

Jervis Bay Airfield Established as a Naval Air Station



**MONAB V RNAS JERVIS BAY
(HMS Nabswick)**

Senior BPF staff visit MONAB V at Jervis Bay, May 1945.

There are three Stinson Reliant under maintenance nearest the camera and five Avengers parked on the apron. Three Seafires can be seen parked in the distance

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 V began assembling on 6 December 1944 at Royal Naval Air Station Ludham in Norfolk, the headquarters of the Mobile Naval Air-

fields Organisation (MNAO). The unit began to assemble as a type B (Large) MONAB tasked with supporting up to 100 aircraft, however due to a late policy change it was decided to change its role; the planned Mobile Repair components were withdrawn on 11 January 1945 and the standard Mobile Maintenance and Maintenance Servicing units (part of a type A MONAB) were substituted. In addition, two Maintenance, Storage & Reserve components were attached, the result was a hybrid MONAB, neither a type A nor B but somewhere in between.

MONAB V was allocated the following maintenance components to provide support facilities for the following aircraft types:

Original allocation:

Mobile Repair Unit No. 1 supporting Corsair Mk. II & IV,

Firefly Mk. I, Hellcat Mk. I & II, Seafire Mk. III & L.III

Mobile Repair Unit No. 2 supporting Avenger Mk. I & II, Expeditor Mk. II, Martinet TT. I, Sea Otter Mk. I

These units continued to assemble and were despatched overseas, they were to be attached to MONABs where needed.

Substituted components:

Mobile Maintenance unit (MM) No. 4 supporting Avenger Mk. I & II, Corsair Mk. II & IV, Martinet TT. I

Maintenance Servicing unit (MS) No. 7 supporting Avenger Mk. I & II

Maintenance Servicing unit (MS) No. 8 supporting Corsair Mk. II & IV

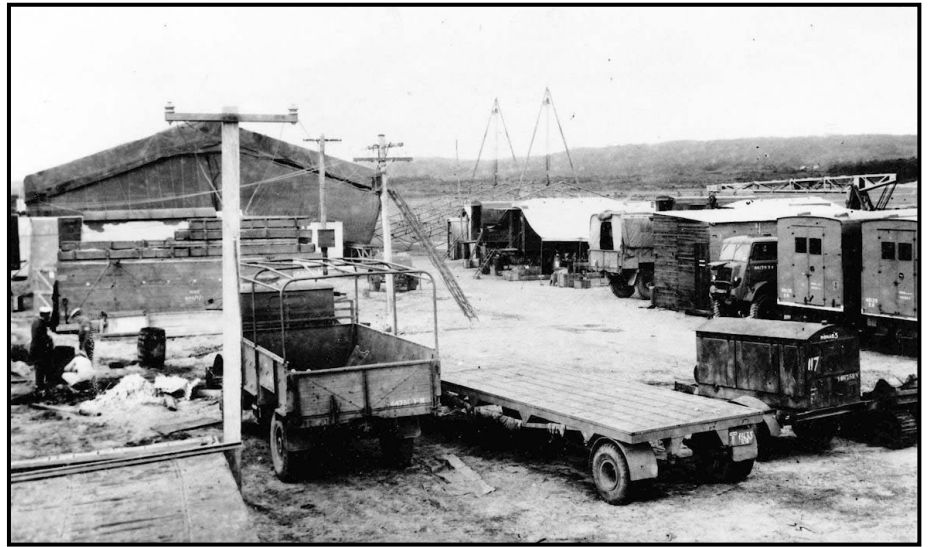
Maintenance Storage & Reserve unit (MSR) No. 1* Avenger Mk. I & II, Corsair Mk. II & IV, Hellcat Mk. I & II

Maintenance Storage & Reserve unit (MSR) No. 2* Seafire Mk. III & L.III, Firefly Mk. I

Mobile Air Torpedo Maintenance Unit (MATMU) No. 6

* Detached to operate under MONAB 1 on arrival in Australia. Additional components added later in Australia.

At the beginning of December 1944, the MONAB formation base was a very crowded place; there were three MONABs already on the station; MONABs II, III and IV. The personnel of MONABs II & III were not due to depart until 20 December and the programme called for MONAB V and Transportable Aircraft Maintenance Yard No. 1 (TAMY 1) to be simultaneously assembled commencing on 6 December. Even after MONABs II & III departed it was still very crowded; some of the overcrowding was eased by splitting TAMY 1 in a similar fashion to that done



Setting up shop at RNAS Jervis Bay – one of the unit's Dorland hangars is complete, a second is being assembled next door and its roof section is ready for lifting using the two 'A' frames.

for MONAB II; the HQ component was to form at Ludham and the technical components at RANE Riley at Warrington in Lancashire.

The late change to the unit's

component makeup led to considerable re-drafting and many ratings joined only a few days prior to sailing from the UK; drafting leave had to be given top priority, the necessarily large store parties came second and the familiarisation of ratings with their equipment and instruction in tropical hygiene etc came a poor third. MONAB V was no different from its predecessors when it came to shortfalls and inadequacies in equipment and training.

In particular, the preparation of the vehicles for shipment was impeded by the inadequate servicing facilities and the delivery of many vehicles too late to be properly serviced before embarkation. In some cases, vehicles joined the convoy on route to the port of embarkation. The main consequence of this was that no time was available for checking the spare parts carried by each vehicle. The M/T section suffered considerably because the ratings allowed by complement were not yet available. In addition, the complement of drivers for a typical MONAB was made out for an allowance of 88 prime movers, whereas MONAB V had 122 prime movers allocated to fulfil the new role.

Function

Support for disembarked front line squadrons

Aviation support Components

Mobile Maintenance (MM) 4

Maintenance Servicing (MS) 7 & 8

Mobile Air Torpedo Maintenance Unit (MATMU) 6

Aircraft type supported

Avenger Mk. I & II, Barracuda Mk. II, Corsair Mk. II & IV
Firefly Mk. I and Martinet TT. I

Commanding Officers

Captain H. G. Dickinson D.S.C.
01 February to 09 March 1945

Commander T. K. Masterman
09 March to 01 May 1945 (Temp command)

Captain H. G. Dickinson D.S.C.
01 May to 18 November 1945

Captain J.F.H. Sawyer
18 November 1945 to 18 March 1946

As with the previous four MONABs the full complement of radio vans did not arrive until shortly before moving off and therefore were not checked or tested before sailing. MONAB Staff found there was insufficient time allowed to familiarise the unit's very junior Telegraphist staff with the equipment supplied, most of them had never seen the ground radio equipment before. Also, insufficient numbers of specially trained and experienced air radio mechanics were drafted, this necessitated many being sent on special short courses. This meant they were not available for checking their equipment.

Storing difficulties prior to the movement of the unit from the United Kingdom were considerable; it was the practice that as far as possible all stores were sent by depots to Ludham. This vast mass of stores, of which a large proportion were in cases and crates weighing over 4 cwts (203



Preparations are made to hoist the roof section of the second Dorland hangar into position using the two 'A' frames.

Kilos), had to be manhandled several times between arrival at the nearest railhead at the village of Potter Heigham and dispatch again by rail to the port of embarkation. Some of the stores despatched from the depots were delivered by road and needed to be uncrated for overseas shipment. Many items together with a

considerable quantity of G-1098 equipment had to be re-cased or crated after acceptance. Reports on the experiences of earlier MONABs and their formation difficulties were not available for reference by the units currently forming.

Commanding Officers' reports on proceeding would not be filled by MONABs I – III until they were installed and so had not yet filtered back to the MNAO staff. Consequently, answers to the questions as to how much cash, loan clothing and compositions etc., should be taken appeared to be left to the guesswork of the supply officer.

Despite the problems and obstacles encoun-

tered during formation, MONAB V commissioned as an independent command on 1 February 1945 bearing the ships name HMS *Nabswick*, with Captain H.G. Dickinson D.S.C. RN in command. TAMY 1 also commissioned on this date as HMS *Nabsford*.

Despatch overseas

Both MONAB V and the advance elements of TAMY I were to be despatched together, their personnel and equipment departed for Gladstone docks, Liverpool overnight by road and rail on 16 February for embarkation. Up to this time, MONAB V had not been allocated an operations site; negotiations with the Australian authorities to secure further airfields on loan were being hampered by labour disputes and delayed completion dates. It was decided to house MONAB V at RAAF Jervis Bay, NSW as soon as it was ready. Upon its arrival in Australia, it was to lodge at Nowra with MONAB I, a few miles to the north of Jervis Bay until it was ready for occupation. TAMY I was to occupy RAAF Archerfield in Brisbane, Queensland.

The personnel embarked in the Troopship *Stirling Castle* (Transport J.4) for passage to



Leading Air Mechanic (Airframes) Leslie Meakin of MONAB V



A Firefly lands wheels up slewing off the Runway

Australia, sailing on 18 February in convoy KMF.40 bound for Gibraltar; MONAB V stores and equipment were to travel in the S.S. *Durham* which sailed with Convoy UC.58A on 26 February.

After leaving the Gibraltar convoy the *Stirling Castle* proceeded directly to the Panama Canal, arriving at Balboa on the Pacific end of the Canal on 8 March. Here Captain Dickinson departed for Australia by air to assume command of MONAB I at RNAS Nowra, Commander T.K. Masterman temporarily taking command of MONAB V. After crossing the Pacific unescorted she called at Wellington, New Zealand on 22 March then Brisbane on 26 March, finally arriving in Sydney on 29 March. On disembarking the personnel travelled by train to HMS *Nabbington*, RNAS Nowra.

The *Durham* arrived at Sydney on 2 April, the stores and equipment were off loaded ready for transport to RNAS Nowra. On inspection it was found that a number of cases had sustained damage due more to the rough handling given them by stevedores than to faulty construction.

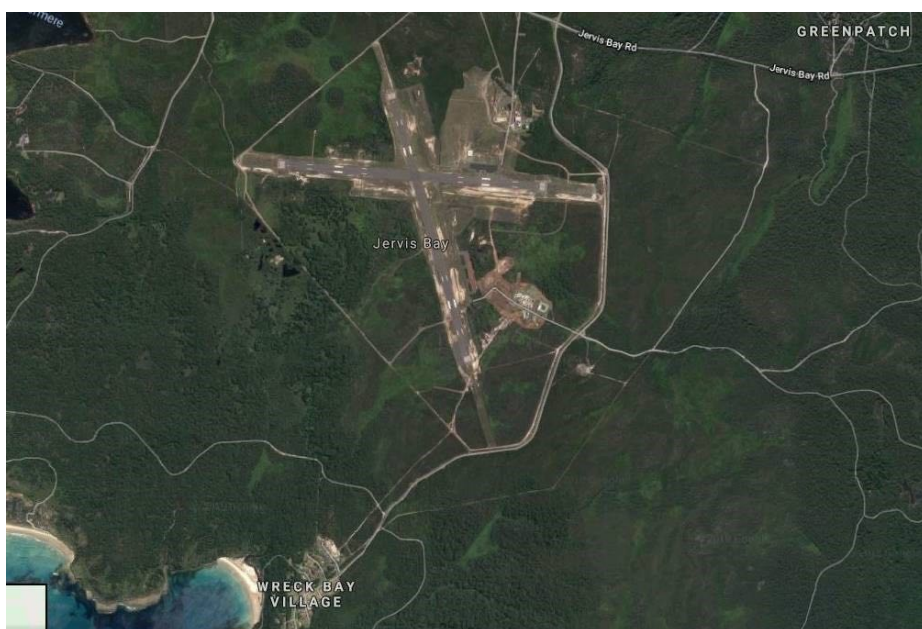
Also, a number of cases were lost in the general confusion of stores at the docks and some of the NAAFI stores had been broken into presumably because the letters "NAAFI" were painted on the cases. Overall, however, the damage and loss were relatively slight when over 5,000 cases were brought from the United Kingdom.

Once their equipment and vehicles were unloaded both the

MSR units were detached to operate under MONAB I. Once collected together at Nowra the personnel of MONAB V began transporting equipment and erecting the various MONAB components at Jervis Bay. At that time the airfield was operating as a tender to RNAS Nowra, and the station was in use for operational flying by MONAB I from 7 March to permit emergency repairs to be carried out on the runways & taxiways at Nowra which were deteriorating due to wet weather and heavy use. During this period the personnel were accommodated at Nowra, there being hardly any permanent buildings or facilities on the airfield at Jervis Bay. Captain H.G. Dickinson had relieved Commander Nunnerley as commanding officer of MONAB I, assuming command on 9 March 1945.

Commissioning of RNAS Jervis Bay, New South Wales

Flying operations returned to Nowra on 28 April 1945 and the station was left to MONAB V, three days later the airfield at Jervis Bay was commissioned as HMS *Nabswick* on 1 May 1945, Captain Dickinson resuming his



***An Aerial View of Jervis Bay Airfield
Reflecting Runways 27/09 and 33/15***



Artists impression of a Firefly Mk 1 of the British Pacific Fleet in action in the Pacific

command; Captain J.D Harvey assumed command of MONAB I. Of the seven MONABs to be installed in Australia No. V occupied the most basic location; all of the unit's mobile equipment was needed as only the runways, taxiways and hardstandings were complete, but no buildings, hangars nor airfield equipment were present. Accommodation for both MONAB personnel and disembarked squadrons was under canvas; 4 Dorland portable Hangars were erected for aircraft servicing.

The MONAB equipment was installed in the Northeast corner of the airfield around the parking area off the 27 half of runway 09/27 and a parking area off the 33 end of runway 33/15 (running roughly north/south). No. 723 Fleet Requirements Unit (FRI) also arrived here from RNAS Bankstown on 1 May; intended as a resident unit at RNAS Nowra it had formed up at Bankstown and had been making training flights to both Nowra and Jervis Bay during March and April before moving to Jervis Bay with its 6 Martinet target tugs and 6 Corsairs to begin operations. The first disembarked

squadrons arrived on 7 May when elements of 30 Wing disembarked from HMS *Implacable*. This included 1771 (Firefly), 828 (Avenger), 801 & 880 (Seafire) squadrons. There were to be five flying accidents during their stay; the first occurred on the 8 May when the starboard undercarriage leg of Firefly MB401, flown by the squadron commanding officer, LCDR W. R. J. MacWhirter RNVR, collapsed on landing.

The other four all involved Seafires, NN458 (880 Sqn) flown by LEUT M. Goodfellow RNVR landed with the undercarriage retracted on the 14 May, NF597 (880 Sqn) flown by SBLT J. E. Letham swung off the runway, and the prop struck the ground on the 19 May, NF583 (801 Sqn) flown by LEUT E. L. Jervis RNVR suffered engine failure on take-off and made a wheels-up forced landing on the 21 May, and finally, also on the 21 May, during a period of Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landing practice PP986 (880 Sqn) flown by SBLT F. H. Tucker RNVR stalled over the runway and burst the port tyre causing the aircraft to nose over. First to leave were 1771 & 828 re-joining *Implacable* on the 24 May, 801 & 880 joining them the following day.

By the end of May the shortcomings of the Dorland hangars became apparent; they were found to be unsatisfactory due to the insecurity of the attaching straps holding the canvas to the metal framework. In high winds, many of these securing straps broke away from the canvas risking the entire covering become detached. Their shortcomings aside, the air engineering depart-



Leading Air Fitter (ordnance) Ken Lowe pictured with a Corsair at Jervis Bay, summer 1945



*A Barracuda aircraft of the British Pacific Fleet flies over
HMS Venerable and a destroyer escort*

ment would have preferred the number of hangers increased to 8 instead of the standard 4 which were in their scale of issue.

The station was not to remain quiet for long, 848 (Avenger) Squadron and 1841 & 1842 (Corsair) Squadrons disembarked from HMS *Formidable* on June 1st. No. 723 Fleet Requirements Unit, moved to RNAS Nowra on the 4th leaving the airfield to *Formidable's* air wing until they too re-embarked on 22 June. There was one accident during their stay, on the 18 May; while taxiing back along the runway in Corsair KD727 ('130/X'), SBLT N Hodgson RNVR of 1842 Sqn, hit KD760.

The next unit to arrive was 1843 (Corsair) squadron which flew in from RNAS Maryborough on 12 July, the squadron was intended for the new No.3 Carrier Air Group (CAG), which was to form at

Nowra, but was located at Jervis Bay until room was available at Nowra, subsequently the squadron moved there on the 20 May. Two days later, 812 (Barracuda) & 1846 (Corsair) squadrons disembarked from HMS *Colossus*, along with 827 squadron (Barracuda) & 1850 (Corsair) squadrons from HMS *Vengeance*; both of these were Light Fleet Carriers which had just arrived in Sydney to join the BPF. These squadrons were to stay until 13 August when they re-joined their carriers.

Victory over Japan and the rundown to closure

On 15 August the Japanese surrendered and VJ Day was celebrated at Nowra by members of both MONABs I & V. This was to mark the beginning of a quiet period at Jervis Bay, a situation which was to continue until 11 September when the 16th CAG

comprising 837 (Barracuda) & 1831 (Corsair) squadrons disembarked from the Light Fleet Carrier HMS *Glory*. Flying training continued for 1831 at Jervis Bay with an accidents occurring on 17 September; SBLT R. Phillips RNVR in KD565 had both main wheels lock up on landing, the aircraft overturned but he was OK. SBLT W. R. Hodgkinson suffered an engine fire at 500 feet in KD219 and ditched in Jervis Bay on the 21 May. He was safely recovered. During October 837 were to re-equip, exchanging their Barracudas for 12 Fireflies. The 16th CAG moved to Nowra on 29 October; the last flying units had now left the station.

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 which 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 operation 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.

Commissioning of MONAB V at RNAS Nowra, NSW

MONAB V commissioned RNAS Nowra as HMS *Nabswick* on 15 November 1945. HMS *Nabbington* paid off on the same day. RNAS Jervis Bay reverted to the status of a tender to Nowra. At this time 820 & 828 (Avenger), 837 (Firefly) and 1831 (Corsair) Squadrons were present at Nowra; 820 Squadron re-embarked in HMS *Indefatigable* on 23 November. The scaling-down of operations continued apace; 1831 Squadron had its strength reduced from 21 to 12 Corsair IVs on 26 November.

The 15th CAG was the next to arrive, 814 (Barracuda) and 1851

(Corsair) squadrons, disembarked from the Light Fleet Carrier HMS *Venerable* on New Year's Eve. On 21 January 1946, 723 FRU relocated to RNAS Schofields, (MONAB VI). They were followed by 814 on the 22 January and 1851 on the 24 January. By the end of the month, 828 Squadron with HMS *Glory's* Air Group began re-embarking as the last remaining occupant of RNAS Nowra. 1851 was reduced in size from 21 to 12 Corsairs while 814 exchanged their Barracudas for 12 Firefly FR.1s. Flying training had continued at Nowra for both the 15th and 16th CAGs and there were three more flying incidents during this period; on 7 January SBLT J. Aston RNVR in Corsair KD736 of 1831, stalled landing with his wingtip hitting the Deck Landing Control Officer (presumably doing Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings?) Firefly DK487 of 814 Squadron, flown by SBLT A. Kerry RNVR stalled on approach, and struck rough ground on the 12 January. Then on 17 January, SBLT R. N. Toseland RNVR in Corsair KD915 1 of 1831, dropped his starboard wing after landing in crosswind.

Paying Off

RNAS Nowra had now begun its run-down to closure, the stock of reserve aircraft held on the station were flown to RNAS Banks-town over the next month. In late February the men of HMS *Nabswick* sentimentally marched through the streets of Nowra to say farewell to the town. MONAB V, HMS *Nabswick*, paid off at Nowra on 18 March 1946, the station being returned to RAAF control. No. 828 Squadron remained at Nowra as a lodger unit with the RAAF until embarking in HMS *Implacable* on 5 May 1946 for passage to the United Kingdom, leaving their aircraft behind.

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All Articles and Reports

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Wessex 31B 834 uses Jervis Bay airfield in the early 1970's for flying training. Airfield was used as a satellite to NAS Nowra (HMAS Albatross) for helicopters when available, Jindivik flying and also for Fleet Requirement contract Learjets at that time.

Sea Fury Story

By HARS Naval Heritage Flight

The Hawker Sea Fury is a British-made fighter aircraft designed and manufactured by Hawker Aircraft Ltd as a carrier-borne aircraft. The Sea Fury was the last propeller-driven fighter to serve with the Royal Navy and one of the fastest production single reciprocating engine aircraft ever built (724km/h at 22,000 feet). The Sea Fury entered service two years after WWII ended, and was used during the Korean War.

Australia was one of three Commonwealth nations to operate the Sea Fury, along with Canada and Pakistan. The type was operated by two front-line squadrons of the RAN Fleet Air Arm, 805 and 808 Squadrons; a third squadron that flew the Sea Fury, 850 Squadron, was also briefly active.

Two Australian aircraft carriers, HMAS *Sydney* and HMAS *Vengeance* embarked Sea Furies in their air wings. The Sea Fury was used by Australia during the Korean War, flying from *Sydney* based along the Korean coast in support of friendly ground forces. The Sea Fury was operated by Australia between 1948 and 1962.

The HARS Sea Fury is a Mark 11 model delivered to the RAN in 1952 as designation WG630. Sea Fury WG630 airframe is currently on display in HARS Hangar 1 and is already a very popular display item, but its restoration will be a huge challenging project. HARS invites your involvement and assistance please with a donation.

The HARS Sea Fury has a fascinating history.

- WG630 entered RAN service in March 1952 as an attrition replacement for aircraft lost on combat during the Korean War.



- WG630 only had a 6-year service life being struck off charge in November 1959.
- WG630 was then sold to the CSIRO experimental building facility in Ryde, Sydney testing weather resistance on windows and sliding doors (see photo below on left.)
- When no longer required by CSIRO WG630 was acquired by the Australian War Memorial in 1986, acting as a parts aircraft to restore another Sea Fury that went on display in the AWM Aircraft Hall.
- WG630 then went to the Fleet Air Museum at Nowra finally being placed on display in 2007 as Sea Fury "K" 110 (see photo above).
- In December 2018, Defence disposed of the RAN Historic Flight aircraft to HARS with WG630 being trucked up the Princes Hwy to HARS Albion Park in January 2019.

Nothing of significance has been done to the NHF Sea Fury since its arrival due to other priority restorations. A significant amount of money and time will need to be devoted to this aircraft for it to be restored to flying status.

How Can You Help HARS?

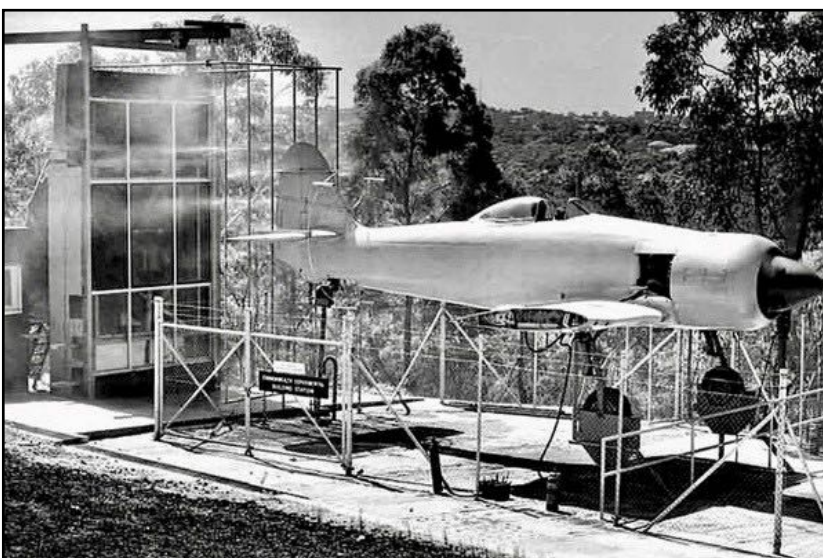
HARS receives no Government funding, and relies on your contributions and sponsorship to continue to rebuild and operate the NHF airframes.

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

You can do this by clicking on: <https://www.harsmuseumshop.com.au/> and donate to restore Navy aircraft!

Thank you for any support that you may give!

Professor Michael Hough AM RFD ED
HARS NHF Project Leader



USN Comments on Formation of Fixed Wing Element of RAN Fleet Air Arm post WWII



RAN Recruit Rating Pilots prior to entering No. 1 Pilots Course at No.1 Flying Training School in 1948 (1BFTS commenced in 1951). Seven graduated as Pilots 4th Class (Leading Seaman equivalent). These Ratings wore the same rig as then Supply & Secretariat Ratings—Red Cap Badge and Black Buttons. It was not uncommon to refer to themselves as 'Recruit Stewards'. (Photo: Fred Lane)

US Naval Aviation News June 1949

Australia's experience during the last war emphasised the need for preparedness. Foremost in Australia's current defence program was a five-year naval expansion plan which will provide a strong and compact carrier force of 26 ships with a reserve of 80 more vessels.

The new Royal Australian Navy was designed to operate independently as a carrier task force, or in cooperation with greater allied naval groups. The new force was to be composed of two light fleet carriers, two cruisers, six new destroyers and 16 other vessels, including frigates, survey ships, minesweepers and boom defence vessels, and was to be in commission by 1952. Personnel strength will be increased to 14,750 two and a half times the pre-war strength and the largest peacetime navy Australia has ever maintained.

The Royal Australian Navy established a naval aviation department for the first time. It trained young men in naval aviation in preparation for the arrival of its two newly-constructed aircraft carriers from Britain.

The first group of airmen to be absorbed into the RAN were of those pilots who flew with the Royal Navy during the war. Training was now consistently going on and additional personnel were being drawn from qualified enlisted ranks within the Navy, and from new civilian recruits. Training was carried on through a cooperative effort between the RAAF and the RAN.

The first carrier to arrive in Australia was the 18,000-ton light fleet carrier HMAS *Sydney*. It was scheduled for delivery early in May. The second carrier was to be the same type and named HMAS *Melbourne*.

The Hawker Sea Fury fighter and the Firefly strike plane was to operate off the new carriers⁽¹⁾. The Sea Fury was the latest Royal Navy fighter



Trainee Naval Aviators move a Tiger Moth to dispersal

armed with four 20 mm cannons and either a 1000-lb. bomb or twelve 60-lb. rocket projectors under the wings. It had a maximum level speed of 460 mph at 16,000 feet. The Firefly was also a top flight British type.

Use of jet-propelled aircraft had been discussed, but Australian Navy Chiefs considered that they had not been fully proved for carrier operations. (British have not yet made any jet squadrons operational on carriers) so they have decided to wait until Britain has developed them further.

The now familiar pattern of long-range carrier task forces maintained at sea for long periods by a fleet train of refuelling and supply ships emerged logically from the conditions of naval warfare in the Pacific. Balanced, hard hitting task forces composed of aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers, roved the vast expanse of the Pacific striking at targets thousands of miles from their bases. The last war in the Pacific was mainly a carrier war.

And it was naval forces that kept Australia from being invaded by the Japanese.

Australia's new Navy would put to sea but as a smaller model of the powerful task forces the U.S. Navy and Royal Navy employed in the Pacific. But it would have the same flexibility and the same power to operate as a long-range strike force capable of carrying out swift raids on distant bases or lightning attacks on enemy forces at sea.

An island continent with a coastline of 12,000 miles, Australia, within the limits of her industrial resources, must base her defences primarily on the Navy. In war-time her existence is dependent on keeping the seaways open for the arrival of reinforcements, and to some extent a safeguarding of her own coastal track.

The peril in which Australia stood when the Japanese occupied the island screen covering her northern approaches showed how swiftly a protective barrier could be turned into a menace to her security. Fast strong naval forces of the type evolved in the island-to-island warfare of the Pacific would be essential to prevent the occupation of these northern islands by hostile forms.

It is this lesson which has dictated the decision of the Government to establish an advance operational naval base at Manus, in the Admiralty Group to the north of New Guinea. Manus, location of a vast American naval base in the Pacific war, is Australian mandated territory. It was to become an overseas service station for the Navy and Air Force from which a watch could be kept at the front door of Australia.

It would be so much easier to stop an invasion at the front door than it is to stop it in the living-room or kitchen. Training of the new naval aviators was to include both thorough indoctrination into aviation as practised aboard ship, and training in the operation of the ships themselves. Aerial navigation must be precise to a matter of miles, but shipboard navigation must be precise to a matter of yards.

It is particularly interesting that as a result of the lessons learned during WWII, England and Australia emphasised carrier and naval aviation to such a degree while other countries of the world, as a result of lessons learned in the same war emphasised strictly aerial warfare more and more.

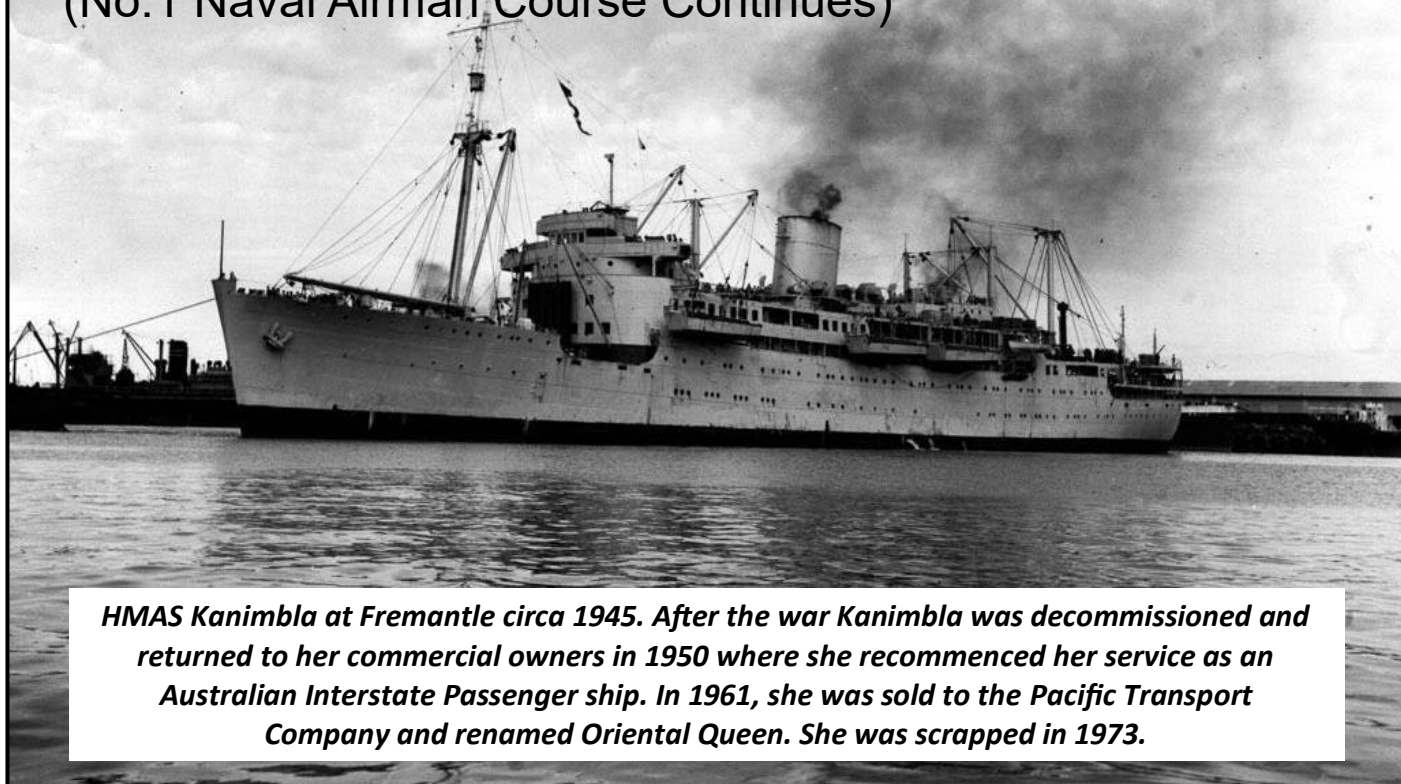
(Note ⁽¹⁾: HMAS Melbourne elected for the Sea Venom and Gannet aircraft with the Sycamore helicopter for SAR duties. Ed)



Getting ready checking safety equipment before a flight

Sea Passage to UK

(No.1 Naval Airman Course Continues)



HMAS Kanimbla at Fremantle circa 1945. After the war Kanimbla was decommissioned and returned to her commercial owners in 1950 where she recommenced her service as an Australian Interstate Passenger ship. In 1961, she was sold to the Pacific Transport Company and renamed Oriental Queen. She was scrapped in 1973.

(The story of the original group of Naval Airmen Recruits who formed a segment of the formation of the RAN Fleet Air Arm in 1948 in a booklet written by Les 'Jukie' Matterson continues. In this issue Slipstream describes the 'Passage to the UK' and 'Naval Aircraft Basic Training' as written by Les. So many serving and ex-Fleet Air Arm personnel can share the experiences these men undertook. As I said in the Dec 2020 issue, it's a credit to Les and all those members of No.1 NAR—1948 who collated all their thoughts into a publication for future generations to remember. Ed)

On return from leave, personnel from the Eastern States and South Australia joined HMAS Kanimbla in Port Melbourne on 21 June for transport to the UK, with one exception. During leave, one of the course obviously considered his future and decided the RAN was no place for him. Eventually he was listed as a deserter and was not heard from again.

The ship would call at Fremantle to embark the Western Australia contingent enroute.

Built during the mid-1930s as the passenger liner MV Kanimbla for McIlwraith, McEacharn & Co, the ship operated in Australian waters until 1939, when she was requisitioned for military service, converted into an armed merchant cruiser, and commissioned in the Royal Navy as HMS Kanimbla. She was transferred to the RAN, converted to a Landing Ship Infantry (LSI) and recommissioned

HMAS Kanimbla in 1943 for service against the Japanese in the islands. The maximum troop carrying capacity was 1280, so there was more than enough space to accommodate the Air Branch personnel and others bound for the UK. After a streamer farewell alongside at Port Melbourne on 23 June 1948, Kanimbla slipped her moorings and set a course for Fremantle, arriving within a few days following an uneventful crossing of the Bight.

A couple of days and another streamer farewell later, she set sail for the UK with the Western Australians embarked. As a safety measure, abandon ship drill was practised initially, to avoid confusion should the need arise.

Early into the passage across the Indian Ocean very rough weather was encountered. The ship headed into a storm and was soon rolling and pitching violently. Hugh waves battered the fore-castle, flooding the weather decks and creating hazardous situations for anyone traversing an open deck space. Safety lines were rigged on well deck spaces to assist personnel to remain standing and prevent the likelihood of anyone being washed overboard.

Such conditions precluded the preparation of proper meals for a day and equipment damage was sustained in some parts of the ship. A reel of steel wire rope broke loose from its bolted down location on a well deck, an imitation of an enraged bull charging dangerously about until it was finally

brought under control and secured to deck fittings by a Seaman's Emergency Party.

This was the first sea experience of any consequence for most of the NAM group, and the pitiful sight caused by seasickness was soon evident, much to the entertainment of seasoned crew members. As the storm subsided, conditions improved together with the health and appetite of the recruits who were finding their sea legs at last.

They were accommodated in the for'ard part of the ship on a mess deck outfitted with three tiered bunks attached to vertical steel posts as installed for troop transport. It was not the most comfortable arrangement being somewhat cramped, and accompanied by a lack of ventilation.

During the hotter part of the voyage, a wind scoop was rigged in a hatch that opened onto the fo'castle deck to provide some relief but its use was conditional upon good weather. Meals were served in a cafeteria amidships accessible through hatches that opened onto the for'ard well deck. The original kit issue included khaki tropical clothing - shorts, square necked tee shirt and stockings, which were useful in the hotter climates.

Fortunately with such a large number of personnel embarked, there was ample "make and mend" or leisure time. A 'crossing the line' ceremony was arranged to observe the maritime tradition when crossing the equator, passing from one hemisphere to the other. The crew rigged a swimming pool fashioned from a large tarpaulin suspended by ropes between two parts of superstructure on the upper deck, and filled with water. A boom was suspended over the pool and King Neptune, seated on a make-shift throne on one side, holding a trident and bedecked in robes and a rope fibre hairpiece, presided over his court, sentencing randomly selected personnel to a dunking carried out by willing attendants. After the ceremony the boom was greased and a pillow fight contest took place. A boxing contest was also organised with contestants from the ship's company and the recruits turning on a willing spectacle.

Although restricted for space, ceremonial divisions and divine service were held on the upper deck on Sundays. Many pleasant hours were spent topside, sometimes watching the dolphins keeping pace with the ship's bows.

During leisure hours popular music of the time was broadcast over the PA system. Who could forget the Congo Blues ~ "bongo bongo bongo I don't want to leave the Congo. . . ."?

After crossing the Indian Ocean the ship called briefly at the port of Aden where ever vigilant Arab traders came alongside in boats to offer an assortment of souvenirs, photographs and trinkets to ship's personnel at bargain prices. The voyage was resumed through the Red Sea and on to the entrance to the Suez Canal to join a line of ships which proceeded to transit the canal at a steady, measured speed to prevent bow-wave damage to the embankment on either side of the ship.

After leaving the canal and entering the Mediterranean, *Kanimbla* sailed on to berth at Gibraltar for a few days. Shore leave was granted and members of the group ventured ashore for sightseeing, a pint at the Navy Army and Air Force Institute (NAAFI) and a change of atmosphere. For the majority, this was the first occasion they had set foot on foreign soil.

The final stage of the voyage began on leaving the Rock and after a short cruise *Kanimbla* docked in Plymouth, England, on 31 July 1948. At a Devonport dock nearby

HMS *Terrible* was refitting preparatory to being recommissioned HMAS *Sydney* later in the year.

As the NAM group was not disembarked on arrival, the opportunity to step ashore on English soil in such a famous seafaring port as Plymouth, was welcomed. A great deal of bomb damage from the recent war was immediately noticeable and it conveyed a depressing picture. In contrast, the promenade overlooking the sea front was lush green and refreshingly pleasant featuring historical buildings and a commemorative statue of Sir Francis Drake.

During the voyage one recruit was deemed to be unfit to continue his RAN service. He was to remain in the ship for return to Australia for discharge, taking the deserter into account, a total of 58 NAM recruits would proceed to the next training stage.



**Sunday Divisions aboard
HMAS *Kanimbla***

Breaking, breaking, breaking. . . .GO!

THE SHARKS

***The story of 'The Sharks', the
Royal Navy Helicopter Formation
Display Team 1976-1996***

By Trevor Reick

The Royal Navy Formation Display Team, the Sharks, flew the Aerospatiale Gazelle helicopter in the summer airshow seasons in UK and Europe from 1975 until 1996 when the RN paid off the Gazelle.

The Gazelle was introduced into service in late 1974 and was flown by 705 Squadron, RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall, in the basic helicopter training role and proved to be a very versatile machine and a joy to fly. This made it absolutely ideal for the public relations and recruiting programs for which it was used very successfully for 21 years by the Royal Navy. RAN FAA exchange officers played a part in the Sharks' success.

Qualified Helicopter Instructors (QHI) staffed the squadron and "volunteers" were recruited each year for the team. For volunteer team members it was a major commitment to give up their spare time by having to fly out of hours for all Sharks' flying. Practice was held early mornings before the instructional day started and weekends away for the displays throughout UK and Europe. That system remained in practice for the life of the Sharks.

The RAN had a QHI exchange program with the RN in 705 Squadron from 1963 until 1996 amounting to 33 officers overall. Until 1976 there were two exchange officers posted for two years, which was reduced to one from 1976 until the end of the program in 1996.

The Sharks

The 1975 team started off with a six aircraft routine. Bomber Brown and Trevor Rieck, who were on exchange with 705 at the time, flew in the inaugural team. Bomber flew the solo slot and Trevor No 5. It has been officially recorded that Bomber coined the 'Sharks' name as he thought the tail of the Gazelle resembled that of a shark. This team displayed exclusively at naval establishment air days and open days in the summer of 1975.



***Tails of 'The Sharks' in dispersal displaying
the 'Shark' emblem adjacent to the tail rotor***



***Some of the early RAN pilots in 'The Sharks' in the 1970's from left to right:
'Bomber Brown', Trevor Rieck, Mick Perrot and Jan Criddle***

The 1976 Sharks team included the new RAN exchange QHI, Mick Perrot, and the displays included air days at Portland, Lee-on-Solent, Culdrose, Yeovilton and RAF St Mawgan.

In 1977 the Team was cancelled due to a fatal mid-air collision during the six aircraft practice in which three were killed. The team was practising their routine over water as more requests were being received to fly in regular air shows off popular beaches. Whatever happened two aircraft "touched" and shrapnel flew everywhere with two aircraft ditched uncontrollably and the other four managed to recover to Culdrose. One of those killed was the Senior Pilot along for the ride.

In 1978 it was decided that helicopter display flying was best kept to four aircraft and the "box" became the basic formation because it was easy to fly, safe, highly manoeuvrable and allowed fast formation changes. Thus the Team was reduced to four aircraft with an integrated solo performer and this became the format for the rest of the Sharks' life until 1992.

By that stage the Team was gaining a reputation and more and more bookings were being accepted hence the need for a manager (who also flew the spare aircraft).

In 1977 Jack Kinross was Australia's representative on this team as the manager and the air show commentator; an interesting duty considering his broad Aussie accent. Also in the team was the well known to the RAN FAA Jan Criddle. Jack and Jan were also on the 1979 team.

Jan Criddle relates that towards the end of the 1978 season an official photographer for the Sunday Times, Richard Cook, was approved to fly with the Sharks. In the week he flew with the Team at practises and a display at Portland. A camera he had used on previous air photography with the RAF was mounted under the tail of a Gazelle with the help of the 705's civilian maintenance contrac-

tors. He sat in the front seat and operated the camera. We practiced a few times with him calling the shots for smoke, and it went off perfectly. The Sharks leader was controlling the positioning for the various photos, and the camera was rigged with a slight tilt, for extra effect. It produced some magnificent aerial photography.

The 1980s team did not have any sponsors so the team took their issue green flying suits and dyed them blue. By the end of the season their white polo neck shirts were also blue. The season was highly successful and the Sharks had been noticed, as civilian air show organisers were keen to book the team for the following year.

Biggin Hill Airshow was added to the growing list of displays and one at air show, the famous TV commentator, Raymond Baxter, said "It's so nice to see a helicopter display team that gives a fast and exciting professional performance which demonstrates that these days helicopters are capable of doing a lot more than precision hovering". High praise indeed.

As the 1982 season began the Falklands War started and the team had to stay low key and was likely to be cancelled. However the recruiting value was considered important so the team flew a limited program. In any case the basic helicopter training student numbers doubled so the day job was very busy. One of the team was pier-jumped to the Falklands war and the resident Aussie, Vince Di Pietro, was drafted in at short notice as the manager and airshow commentator.

This team pioneered the "opposition break", a manoeuvre in which the aircraft dive head-on towards the crowd in a staggered box formation and, apparently, inter meshing rotors as they break across each other. This manoeuvre became the signature of all in all Shark's displays from then on.

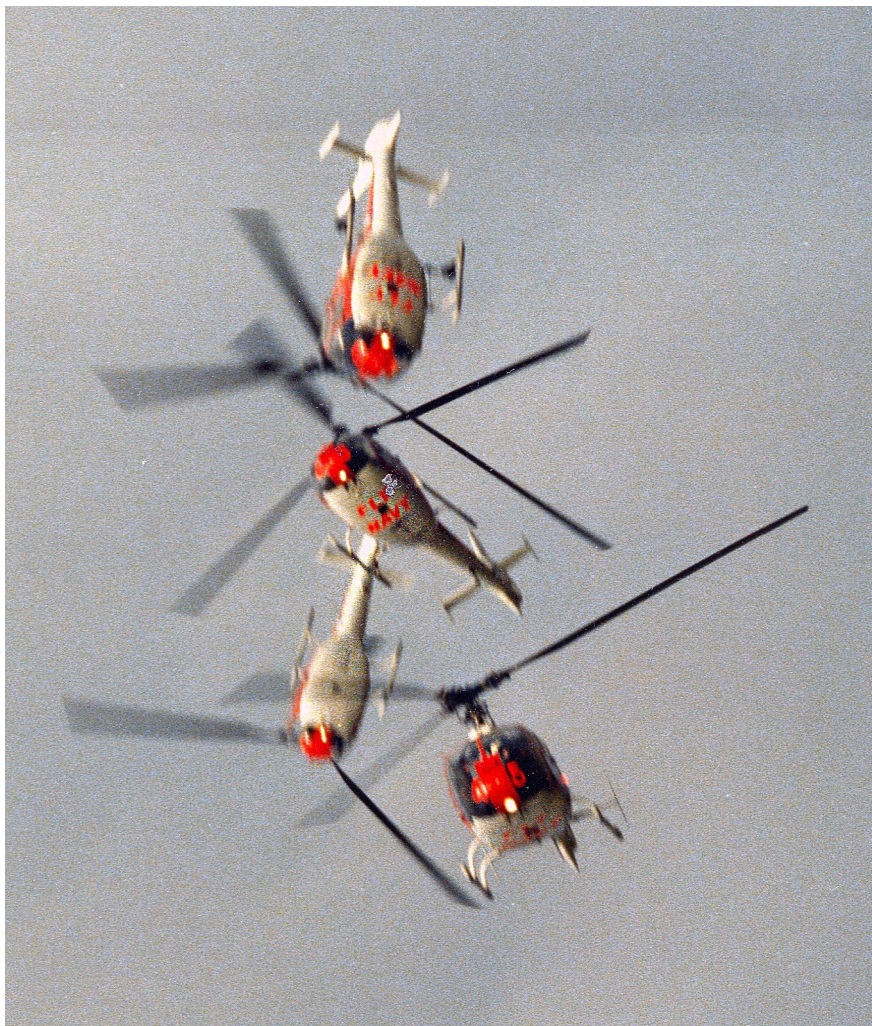
Green and red smoke was strapped to the



Jack Kinross



Vince Di Pietro



The cross-over manoeuvre demonstrated by 'The Sharks'

skids and was activated by a wire from the cockpit. An orchestrated musical/scripted commentary was included in the 1983 display season.

By this stage commercial organisations saw value in sponsorship but the RN was not at all comfortable with this. In any case the team was able to obtain a van and caravan, which became the “shop” at the main airshows where a collection of Sharks memorabilia was sold for charitable causes. Pusser’s Rum printing the posters and Marks and Spencer (one of UK’s major retailers) providing the flying suits. Publicity increased with an appearance on BBC’s Radio Road show.

In 1986 the team displayed at 30 airshows including the first continental show at Sanicole in Belgium. Success had bred success and the 1987 team displayed at 36 events at home and abroad. It was a very busy season with, on several occasions, two shows being covered per weekend and some shows carried out while transiting. There were two trips to Belgium, one at Sanicole and the other at Koksijde.

As the years progressed the selection process became more formalised and gaining a slot on the Team became very competitive. Usually the outgoing Team would fly with the “recruits” for the next year’s team and the selections were made before the end of that year. The Team was therefore ready to get under way when the season began the next year.

The 1988 season was very demanding and the decision was made to form a more flexible two-aircraft display team. These were sponsored by Pusser’s Rum and became known as the Pusser’s Pair.

Biggin Hill Airshow was generally on the itinerary. The team recruited the resident WREN staff officer as the PR member. 1990 was the 15th Anniversary year. The Sharks was one of only three helicopter display teams in Europe and was acknowledged as the Number One. In October the first reunion was celebrated with over 100 members and partners attending at RNAS Culdrose.

The following year saw another Aussie fly in the team—Jeff Kone-mann RAN. The team had, by 1992, a sponsored van and caravan, computer, blunderbuss mobile phones (the ones requiring a shoulder strap), video camera and flying suits. However the axe was hanging over the team. It did not help that the Sharks’ leader at the Culdrose Airshow made a late call for a manoeuvre and sprayed the Captain and senior officers in orange smoke resulting in a one-way conversation with the CO and a logging.

The Sharks was officially disbanded in 1992. But oddly enough, in 1993, the team was allocated the same number of aircraft, flying hours and pilots as in the previous seasons but no money. Tim Leonard RAN represented Australia in that season’s team. Sponsorship was raised and a very successful season was completed. As the Sharks did not exist officially the team was not allowed to display more than two aircraft at the same display (lest the public became confused and begin to think the Sharks still existed). Ironically this enabled the team to spread its talents more widely and display at four venues at the same time and with two pairs displays and two solos.

Tim Leonard RAN flew in a “pair” in 1993; he enjoyed the season immensely but was glad it was over as it was many, many



Jeff Konemann



A very unique flying shot of the 'Sharks' from an installed camera in the tail of a Gazelle

went on to lead teams multiple seasons. Sponsors included Breitling, Pusser's Rum, the Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association, and AgustaWestland, to name a few.

A local farmer, who had purchased an ex RN 705 Gazelle flew it into the Wardroom as a backdrop. Over 100 attended the dinner. The RAN CN provided a video of congratulations and several Aussies who flew in the Sharks during their exchange time, attended with their wives including Jeff and Wendy Konemann from Sydney, Bomber and Meryl Brown from Perth and Trevor and Judy Rieck from London.

In 2018 a new Sharks' Commemoration Wall was mounted in 705 Squadron at the No. 1 Flying Training School at RAF Shawbury (previously the Defence Helicopter Flying School).

Being in the Sharks provided an edge and a regular adrenalin rush over and above the satisfaction of daily training

weekends away from the family (and early morning starts).

705 Squadron continued on the same format for the next year for the team that did not exist. A new transit van and a wad of cash were secured allowing a full season of displays.

In 1995 Harry Butler was recruited into the non-existent Sharks. The format continued of two pairs and two singles and displays were conducted throughout UK and Europe, including all major UK air shows. An added bonus for the Sharks that season was that it unofficially reformed for a few shows such as Middle Wallop and RNAS Yeovilton.

In 1996 the RAN ceased its QHI exchange program with the RN and Harry Butler was the last lucky participant of this highly successful program that existed from 1963 to 1996 with 33 RAN helicopter instructors participating.

Finally in 1996, with the Sharks name being dropped, this still did not stop some spirited displays in UK. It was also 705's Diamond Jubilee and a four-ship display was formed especially for this commemoration. The finale to any two-ship displays this year was the "heart of smoke" with the teams using the call sign "Navy Diamonds".

The Royal Navy Basic Helicopter Flying Training transferred to RAF Shawbury. In October 1997 the Gazelles of 705 Squadron left RNAS Culdrose for the last time for long-term storage and eventual disposal.

Breitling's Sharks Reunion 2010

The 40th reunion was celebrated in 2010 at a mess dinner in the RNAS Yeovilton's Wardroom. Organised by Trevor Rieck (RAN, team 1975), now a long-term resident of London, Nigel Hennell, David and Dee George. Dee produced a magazine for the show. Both Nigel and David participated in early teams and

tasks and was a marvellous way to represent the Squadron, the Fleet Air Arm, the RN and the RAN.

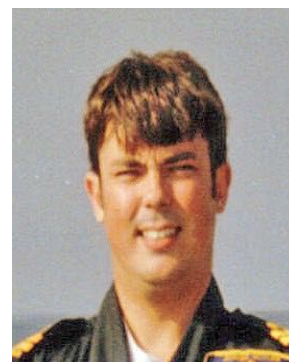
The Sharks' display routine was renowned for mixing together a range of different manoeuvres, comprising close formation, synchronised opposition and solo flying and was highlighted by the use of distinctive mix of red and green smoke and polished off with an orchestrated musical/scripted commentary.

The team operated successfully for the best part of two decades, appearing at airshows and events around the UK and near Europe. They were regulars at the largest shows such as the International Air Tattoo, Farnborough Air show, as well as Royal Navy organised events and the British Grand Prix.

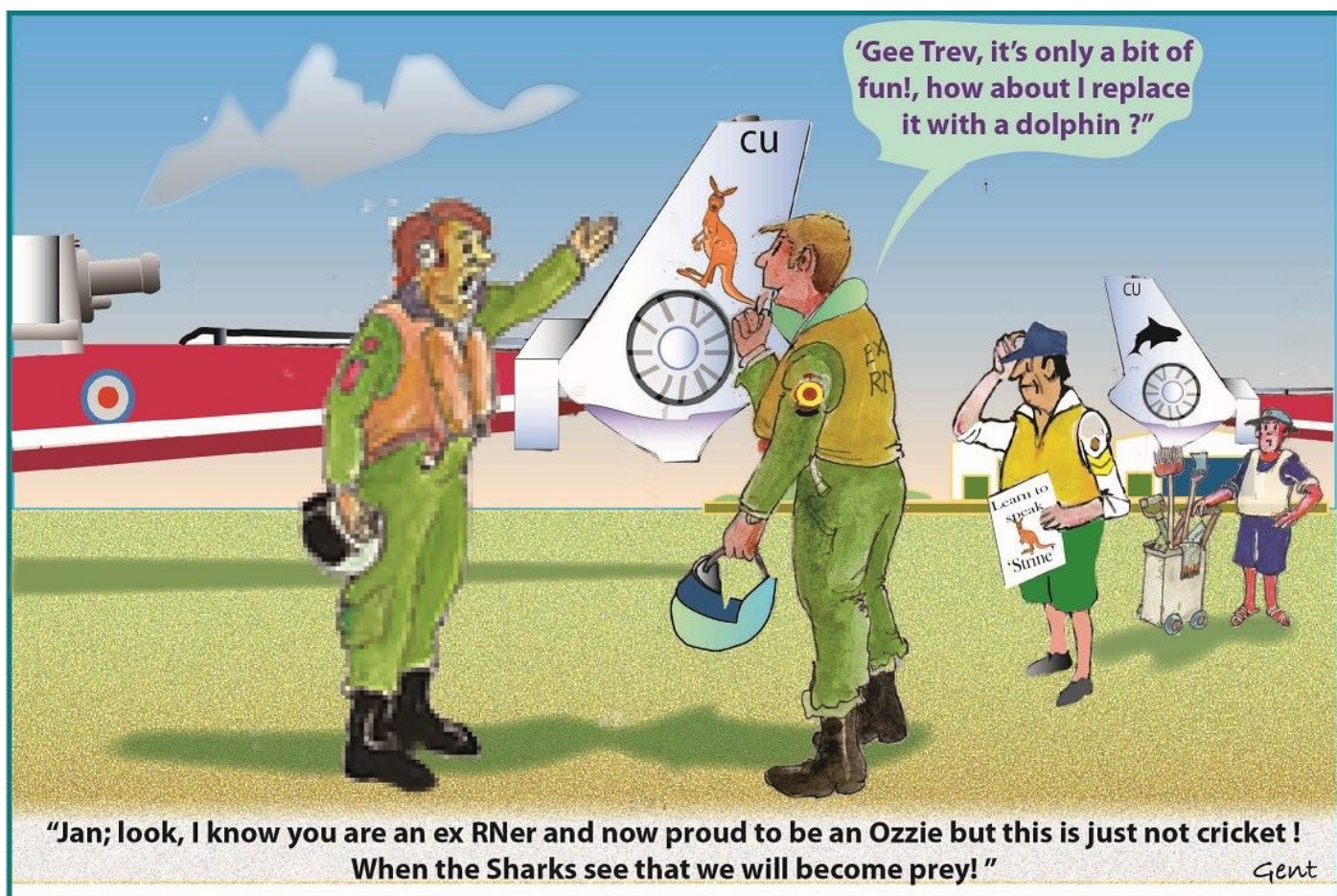
(A new RN Helicopter Formation Display Team was established in 2001 using two Lynx helicopters. Due to the transition within the RN from the Lynx HMA.8 to the Wildcat HMA.2, one of the Lynxes was changed to an AgustaWestland Wildcat. From 2019, the team operated only one aircraft. The RN confirmed that shows in 2020 also featured a solo display, but there is doubt that even occurred because of COVID-19 — A huge difference to 'The Sharks' days.Ed)



Tim Leonard



Harry Butler



It's on again! Please join us in celebrating

All Navy Reunion 2021

Website

(This takes online subscribers to the website to register. Hard Copy subscribers the URL is:
<https://allnavyreunion.com/>)

Where

Maroochydore, Sunshine Coast, Queensland.

Contact

0411 024 985 - Bill
0438 800 799 - Mark

Email:
allnavyreunion@gmail.com

When

All Navy Reunion will be held on 21st – 24th October 2021. The times have not yet been decided. Organisers will advise in due course.



Four Wessex of 817 Sqn embarked in HMAS Sydney enroute to Vietnam. Note: After lift in down position with guard rails surrounding the open space

The Dangers of Aircraft Carrier Lifts

By Kim Harris formerly of 817 Sqn

Sometimes it was easier to leave them in place. Otherwise they jangled around your neck like a hard plastic albatross, or they fell from the back pocket of your overalls onto the flight or hangar-deck, some clipped them around their head above their ears, but that was like wearing a hard plastic sweatband on your forehead. In this case, the leaving on was the probable cause of the misfortune to be told. What am I talking about? Ear Muffs!!

A Wessex was on its way down to the hangar on the aft lift. Bells rang whistles blew but ear muffs do their work and our mechanic, concentrating on the next aircraft he had to refuel, looked up too late to see the lift doing its work. He stepped onto nothingness. Two kinds of damage hit him.

The physical of course, even down a few feet onto a thick solid metal deck is a hard landing, but the embarrassment of falling into a trap for new players and ordinary seamen hurt more so. Even worse than the damage though, he missed lunch: not because he was delayed in the sick bay having the physical of the injury attended to, but because in shock and delirium at the bottom of the fall, he gave up his early scran chit. A hungry electrician (a greenie, not green about the benefit of an early scran) was first on the scene with an offer to take it off his hands '...considering you can't use it anyway now mate...', he became the grateful recipient.

When due back on deck, without time for normal scran, our mechanic relied on the largesse of the cooks to understand his predicament and relent with some roast beef he could drown in gravy and shroud in bread for a feed on the run "Come on there's plenty still there you blokes, have a heart." His second mistake within two hours: don't question the exist-

ence or otherwise of a cook's cardio organ: for they are all heart. "Piss off, or get a plate and eat like a civilised birdie, or is that an oxy-moron?" Our mechanic settled for bread, extracting from it all the glistening dead weevils he could find while on the run.

His absence was noted by, but not explained to the Petty Officer supervising the watch. Our mechanic tried to undo the damage done, but as crumbs spattered the P.O's face, the defaulter foresaw extra duty coming his way. He swallowed more than he could chew, choked and without words, thrust into the PO's hand the sick bay's chit he'd just remembered given him as he was discharged from there.

"I can't read this...what's it say?" "I fell into the liftwell, I'm bruised to blazes and concussed - the SBA says I'm excused this watch PO." "Sorry mech, it's all smudged with some brown goo and I still can't read it. And you've got the next watch too for being so bloody stupid, falling into the well, just like pussy. Didn't you hear the bells and whistles?" "Had my muffs on, sorry PO." "So over your eyes too apparently?"

Our mechanic dutifully and simultaneously reluctantly (if such is actually possible), returned to refuelling and pre-flight checks of a Wessex - with his muffs around his neck. He looked forward to a brew and sympathy from his squadron mates at the end of his double shift: it could've happened to anyone. There would be no need for explanation to them.

The story of his fall from grace beyond mere scuttlebutt, now a universal truth across all 'Squadrons and general service sailors' on board the carrier. Even so, when he eventually did return to HS 817's mess at 4DP, some compassion flowed toward him, with flying over, the expected brew was replaced by beer. Reschs Pilsener, smokes too were offered up as consolation for injury and embarrassment suffered, but understanding was absent. "Who'd be so out of it to give up an early scran chit?"



Sea Venom lowered to Hangar Deck on after lift of HMAS Melbourne



Hawker de Havilland Vampire Trainer— Red Light

Both Toz Dadswell's final lines (*Slipstream Vol 31 No.3 Sep 2020*) on page 21, where he mentioned Hawker de Havilland (HdeH), and Brian Dutch's Vampire Trainer stories on pages 30 and 31, brought back to me memories of a day in February 1960.

At the time the Vampire Trainers on 724 Squadron were often used to accompany Sea Venoms on training exercises when two specialist All Weather Fighters were unnecessary. On one such sortie I was flying a Vampire on a Formation Flying Exercise (Battle Drill), accompanying a Sea Venom, when my aircraft experienced an electrical generator failure. Because the Vampire had only one generator, this quickly led to an electrical system failure. I advised my flight leader (in the Sea Venom) of the problem and informed him that I was returning to base for a precautionary landing.

My radio then started to fail, so I selected "wheels down" and asked my flight leader to request, on my behalf, a "straight-in" approach for landing. To my concern, I saw that my landing gear indicator showed that my left main undercarriage appeared to be unlocked (i.e. a RED light). I recycled the undercarriage several times but the red "unlocked: light only appeared to get even brighter! I reported the situation to my flight leader, who flew close to me for a visual inspection. He called up to tell me, and NAS Nowra, that the undercarriage "appeared to be in the locked down position". At this point I lost all radio contact.

Because of the uncertain undercarriage situation, I abandoned the plan for a straight-in approach and, instead, first carried out a low pass close to the Control Tower, confident that Air Traffic Control would have cleared all other aircraft out of the landing pattern. Air Traffic, after a visual inspection through binoculars, flashed me a green light, so I positioned for a landing on 08 runway (the West-East runway that crosses the threshold of the South-North 03 runway).

Still quite concerned at the cockpit indication of an unlocked Port undercarriage, I touched down as smoothly (of course!) as I could manage on my Starboard main wheel and held the aircraft nose and

left wing up for as long as I could. I must say that I was not surprised to see the left wing drop down and hit the runway. This caused the aircraft to spin off the runway in a cloud of dust, to come to rest a short distance off the runway. Needless to say, because of the normal aviator's concern about aircraft fires after a crash landing, I did not hang about after shutting down.

From my position about 50 metres away from the aircraft, I saw the Crash Rescue vehicles, Ambulance and Fire Tender leave their positions near the 08/03 runway intersection and come charging down the dirt track to the "crash site". The Fear-nought-clad crews dismounted and ran to the aircraft to rescue the cockpit occupant and were puzzled, to say the least, to find an empty cockpit. Clearly, because of my high speed exit and world-record sprint away from the dust cloud, no one had seen me leave. It looked funny to me, but perhaps not so funny to them!

The whole point of this historical ramble is that the subsequent aircraft accident investigation discovered a riveting "dolly" wedged in the undercarriage, preventing it from locking down. The dolly was clearly labelled "Hawker de Havilland". After an HdeH deep maintenance overhaul of the Vampire Trainer at Bankstown, it must have been lurking in the vicinity of the wheel-well for a considerable period, including for a number of maintenance test flights, I am not sure just when "Tool Control" was introduced into the RAN aircraft maintenance system, so as to minimize the risk of such maintenance errors, but it would seem that HdeH did not have such a programme at that time.

John DaCosta

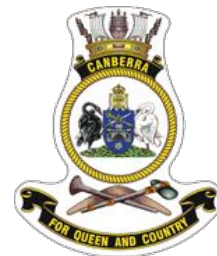
WANTED AVIONICS VOLUNTEER

HARS based at Albion Park NSW are trying to get/keep the former RAN Historic Flight Iroquois airworthy again but are desperate for the skills and experience of a UH-1-qualified avionics maintainer.

If any of you know of such a volunteer, please let Michael Hough HARS NHF Director (0418 424 748) or Greg Morris (0403 075 270) know.



Letters to the Editor



The End of the Tiger

Anyone who has ever served in the Navy, or indeed in any military force will be well aware of the omnipotence of the "pusser's store" or its equivalent and the power of "stores sheets and lists".

These can create something from nothing by a simple entry and conversely can cause items from boots to battleships and even personnel to vanish completely and cease to exist by the removal of their documented presence.

In my time and probably to this day to physically possess such a non existent item was a strong ambition as witnessed for example by the almost instantaneous disappearance of clocks from crashed aircraft almost before they had come to rest.

On the other side of the coin there is the trauma of trying to persuade the Stores Branch that an item which it finds on one's personal sheet was never there at all or had been returned.

The episode of the Tiger Moth remains fresh in my memory and is a classic example of how, given careful planning, advantage can be taken of the bureaucratic system as it related then and now in respect to stores sheets.

In early 1944 I was DLCO in HMS *Ravager* which at that time was blessed with the privilege of receiving the first deck landings of pilots in the final stage of their training.

Most weekends were free and the ship either moored in the Clyde off Greenock or occasionally anchored in Lamlash harbour at the South end of The Island of Airan. Consequently many weekends were spent ashore either by flying off to Abbotsinch or even as far as the Naval Air Stations on the east coast.

The story involves some very clever and cunning espionage by the Commander 'F' who established that there was a Squadron shore based at Abbotsinch which had a Tiger Moth and that this did not appear in this Squadron's stores records. Perhaps it had been stolen, perhaps it had been pranged written off and clandestinely restored.

Whatever, the plot was hatched to make off with this machine and fly it to the ship for use by the staff

aviators as might be convenient. That this could be done without any rebounding consequences was quite clear since it officially didn't exist and this being so its theft or loss couldn't be reported. Further, if carefully done and everyone kept their mouths shut, nobody would know to where it had been spirited away.

Careful measurements had been made of the hangar lift clearances and it was established that there would be no problem storing it in the hangar deck. There remained only the act of larceny to be effected without detection. To this end 'F' applied his social skills during one weekend ashore and by way of suitable alcoholic encouragement found that the short Squadron had a planned exercise during the following week involving the whole strength which would be absent for a full day. Accordingly about mid morning on the day concerned a Swordfish left *Ravager* containing 'F', a pilot and a mechanic, landed at Abbotsinch, checked and started the Tiger Moth and flew it back to the ship.

In all this, with hindsight, it would have been certain that the Captain knew of and condoned the action and it would seem that he was far more human than appearances would indicate.

Having no hook meant that the flight deck party was detailed to place themselves abreast the Bridge and catch and restrain the Tiger Moth which had a stalling speed of the order of 40 knots and would not be travelling at more than trotting speed at this point. In fact if not restrained it would probably stop anyway.

After a few weeks of 'ownership' and some spare time use, the ship was anchored for the weekend in Lamlash harbour and being a Sunday with no dissipatory pursuits available to us subsequent to Divisions and a brisk 20 knot wind holding the Carrier by its mooring direct into the wind, it was decided to indulge in some recreational aviating prior to the lunchtime gin session.

So sufficient members of the handling party and a few pilots were assembled and off we went for a few circuits and landings. After a few it became my turn with another in the front cockpit.



Letters to the Editor



The Tiger Moth being prepared for hoisting onto the Flight Deck

All went well until the landing. That was when things went wrong through no fault of ours and it may be that the rum ration had been issued whilst we were airborne or Murphy produced one of his Laws. The landing made, and trundling up the deck, the handling party on the port side caught and restrained the port wing but the starboard crew missed with the inevitable result that the Moth, without brakes, turned sharply through 90 degrees and hopped over the side into the harbour.

Sutton harnesses being what they were the impact from a fall of about 65 feet had little effect but the sudden contact with icy water was worse than a physical blow. The Moth floated for a few minutes and we both shot out of the cockpits like jacks-in-the-box. I pulled the 'chute which was part of the sit down portion of the seat out of the wreck, inflated the one man dinghy which was included and used it until a ship's boat picked us up.

That was the end of the "Tiger which never was" although it was secured before totally disappearing and hoisted out and stripped for parts. I have a photograph of the poor thing all bent and shattered being hoisted inboard and sitting with drooping broken wings on the deck.

The only damage suffered by us was to our best No.1 uniforms which were never the same again despite every effort to rehabilitate them. One compensation was that the two of us after cleaning up

and donning our No.2 uniforms were invited to the Captain's quarters for a private gin session. Probably he was relieved that we hadn't drowned or he would have had difficulty explaining away the circumstances to the High Brass.

The episode confirmed our conclusions that we had been saved for something worse or perhaps the now rescinded principle of the time that "crime doesn't pay" had manifested itself.

Bill Wilson

(This letter was originally included in Slipstream several decades ago by LEUT (A) Bill Wilson RNVR. But, as I found it so interesting and following on from the Tiger Moth story by the late LEUT 'A' Basil Nash RN 'Slipstream Sep 2019—Flying the Tiger Moth' I decided to run it again. Ed)



Due to the popular demand the FAAAA has organised another batch of Fly Navy stickers. They are self-adhesive, made of high quality fade-resistant vinyl, and are 200 x 60 cm in size. See image above for the design.

On the printer's website they were a prohibitive \$5.50 each, but our buying power means we can do them for just **\$1.50** each inclusive of domestic postage (minimum order 5) or **\$1.40** each if you order 10 or more.

The last batch went like hot cakes so don't delay if you want any. Simply send the Webmaster an email [here](#), advising how many you want. He will respond with payment details and will post them to you once he has your money. They are in stock and available for immediate delivery.

Marcus Peake, Webmaster



Letters to the Editor



From Observer to Civil Air Traffic Controller

The *Slipstream* in recent times has stirred nostalgia due to articles and names familiar to me. I would like to remind shipmates that I am still alive and active enough to get onto the bowling green at least three times a week.

I noted in the September issue 'Blue' Boulton came out of the woodwork with an interesting letter. He mentioned Cyclone Tracy. The message from the Conair Heron about the cyclone destroying Darwin was transmitted by another Air Traffic Controller Tony Frodsham (deceased) who was an ex RAF pilot. I was Supervisor of Darwin ATC at the time.

Yes, recent publications of *Slipstream* have caused a flood of nostalgia bringing back memories of events now more than 70 years old. The articles about both number one courses of aircrew and naval airmen is worthy of mention. In a way they were a resume of my experiences. I joined in September 1948 one month after the commissioning of the FAA as a naval airman. One could say nearly a pioneer. Those from the first courses are familiar faces, especially that of Keith Charles Marly Potts who became a close shipmate when we commenced aircrew training in 1950.

My first appointment to a squadron was 817 with John Goble as CO and one of the line pilots was 'Lofty' Lane from number one aircrew course. Norm Lee too was in 817 who qualified from number three aircrew course. It is interesting that before joining up I made an attempt to sign on as a recruit rating pilot. I was rejected appropriately due to immaturity. If recruited I would have been on three course because I remember Ron Gleeson was there. He subsequently was on number three course and regrettably was killed in a Sea Fury accident at Beecroft Head Range in 1955. We both had a first born on that fateful day, him a son and me a daughter. I also made the mistake of admitting I was going to join up anyway.

The year 1955 was very memorable when many Australian FAA personnel were drafted to UK to take delivery of new type aircraft. I was privileged to be one of 'Snow' O'Connell's 816 Gannet boys. There are few of us left. As I write I am aware that Norm Lee, John Sutcliffe and I are still breathing. Is Brian Farthing still about the place? Sadly Haddon Spurgeon has recently passed on. I can boast of serving in all of the three carriers, HMAS *Sydney* as a naval airman in 1950 as a Met rating with the likes of George Self as a mess mate and then later served as aircrew. The other two ships were HMAS *Vengeance* and HMAS *Melbourne* serving as aircrew!

The navy injected aviation into my blood and after leaving the navy I became a Civil Air Traffic Control-



ler. This was like still being in service again. My superiors were nearly all ex RAAF aircrew with WW11 experience mainly Lancaster crew. They tolerated my naval background and helped me to achieve in that profession. I have now been retired for over 35 years and in good health. Attached is a snap of Jan Cupitt a life member of the Yungaburra Bowls club awarding me the Patriarch Badge which is an honour given to those who still can play bowls at age 90 or more.

I have always judged VAT Smith as one of the finest officers who have had authority over me. My first experience of him was when he was Executive Officer of *Sydney*.

I also held Butch Haines in high esteem. He was a Swordfish hero. It was only years later that I learnt that Geoff Gledhill was involved with Barracuda attacks on the Tirpitz in 1944. The ship was damaged and kept out of action for some time. I enjoyed my 40 odd hours in the Barra when doing Observer training at St Merryn with Keith Potts John Dudley and Roy Prior. We were never scrubbed from pilot training but volunteered from eight NAC when there was a need to increase Observer training. We fancied the trip to UK. Neil Ralph was in that category and after observer training completed pilot training. Neil joined us in Goble's 817 and I miss understood his name. I called him Ralph. He must have thought I was exercising my few months' seniority. I soon realised my error when he started to call me Lord. Although I am living in FN Queensland I am member of the SA Division. I am a native of SA. I signed up in 'Torrens' for twelve years. Up until I signed up the recruiting staff was kind and considerate. I have no idea why their personalities changed there after? On arrival to FND falling in three thick outside the Master of Arms Office PO Buck Rogers opened the welcome remarks with 'you are going to learn to hate me'! So long ago!

Barry (Dooley) Lord

Oh...What a Ride!!



A French defence contractor riding in a Dassault fighter learned the hard way that the black and yellow handle between his legs was actually the ejection handle!!

*By Ezra Dyer
of Car and Drive
located [here](#)*

- A French defence-industry employee about to retire was gifted something he was extremely reluctant to accept: a ride in a Dassault fighter jet.
- The 64-year-old was not correctly instructed, to say the least, in passenger etiquette, and to make a long story short, he self-ejected mid-flight.
- He's okay, according to the government's incident report, but the chance of this gentleman ever repeating the stunt is definitely zero.

Imagine: You work hard your whole life in the French defence industry, and when it's time to retire, your co-workers want to give you something more memorable than a gold watch or a set of golf clubs. So they set up a coveted back-seat ride in a Dassault Rafale B fighter jet, the kind of perk that requires serious connections.

Just one problem: nobody asked one particular 64-year-old civilian whether he ever wanted such a ride, or showed him much about what to expect. Next thing you know, the French Investigation Bu-

reau for State Aviation Safety (BEA-E) is issuing a report explaining how Monsieur Newbie came to experience not only the Dassault, but also its Martin-Baker MK16 ejection seat.

Well, mistakes were made. Lots of them. Since this treat was to be a surprise, the recipient didn't get much of a briefing on what to expect. His g-suit pants weren't on correctly, his seat harness wasn't tight, and his helmet—and oxygen mask—were unbuckled as the plane taxied to the runway at Saint-Dizier 113 air base. He was so nervous that his heartbeat was around 140 beats per minute just from climbing into the air-



**Martin Baker Mk 16
Ejection Seat**

craft. Our reluctant Goose did get medical clearance from a doctor, but only four hours before the flight, and with an important stipulation: no negative g's. The way the rest of this was unfolding, do you want to guess whether there were negative g's? Mais oui.

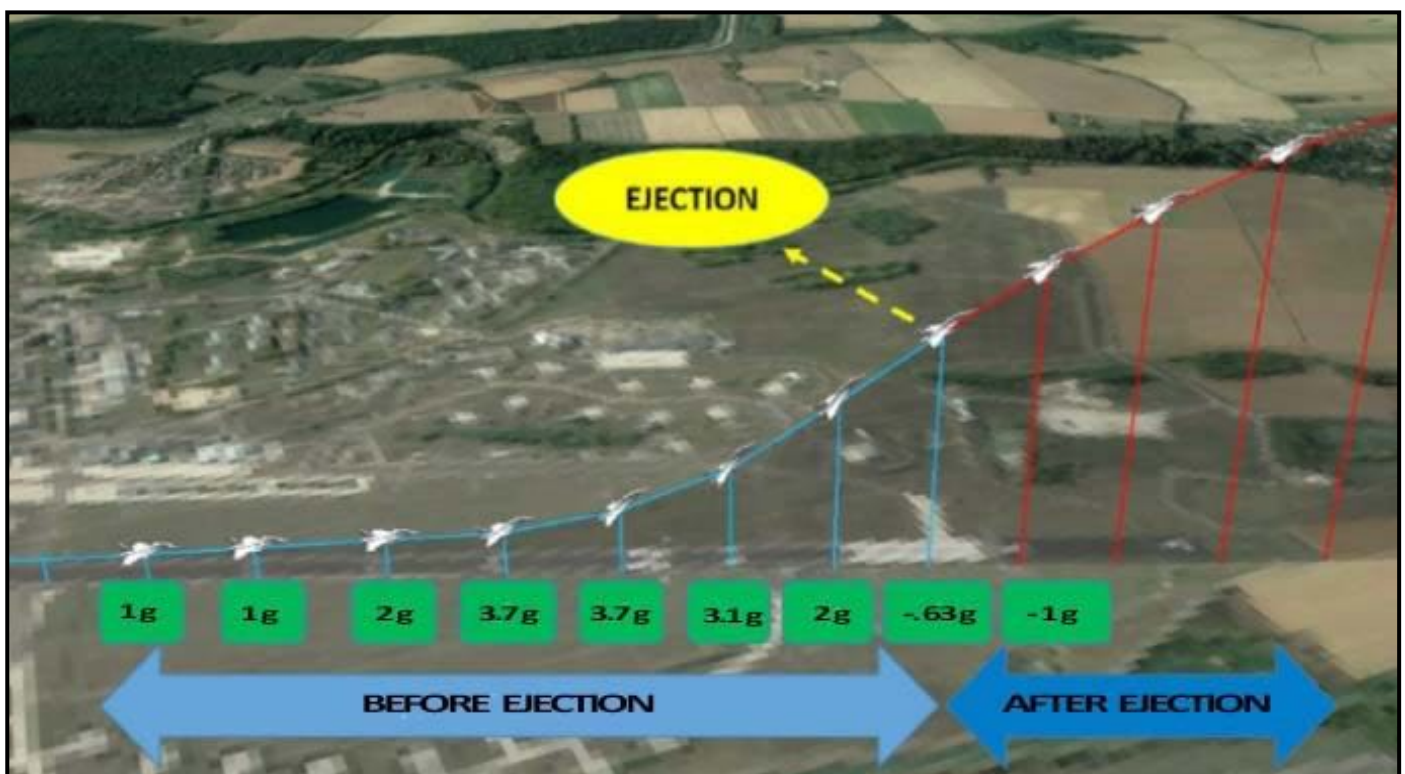
The fighter pilot, being a fighter pilot, probably thought he was taking it easy as he pulled into a 47-degree climb and generated a 3.7-g load. (Which, incidentally, was also beyond the doctor-ordered limit of 3 g's.) On the climb, both pilot and passenger were crushed down into the seat. But when the plane started to level off, things got real panicky in the rear seat, as a negative 0.67-g load caused the ill-buckled passenger to feel like he was about to fly out of the cockpit. Which, shortly thereafter, he did.

Apparently the quick and dirty safety briefing failed to properly emphasise the fact that the black-and-yellow striped loop in the middle of the seat, between his legs, was not a grab handle but the trigger for the ejection seat. The good doctor's g-load recommendations were surely exceeded as pyrotechnics blasted a hole in the canopy and rocket motors fired the seat and its terrified denizen out into the slipstream high above the French countryside.

Around about the time our hero took to the skies in his very own chairplane, the unbuckled helmet parted ways with the miserable noggin it was pledged to protect.

In a growing cascade of colossal fails, the next one was actually fortuitous: the pilot's own ejection seat malfunctioned. When either the fore or aft seat in a Rafale is triggered, the second one is supposed to follow automatically, on the theory that if one crew member makes an unscheduled departure, there's probably a good reason for the other to promptly join the exodus. And indeed, after the world's unhappiest retiree bid adieu, pyrotechnics blew a hole in the pilot's canopy. But the first ejection damaged the front seat, such that it didn't eject, and the pilot was actually able to land his now al fresco fighter jet. At which point the pilot beat feet away from the aircraft, for fear that the dud seat would, like so many flights, take off late. In fact, nobody was allowed near the plane for 24 hours after it landed, just in case the pilot's seat decided to go all Colonel Stapp and fire the rockets.

As for our unfortunate co-pilot, he made it to the ground with minor injuries and likely a keen desire to never hang out with his old co-workers ever again. Because, as the report notes, he didn't want to ride in a fighter jet in the first place. According to the BEA-E, the passenger "never expressed a desire to carry out this type of flight, and in particular on Rafale," but his cohorts offered him no chance to bail. Ultimately, he did anyway.



*The sequence leading up to the Ejection
taken from the French Government's Incident Report*

Procedure for Burial in Nowra Naval Cemetery

Some members have recently inquired into the procedure to be followed for burial at the Nowra Naval Cemetery. The undermentioned applies:

a. The legal representative of the estate of the deceased member or spouse lodges an application with Shoalhaven Bereavement Services (SBS) requesting burial in the Nowra Naval Cemetery (NNC);

b. All relevant fees are to be paid to SBS at the time of the application;

c. SBS forwards the application to Military Support Officer (MSO) at Defence Community Organisation (DCO)–HMAS *Albatross* who confirms the eligibility for burial in NNC and forwards the recommended application to CO *Albatross*;

d. CO *Albatross* approves the application and releases a letter to the legal representative of the estate (of the deceased) informing them of the approval and advising that person to liaise with MSO DCO-*Albatross* on any Defence specific issues;

e. The legal representative of the estate (of the

deceased) informs SBS that approval for the burial in NNC has been given;

f. At the appropriate time, SBS forwards the draft plaque or headstone inscription to MSO DCO-*Albatross*;

g. If required, MSO DCO-*Albatross* request approval from the Office of Chief of Navy for the use of the RAN badge;

h. As required, MSO DCO-*Albatross* coordinates chaplaincy services at the request of the family as required.

Shoalhaven Bereavement Services contact details:

Ms Pamela Green

Manager of Shoalhaven Bereavement Services

Shoalhaven Council

Worrigee Road, Worrigee NSW 2540 or

PO Box 42 Nowra NSW 2541

Tel: 02 4429 5781

Thinking of Writing an Article for Slipstream???

Spelling and style in many instances are largely a matter of personal preference. There are many modifications of English spelling so that even the purists can dispute “common usage” with hundreds of words.

However, ‘*Slipstream*’, the official publication of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia needs some degree of uniformity.

In many instances, one alternative is as correct as the other. But in a magazine as in a newspaper you have to come down on one side of the fence! ‘*Slipstream*’ seeks to attain a reasonable balance between dignity and simplicity. It does not object to any colloquialisms when these are apt, familiar, or without vulgarity.

Even slang is not ruled out but must be used with discretion and not in preference to established, unambiguous words. ‘*Slipstream*’ will not discuss politics or religion. Cartoons and jokes should be limited to FAA, Naval or Aviation.

Members will be allowed to express and give opinions. Where articles are sourced through other publications, then an authority to print must be obtained from the copyright publisher or writer.

‘*Slipstream*’ needs colour, zest, and vitality in our magazine presentation and interpretation. So, consider these when writing articles. Unless the

facts are guaranteed and rechecked and the sources of guidance trustworthy, let us lean towards three MUSTS: be accurate; be lucid; and be crisp.

DEATH NOTICES

CURRAN, Andy. Ex-RAN. Passed away at home on January 2021 at home. The funeral service was held in the Presbyterian Church Bicton (Fremantle), on Tuesday 12 January 2021 followed by a private cremation. Andy is survived by his wife Clair and family.

Keith Taylor, Secretary WA Division

NASH, Basil. LEUT (A) RN (Retired). Passed away on 7 December 2020 aged 95. Basil is survived by his beloved wife Sheila, father of Peter, Nigel, Martin, Daphne, Ian, Paul and Jill and their partners, and an adored grandfather and great-grandfather.

Marcus Peake, Webmaster

SPURGEON, Haddon. CMDR RAN (Retired). Died Mid-December aged 90. A funeral service was held on Thursday 31 December at the Mitchell Crematorium in Canberra. Haddon was the son and grandson and nephew of distinguished and decorated RAN officers.

Simon Cullen,

President of the Naval Officers Club of Australia

SUTHERLAND, Doug. Ex-RAN. Died 1 November 2020 at Chatham NSW. He is survived by his wife Rosemarie and family.

Ray Guest

A First for the RAN - All Female Aircrew Exhibit Skills in the Air!



Lieutenant Hannah Best, Lieutenant Rhiannon Thomson and Leading Seaman Clare Lassam, from 725 Squadron, in front of a MH-60R Seahawk helicopter (Photo Supplied: ADF)

***First Published online by the ABC
Story by Jessica Clifford ABC Nowra Reporter***

A Nowra-based crew has made history by becoming the first all-female flight team to operate an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter. The all-female crew is the first to have flown the MH-60R helicopters since they were rolled out in 2014.

Pilot Lieutenant Rhiannon Thomson, Aviation Warfare Officer Lieutenant Hannah Best Royal Navy and Sensor Operator Leading Seaman Clare Lassam, from 725 Squadron, flew the routine shift from NAS Nowra (HMAS *Albatross*) mid-January.

Lieutenant Thomson said it was a coincidence the team were rostered together.

"It was nice to get out with my peers and do what we do every day," she said.

"We just don't always get to do it with an all-female crew because we are in such small numbers."

Lieutenant Thomson said when she began her training as a pilot in 2016, there were no female role models to look up to but it did not put her off her dream job.

She said gender should not be a barrier to a Defence career or in any other role.

"I think just through history it has been subconsciously programmed into us all, the types of roles men and women might go on to do.

"We are seeing more gender crossover in roles, but I think it is important to take the gender out of it and just encourage anyone to go and do what they want to do," she said.

She said she would encourage any young woman wanting to become a pilot to think about a career in the Defence Force.

Women make up 19.2 per cent of the Defence Force — each arm has a 2023 workforce target:

- ◆ Navy — 25 per cent
- ◆ Air Force — 25 per cent
- ◆ Army — 15 per cent.

Naval Aircraft Technical Training Begins For No.1 NAR Course

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

The NAR group disembarked from HMAS *Kanimbla* on 2 August 1948 and boarded a train at Plymouth rail station. After refreshments and a train change at Bristol, the journey continued, finally terminating at Nuneaton in the Midlands. From there they proceeded by road transport to RNAS Bramcote to begin naval aircraft technical training.

The journey to Nuneaton had occupied the daylight hours and the group arrived at HMS *Gamecock* (RNAS Bramcote), Warwickshire in the evening. They were taken to their quarters to unload their kit, then to a large cafeteria facility where a small greeting party revealed that the majority of establishment personnel were on main leave. However they had managed to 'prepare some food to satisfy any urgent need. With the exception of a luncheon snack at Bristol rail station, the last reasonable meal had been breakfast on *Kanimbla* before departing the ship.

Stunned disbelief followed the serving of their first meal at Bramcote, the main portion of which was a small cube of cheese, accompanied by a little salad. Although totally inadequate by RAN meal standards, the occasion brought into sharp focus the fact that stringent food rationing was still necessary in post war England.

Temporary accommodation had been arranged in large dormitories fitted out with single beds on the ground floor of Ocean block. This was one of several two storey buildings in the air station complex. Each floor included full toilet, bathing and laundry facilities; and each dormitory was equipped with a public address speaker which broadcast information related to daily routine and recreational music at other times. Not surprisingly the group was employed on cleaning duties around the establishment until main leave expired and normal routine was resumed.

All personnel were issued with a meal card for a specific calendar period. The card was printed with



***Airframe Instruction at HMS Gamecock (RNAS Bramcote)
given on a counter-rotating propeller Seafire***

boxes to represent the meals for each day and the routine required the card holder to enter the cafeteria via a control lane. Only when the card was marked for the meal was the holder permitted to proceed to the serving area.

After exiting the serving area with the meal and moving to the dining space, the servery could not be revisited without repeating the control lane routine, thus double-dipping was prevented. To ensure the

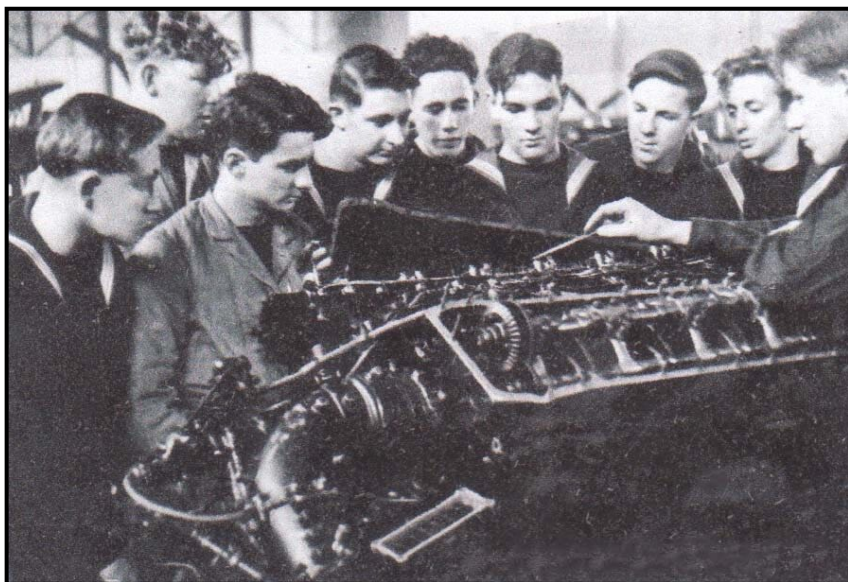
meal routine went smoothly, it was usually supervised by a member of the Regulating Branch. Although many meals lacked variety and quantity due to rationing, they were generally satisfactory with the exception of the first meal on arrival.

The NAAFI provided a canteen facility on all UK establishments where personnel could purchase a variety of small goods, toiletries and light refreshment. Mobile vehicle canteens were utilised also to service the outlying working areas between main meals. The canteen system was administered by the

Institute and staffed by civilians, usually women. "A cuppa cha and a wad, luv" was a familiar phrase uttered by RN sailors ordering a cup of tea and a cake or bun.

The parade ground was a large expanse of hard standing sited between the main accommodation blocks and the cafeteria. Classes paraded there at the start of each working day to be checked before marching to instruction. Ceremonial divisions were also conducted there. This hallowed ground played a big part in the disciplining of trainees. For those quartered in the main blocks, the shortest path to the cafeteria was across the parade ground, alternative being to take the longer path around the periphery.





Engineering Instruction also at HMS Gamecock (RNAS Bramcote) on a Seafire Engine (Griffon?)

The golden rule was that anyone wanting to move across the parade ground was required to double the instant his foot crossed the boundary. The area was kept under surveillance and those caught not doubling, or spilling tea while returning at the double from the cafeteria via the parade ground, were subjected to an extended period of doubling around it after working hours.

Prior to commencement of training the RAN group was split into smaller groups of three or four persons who were then distributed throughout the various dormitories in Ark Royal, Formidable and Illustrious blocks on remote Nissen style camps, Campania, Nairana and Vindex, located outside the air station boundary and accessible via the main gate. Camp accommodation was not as well appointed as the main blocks. Pot bellied stoves were provided in lieu of central steam heating and communication relied on phone contact in place of the Tannoy or public address system in the blocks. The purpose of decentralising the RAN trainees and placing them in dormitories with larger numbers of RN personnel was a measure to circumvent the likelihood of trouble developing, should they remain concentrated in one location. Apparently such a situation involving trainees from another Commonwealth country, had occurred previously.

A synopsis of course content follows:

Airframes - theory of flight; aircraft control; construction; control systems — mechanical, pneumatic and hydraulic; oxygen systems; undercarriages; fabrics; finishes; canopies.

Engines - theory of operation; types; construction; fuel, oil and coolant systems; ignition and starting systems; propellers.

Electrics - basic theory; power generation, regulation and distribution; test equipment; batteries.

Ordinance - aircraft gun installations; rockets;

bombs; depth charges; torpedoes; pyrotechnics; arming procedures; explosives handling and regulations.

Classes also received some instruction on ground equipment, aircraft ground handling, refuelling and hand starting a light aircraft. The latter was quite a novel experience requiring strict observance of a drill procedure by the cockpit occupant and the person handling the propeller. Pairs of trainees took turns at the cockpit drill and hand swinging the propeller. The former was reasonably simple but the latter required exacting attention to detail to avoid being struck by the propeller on start up. Positioning of the propeller blade, body and arms were important to ensure that the “starter” moved away from the propeller and not into it while

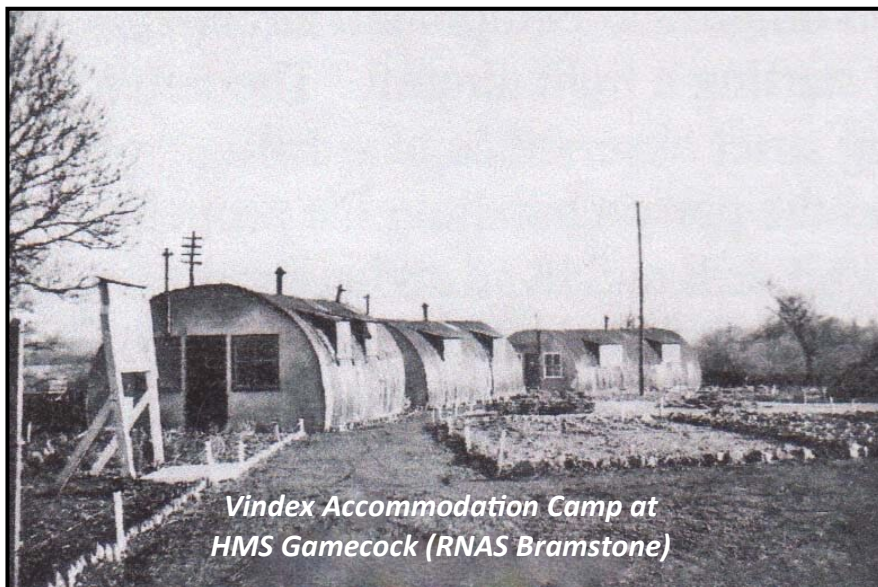
affecting the swing. The classrooms were located internally along one side of aircraft hangars that bordered the airfield. Aircraft, engines and associated equipment training aids were displayed on the hangar decks. Much of the equipment was sectioned to show the construction and internal details. Trainees moved between the classrooms and equipment in the hangar as required.

All classroom instruction was given by the chalk and talk method, students copying black board sketches and dictated notes into notebooks for future reference. There were no printed handouts, but the hardware was readily available in the hangar to enable the instructor to satisfactorily teach his subject. Classrooms were equipped with steam heated radiators which made the rooms warm enough on occasions to induce drowsiness, particularly when the instructor droned on for some time. One instructor's remedy was to make the offending trainee stand and hold a house brick in one hand with his arm outstretched at a right angle to his body; a few minutes usually sufficed. Doubling around the outside of the hangar was another penalty.

MEAL CARD. — Name *Schmidt*

564											
	B	D	S		B	D	S		B	D	S
1			1	11				21			
2				12				22			
3				13				23			
4				14				24			
5				15				25			
6				16				26			
7				17				27			
8				18				28			
9				19				29			
10				20				30			
								31			

Meal Card — 1948



*Vindex Accommodation Camp at
HMS Gamecock (RNAS Bramstone)*

After a few months, GP training was stopped prematurely and RAN trainees were once again employed on various non-technical assignments around the air station. One entailed digging potatoes in a nearby field. The RN had rescinded its GP training policy and introduced single trade courses for Airframes (A), Engines (E), Electrics (L) and Ordnance (O) categories. The RAN followed suit and A and E category courses were arranged for the *Gamecock* trainees.

The method of dividing the group to provide an equal number of trainees in each category was interesting and typically “navy”. The trainees were assembled in a drill hall with a line drawn to bisect the floor space.

Preferences had been noted earlier and staff had prepared a list for each category, dividing the group equally. The lists were read out placing one half of the group in the A category on one side of the line; the others in the E category on the other side. Ten minutes were allowed for those wanting to change category, provided they found someone from across the line willing to exchange places. After that time the numbers had to balance. Needless to say they did and the group departed to prepare for their revised courses.

As time elapsed a number of milestones were passed: Six months from date of entry the trainees advanced from the recruit stage and were promoted to Naval Airman 2nd class (NA2); coincidentally they received a pay rise to ten shillings (\$1.00) per day. To be educationally qualified for higher rank in the future, a pass in the Education Test 1 (ET1) was required. Instruction and the necessary examination were arranged and a majority of the trainees gained the qualification.

RAN representatives were located in Canberra House, Jermyn St, London and a liaison officer, Commander

V.A.T. Smith, visited *Gamecock* to address the trainees and ascertain whether there were any problems he might be able to resolve. One such problem was the need for an approved practical working dress for working on the aircraft and equipment in the hangars, in lieu of the No.3 uniform. RN trainees were issued with a blue twill action working dress comprising shirt and trousers. This more practical rig was eventually issued to the RAN trainees.

Another event occurred to further deplete the group. After notification that his father had suffered a serious illness and was no longer able to work the family farm, one trainee

was granted a discharge on grounds to enable him to return home and become the family breadwinner. He eventually returned to Australia in HMAS *Sydney* in May 1949. The group was thereby reduced to 57 trainees.

Single trade Airframes and Engines courses commenced with each syllabus content revised to include a more comprehensive study of the various systems and their components, otherwise the subjects were similar to those listed in the GP’s course. Some repetition was unavoidable for those who had already completed any of the subjects during the discontinued GP’s training. It also meant that the Electrical and Ordnance training already undertaken was of general knowledge value only.

Winter in the UK invariably brings snow and this was another unique experience. The first falls were enthusiastically greeted and the usual capers ensued: snowball fights and hastily built snowmen. The novelty soon passed, especially when the thaw left the grounds and playing fields uncomfortably waterlogged. At this time RAN trainees were issued with blue caps to be worn in lieu of their white caps for the winter months.



The Parade Ground at HMS Gamecock (RNAS Bramstone)



**Engineering Workshop with Trainees
Undergoing instruction**

Nags Head, returning before leave expired at 2300.

On occasions some chanced their luck to slip through the perimeter fence and cross a few fields to visit the Blue Pig near the village of Hinckley. At weekends leave could be taken from noon Saturday to 2300 Sunday, allowing ample time to visit nearby towns and cities. Coventry, Birmingham, Leicester and Tamworth were within easy reach by bus.

Long leave of 14 days duration taken twice per year allowed for a much broader compass with many travelling to localities in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. London was very popular. The extent of one's travels depended on available finances. It was an advantage to have resident friends or relatives.

To overcome the food rationing situation, food coupons were issued to cover the daily needs for the leave period for items such as meat, sugar, butter, eggs, etc. For those wishing to avail themselves of the facility, a food parcel containing goods not readily obtainable in the UK could be purchased from Canberra House, Jermyn St., London and gifted to friends or relatives. Canned fruits, butter, ham and fruit cake were popular choices. Those who wished to remain on board in lieu of travelling spent the time sightseeing locally, reading and relaxing to popular music like Nature Boy, Galway Bay, Buttons and Bows and Doggie in the Window.

The single trade category courses advanced with regular testing providing assessments of progress. The final test was completed in April 1949 and a pass was awarded to all RAN trainees. They had earned the right to wear a category badge consisting of the plan view of an aircraft above the letter A or E embroidered on a patch worn on the upper right sleeve of the uniform and working dress to signify the trade of the wearer.

Another feature of the discipline imposed at *Gamecock* required trainees to salute the quarterdeck when entering and leaving the establishment. The quarterdeck was a section of the road just inside the main gate, demarcated by two white lines. On 4 May 1949, after eight months, the RAN trainees saluted the quarterdeck at *Gamecock* for the last time as they departed for the next phase of their training.

Ceremonial Divisions was a celebrated event and the routine was practised every Wednesday at the morning parade. The trainees "fell in" on the parade ground in their various divisions in three ranks facing the dais. Following a divisional inspection and the order "The parade will advance in review order", they awaited a drum roll after which the band played the first fifteen bars of the tune, Nancy Lee.

At the first note of the band the parade began to advance fifteen paces, halting coincidentally as the band ceased playing. Further drum beats caused the ranks to open order march, right dress and await the reviewing officer's inspection, after which the procedure was reversed and the divisions finally marched past the dais with eyes right while the reviewing officer took the salute.

When executed in No.1 uniform dress it was impressive, particularly as most of the parade movements were carried out to drum beats and band music with few vocal orders. Ceremonial Divisions were held on Sunday mornings and special occasions e.g. Admiral's Inspection, replicating the practice routine with the addition of the ship's mascot. This was a well groomed gamecock resplendent with spurs, which occupied pride of place in a gleaming cage on a stand situated to the right of the dais.

Sport was an essential pan of the training curriculum. Rugby, soccer, hockey and netball were the main team sports played during the period of RAN training. The trainees participated in interdivisional sport within the air station as well as representative and district social competitions.

Those not required for duty could proceed on short leave outside working hours. On week days this usually constituted a bus trip of about four miles to Nuneaton to see a movie, attend a dance or perhaps enjoy an ale and a game of darts in the

NEXT ISSUE:
Practical Training; and
Type Aircraft And Engine
Specialist Courses

Further Development in Finding A Suitable Turbo-Prop ASW/AEW Aircraft



The prototype S.B. 3 'Jumbo' WF 632

Photo Shorts, courtesy Roger Jackson Collection

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

Short Brothers Eustace and Oswald began their aviation career in 1897. In 1908 Horace Short joined his brothers to form Short Brothers Aviation. As an aside, an interesting historical feature of housing a radar scanner and two operators the **S.B. 3 prototype (WF632)** was powered by two Armstrong Siddeley Mamba turboprops of 1475-

shp (1100-kN) and was first flown on 12 August 1950 piloted by **Tom Brooke-Smith**.

No doubt one of the most ungainly looking post WWII aircraft built (and they call the Gannet ugly) the **S.B. 3** did not meet the requirements nor was it operationally trialled for the ASW/AEW role and further development was discontinued much to the relief of Navy pilots, as by all accounts it performed and handled poorly, partly due to major stability problems associated with the downward directed exhaust pipes, trimming difficulties and asymmetrical problems.

Specifications SHORT S.B. 3

Type	Three-seat anti-submarine / reconnaissance strike aircraft		
Powerplant	Two single Armstrong Siddeley Mamba turbo-props of 1,475shp (1,100kw)		
Performance	Maximum speed, 320mph (515km/h)		
Weight	23,600lb (10,705kg)		
Dimensions	Wingspan	59.9ft (18.3m)	Length 44.7ft (13.6m)
Armament	Torpedoes, depth charges, flares and sonobuoys.		



The first prototype Fairey Gannet VR 546 type 'Q'.

photo Fairey Aviation, courtesy Ian Huntley

The Fairey Aviation Company

The **first prototype Fairey Gannet, VR 546 Fairey type 'Q'** also known as the **Fairey 17**, was completed at Hayes and began taxiing trials on 11 and 13 September 1949. Transported by road to Aldermaston it flew for the first time on 19 September 1949 piloted by Fairey's chief test pilot **Group Capt. Gordon Slade**. In its original form VR546 had no third cockpit and no auxiliary fins on the tailplane. After the completion of dummy deck landings at Boscombe Down on 19 June 1950,

VR546 became the first turbo-prop aircraft to land on an aircraft carrier when trials began on board **HMS *Illustrious*** piloted by **CMDR G.R. Callingham** initially and later by **LEUT. R. Reynolds and Peter Twiss⁽¹⁾**. During the following deck landing trials and under varying conditions, VR546 completed 27 deck landings and take offs in one day alone.

The Fairey Gannet had the unique distinction of being the first aircraft to fly with twin turbine engines driving contra-rotating propellers through a co

Sir Richard Fairey (1887 – 1956) founded the Fairey Aviation Company in 1916, since then and up to the design of the Fairey Gannet it has continued a long and successful association with maritime aviation. Among the notable aircraft was the Hamble Baby, the Fairey III series of seaplanes (also in service with the RAN) the Fairey Swordfish and the Fairey Firefly that the Gannet would eventually replace in RAN service.

Having been successful in its bid, an order for two prototypes was issued by the Air Ministry on 12 August 1946. Fairey's chief designer H.E. 'Charlie' Chaplin and chief engineer D. L. Hollis headed the design team





-axial shaft, and the first in British Fleet Air Arm service to combine its search and strike capability, (apart from external wing mounted bombs and rockets) within a single airframe. **Also, and an often neglected feature of the Fairey Gannet, it was to introduce a new method of aircraft construction. ‘Envelope Tooling’ was pioneered by Fairey Avi-**

ation, and would solve many of the problems associated with the continuous assembly of aircraft.

As with the majority of prototype aircraft VR546 was not exempt from teething troubles, stability and trim problems being the major factors contributing to its crash during take-off on 25 November 1949, repairs and



The third prototype, WE488 at Fairey Aviation.

Photo Fairey, courtesy Ryland Gill.

further modifications failed to completely cure the problem.

The second prototype, VR 557 flew on 6 July 1950 enabling further modifications to be carried out on VR546. Also a two-seater VR577 included the ventral radome (housing the search radar) omitted from VR546. However stability problems persisted with the second prototype, partly due to the ventral radome having been initially installed directly under the jet pipes.

Whilst cleaning out the garage and rummaging through my 'treasures' I came across a very interesting, if not impressive study of what seems to be the second Fairey Gannet prototype, from artwork by **Laurence C. Bagley** in his book 'How To Fly.'⁽²⁾ Of note there is no third cockpit nor auxiliary fins on the tailplanes, there are three intakes on the engine cowling, and wing 'fences' were also trialled. (See artists drawings on opposite page)

Several modifications were trialled on both prototypes. These included mock third canopies, moving the ventral radome further aft of the jet pipes, wing fences and even trialling a tailplane mounted on top of the fin, not dissimilar to that of the Fairey Barracuda. Finally finlets were incorporated on the tailplane together with the repositioned radome. It was in this form that VR546 outmatched the Black-

burn and Shorts offerings during competitive trials, resulting in an order for 100 A.S.1 aircraft. Further trials with VR546 to prevent tail sitting necessitated the main landing gear to be moved further back.

The third Fairey Gannet prototype, WE488 continued to be modified, and apart from minor changes to the rear canopy acquired the definitive shape of the production Gannet.

The first production Gannet AS.Mk1 **WN339**⁽³⁾ to incorporate these changes flew in June 1953.

(Notes:

1. *Peter Twiss was to set a new world speed record of 1,132mph (1,822 km/h) on the 10 March 1956. The aircraft was the Fairey FD 2, Fairey Delta;*
2. *'How To Fly' by Laurence C. Bagley was published in Great Britain by Blackie & Son, Ltd, Glasgow in 1953; and*
3. *A photograph of the first production Fairy Gannet featured in the aviation publication 'The Aeroplane' June 19, 1953 clearly shows the serial number as WN 339. H. A. Taylor "Fairy Aircraft Since 1915" also lists WN 339 as being the first production Gannet AS1.*

Obituaries

Lieutenant Basil Nash RN (Retired)

What more can be said? Marcus our webmaster has summed up Basil's unique life, eloquently in an obituary page which is located [here](#).

For those who have no access to the internet Basil died on 7 December 2020, aged 95. In his latter years he was a regular contributor to *Slipstream* and I had dealings with him up until the last few weeks of his life.

I learnt so much from him where he joined the RNR as a Cadet to completing his RN service in 1949. The RNR like the RANR (Seagoing) as Basil explained were Merchant Navy officers who joined the Naval Reserve. In explaining his training in HMS *Conway*, Basil said that in the mid-19th century, the demand for a reliable standard of merchant navy officers had grown to the point where ship owners decided to

set up an organisation to train, and indeed educate, them properly — the Mercantile Marine Service Association. This Association believed the RN had the best form of officer training and so adapted it. The school ships for most of their lives were lent by the Royal Navy to the Mercantile Marine Service Association.

So, Basil became one of the few RNR officers in the FAA. Most were RN or RNVR. He also stated in one of his earlier stories that he'd never sailed under the White Ensign. Finally, he was one of a limited number of FAA officers who ever flew the Sea Mosquito as a Sqn pilot.

I still have one more story of Basil's to include in *Slipstream*. This he provided just before his death. Hopefully, I can publish the article sometime this year. RIP Basil

Paul Shiels, Editor

Andrew Curran RAN (Rtd)

Andrew died on Saturday 2 January 2021 at home. He is survived by his wife Clair and family.

Andy was a Member of the 4th Contingent of the RANHFV – he was awarded the US Air Medal and a US Purple Heart.

Known as 'Warbadge', Andrew manufactured and supplied military paraphernalia between Australia and America.

His funeral service was held in the Presbyterian Church Bicton (Fremantle), on Tuesday 12 January 2021 followed by a private cremation.

Andrew's obituary is located on the FAAAA website [here](#).

Keith Taylor, Secretary WA Division

CMDR Haddon Spurgeon RAN (Rtd)

Haddon died Mid-December aged 90. He was the son, grandson and nephew of distinguished and decorated RAN officers. He was also the nephew of Air Commodore Clarence Spurgeon RAAF.

He entered the RANC as a Cadet Midshipman in 1944 and served in the RAN until 1977. Haddon trained as an RAN Fleet Air Arm Pilot and served much of his career at sea in HMAS *Melbourne* and at HMAS *Albatross*, including as a Fairey Gannet pilot.

Haddon was the first RAN pilot to command at sea, having served as XO of HMAS *Duchess* and CO of HMAS *Quickmatch*. His charitable trusts supports *Young Endeavour*.

He was cremated after a funeral service held on Thursday 31 December 2020 at the Mitchell Crematorium, Canberra. FAAAA obituary is [here](#).

Simon Cullen,

President of the Naval Officers Club of Australia

WO Doug Sutherland RAN (Rtd)

Doug died on 1 November 2020 at Chatham NSW. He is survived by his wife Rosemarie and family. FAAAA website obituary is [here](#).

Doug joined the FAA in 1959 from Yackandandah, Vic. He was a qualified motor mechanic and joined as a Naval Airman (Engines). Doug was among the original Tracker personal who went to the USA for 14 months in the late 60's. He is understood to be a former President of the Chief's Mess at *Albatross*. Doug was discharged in the early 1980's, and ended up at Chatham (near Taree) in NSW. *Ray Guest*

Next Issue:
***The Royal Navy's
Last Biplane Fighter***

WA Report for the period Jan-Mar 2021

By Sharron Spargo

While life here in the West continues to be little impacted by the Covid-19 virus, the rhythm of life and death also continues. On January 26 Margaret (Marg) Mayo (widow of Clive) lost her three-year fight with Pancreatic cancer. Marg possessed that unique, undefinable quality that made her a true friend to everyone she met, and this was in evidence at her funeral service which saw as many of us outside the chapel as were present inside. A much-loved woman of intelligence and courage who lived life to the fullest, was always up for a chat, a drink

and a laugh or a friendly ear or shoulder when needed. There is little doubt that Marg will be missed; she made an impression just by being the fun loving, friendly, caring woman she was.

Our Christmas party was a very well attended and raucous affair during which a well deserved award was presented to Dennis Nixon who received a Certificate of Service. Scotty, Annie and Tayla from Rosie O'Grady's received a certificate of grateful thanks for all the years that the West Australian division of the Fleet Air Arm Association have been made welcome there.

Stay safe and well, Sharron.



(Note: Captions not supplied by WA Division. . . .Ed)

SA Division Report for period Jan – Mar

By Roger Harrison
Hon. Whipping Boy SA



Well, here we are a quarter of the way through this New Year 2021 and has it improved from last year? Jury has not yet decided but I suspect it will be more of the same. Apart from the names of members who have “Crossed the Bar” recorded in the last Slipstream, I am hoping that the FAAA Deaths Recorded editor is now looking over his shoulder and wondering if he needs to re-deploy. We in SA had 5 Members who “Crossed the Bar” last year and that’s 5 too many.

Our year started on Sunday 17th January at our Picnic General Meeting held at the Wittunga Botanic Garden and somewhere here the Slipstream Editor will space out the photographs of that Meeting. I wish I could say that we were well represented with numbers, but I would be lying. Numbers were well down for various reasons and I can understand that. The Meeting took the form of a picnic on the greens with ducks and magpies at our feet. I took the Meeting and shortened it to essentials only, which proved correct as we were eventually drizzled on from above and a cold SSE wind. Members hunted around for blankets and spare jackets. The lunch was successful as was the truncated Meeting, refer photos.

John Siebert discussed the topics of interest from the October 2020 Federal Council Meeting held via “Zoom” which he thought was quite a successful format. He warned us that the price of this Slipstream may be increased to cover the shortfall. I do not have a problem with that. Soaking up all that history that has passed us by.

John Siebert proposed a motion to the Members present, that we forward a “one-off donation from this Divisions general account of up to \$1000 to assist the costs of rebuilding the Web Site”. The proposal was agreed by show of hands.

John Siebert also discussed ideas regarding the Wall of Service which was chatted over by members present. John will research his idea and present it to the Committee at the March General Meeting.

At the picnic Meeting, I firstly introduced Kalell (pronounced Kay-ell) Kemp, to Members present and he joined in with the general chatter. Hopefully some of the old sea dogs loitering around didn’t frighten him off. He couldn’t escape though, as I was driving him home. Kalell is our 16-year-old Associate Member to the FAAA. He will enter a different Navy than we did. Listening to Kalell and reading his achievements, I can see why I never progressed to be First Sea Lord. He has the drive and focus.

At the picnic meeting, I mentioned our new Member, Murray Staff to the members and hope to meet up formally at a Meeting or function.

I think Marcus has the SA Divisions meeting dates for the web page, if not, then drop me a line for those able to travel Covid-19 free to this State and wish to look in on one of our Meetings. On average, the Meetings generally flow well as does the beer.

Secretary Jan Akeroyd has suffered through having a nuclear pacemaker fitted and she agrees, it has improved her mood and hopes to be attending the next Meeting. From my experience, the secretary does all the work in any Division, so I will try to keep her workload as light as possible.

President Michael Stubbington (Stubbo) still has issues with knees and teeth, so he tells me. He has a strong dislike for doctors and dentists, so it isn’t going to be a great year for Michael.

Bob Scobie attended the picnic meeting, and apart from dodgy legs and a predisposition to fall over, he looked well as he settled into lunch with his favourite chilled chardonnay. May not be the legs after all?

Mal Parrington was absent from the picnic meeting, and the Minutes will show that I only rubbished him three times.

Sending cheers to my Queensland mates who haven’t felt slighted by my slings and arrows, mentioned in the Slipstream Magazine, and especially Phil Blakemore and Adrian Whiteman. Stay safe you guys and that goes to all Members nationwide as this blasted Covid-19 is not finished yet

Our March Meeting at The Windsor Hotel was SA Division’s Annual General Meeting. Prior to the meeting we had lunch with a couple of pints, then it was down to business. All Executive positions on the committee were declared vacant and all nominations put forward for a vote. A list of Committee holders will appear in the June *Slipstream*.

ANZAC Day Parade may or may not go ahead as planned and will depend on some old chin-less wonder with no real sense for ex-military types to gather. As 25 April approaches, I will issue SA Members, a Flash Message with all the details at hand.

So, polish up your medals and allow the camphor to be fully aired from your best suit. Hope to see you all there. Bring a friend.

Difficulty here, and I imagine all States are the same, is that this edition is forwarded to Paul Shiels weeks before publishing and you just know something important will pop up too late to be included here. If we survive Covid-19, then look in the June edition.

Finally, just a request that we all look out for each other and as the National President, Mark Campbell RADM, RAN (Rtd) stated in the last Slipstream edition, “Ask a mate, RUOK.”

Regards to you all.

Pictures of the SA Picnic Meeting - Page 44

Vic Elects Committee for 2021

By Mal Smith

Greetings to all members from the Victoria Division.

Since our last report we have managed to have our Christmas Meeting/Breakup and our AGM in early February. Our Christmas meeting was well attended with a few first time members attending and several who travelled from the country. Elsewhere in this issue are some photos of the day.

Our AGM resulted in the following committee being elected for 2021:

President:	Chris Fealy
Vice President:	Scott Myers
Treasurer:	Paul Thitchener
Secretary:	Mal Smith
Committee:	Rob Gagnon
Committee:	Ron Christie
Committee:	John Champion
Committee:	Ken Pryor
Auditor:	George self

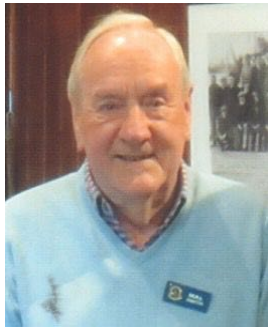
Many of you will know ex photographer George Self and ex Firefly and Gannet pilot John Champion. Both have been in sick bay recently and we wish them a speedy recovery.

As you will be aware, we have recently had another outbreak of COVID 19 and another lockdown. This has now eased and we are back to "Covid" normal conditions.

Once again the Melbourne ANZAC Day March has been cancelled with only a limited number, by invitation, able to attend the dawn service. In place of the march there will be a parade of Ship/Unit/Association banners along St Kilda Road to the Shrine. At this stage we are still planning on having our reunion at the Mission to Seafarers. We quite often have interstate members join us for this day and if any would like the details please contact me.

A discussion was held at our AGM on the problem all divisions and associations such as ours face of retaining and increasing members and indeed member participation in division activities. As we are all aware this is a problem regularly discussed at division and federal level. At the suggestion of committee-man Rob Gagnon, our committee will be meeting shortly to for a lunch/brainstorming session to see if between us we can come up with a few answers. Several members have already sent submissions.

I suspect that our situation is better than some di-



visions and it is not all doom and gloom. Last year, 2020, for the first time in many years every member from 2019 re-joined. Sadly several members passed away but we also had a number of new members join for a net gain. The challenge now is to improve again this year.

The State Government and the RSL have recently announced that the Victorian ANZAC Day march will now go ahead. Details are not available yet but members will be advised as soon as they are to hand. All that has been said to this stage is that the march will be as near as possible to normal.

Yours Aye

Pictures of the Victoria Division Christmas Luncheon 2020 - Page 45

Cheap Drinks!!

Four old retired Observers are walking down a street in Nowra. They turn a corner and see a sign that said: "Old Flight Crew Bar - all drinks 10 cents."

They looked at each other and then go in, thinking this is too good to be true. The old bartender says in a voice that carries across the room, "Come on in and let me pour one for you! What'll it be, gentlemen?"

The bar looks fully-stocked, so each of the four orders a Scotch. In short order, the bartender serves up the four Scotches and says, "That'll be 10 cents each, please."

The four stare at the bartender for a moment and then look at each other. They can't believe their good luck. They pay the 40 cents, finish their drinks, and order another round.

Again, the bartender pours four Scotches, and again, the bartender says, "That's 40 cents, please." They pay the 40 cents, but their curiosity is more than they can stand. They have each had two drinks apiece and they had spent less than a dollar.

Finally one of them says, "How can you afford to serve Scotch as good as this for a 10 cents a drink?" "I'm a retired Air Traffic Controller" the bartender replies, "And I always wanted to own a bar. Last year, I hit the Lottery jackpot for \$250 million and bought this place. Every drink costs 10c -- wine, liquor, beer, it's all the same."

"Wow!!! that's quite a story," says one Observer.

As the four of them sipped their drinks, they couldn't help but notice seven other guys at the end of the bar who didn't have drinks in front of them, and hadn't ordered anything the whole time they were there.

One gestured at the seven at the end of the bar without drinks and asked the bartender, "What's with them?"

The bartender replied: "Oh, they're all pilots. They're waiting for Happy Hour, when drinks are half price..."

Photos of SA's January Picnic Meeting



L to R: Eve Gray, John Siebert, Anna Siebert, sitting front Ruth Morris



**Back Row L to R: Michael Cain, Kathleen Cain, Kalell Kemp, Gordon Gray, Eve Gray, John Siebert, Anna Siebert
Front Row L to R: Bob Scobie, Doug Morris, Ruth Morris**



Above Left: Picnic in the Park



Above Right: Kalell Kemp, Roger Harrison,

Pic to the Left

**Backrow L to R:
Michael Cain, Kathleen Cain, Kalell Kemp, Roger Harrison, Gordon Gray, Eve Gray, John Siebert**

**Front row L to R
Bob Scobie, Doug Morris, Ruth Morris**



Who's Who at Victoria's Christmas Function



Left: Mal Smith and Paul Thitchener



Right: From L to R, Marion Earle, Rob Earle, Ron Christie, Val Christie, Shirley Thompson



Left: L to R, Ken Pryor, Chris Fealy, Kim Dunstan, Paul Thitchener



Right: Mal Smith and Brian Farthing



Left: L to R, Sandy Gagnon, Rob Gagnon and Scott Myers



Right: Allen Clark and Meg Clark

Australian Code Breakers

by James Phelps

Australian *Code Breakers* is the extraordinary story of Frederick Wheatley, school headmaster turned cryptographer who broke the German Navy codes in WWI. The author James Phelps is an award-winning senior reporter for Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sunday Telegraph* and author of several crime books.

Beginning with the attempted escape on 5 August 1914, SS *Pfalz*, a German merchant ship out of Port Phillip, was stopped with a shot across her bows from a shore battery. This shot was arguably the first shot fired in WWI. A few days later another German ship, the SS *Hobart* arrived in Port Melbourne believing war had not commenced. A clandestine operation carried out by the RAN resulted in the discovery of a German codebook aboard.

Wheatley's recruitment was followed by assembling a group of female German linguists. At the time Wheatley was the senior instructor at RANC Geelong who met all the needed criteria and more. He was asked by D/CNS, CAPT Thring, to decipher the codes. Thring also asked him to reproduce translated copies for Britain at the same time.

Wheatley discovered the codebook was virtually a dictionary. He relished the task, decoding that each word was assigned a ten-letter code in two groups of five. Without the key word, the message was nonsense. This codebook known as HVB had a two-part code, without the two parts it was very hard to crack. Wheatley and his team managed to achieve their goal by deciphering this code.

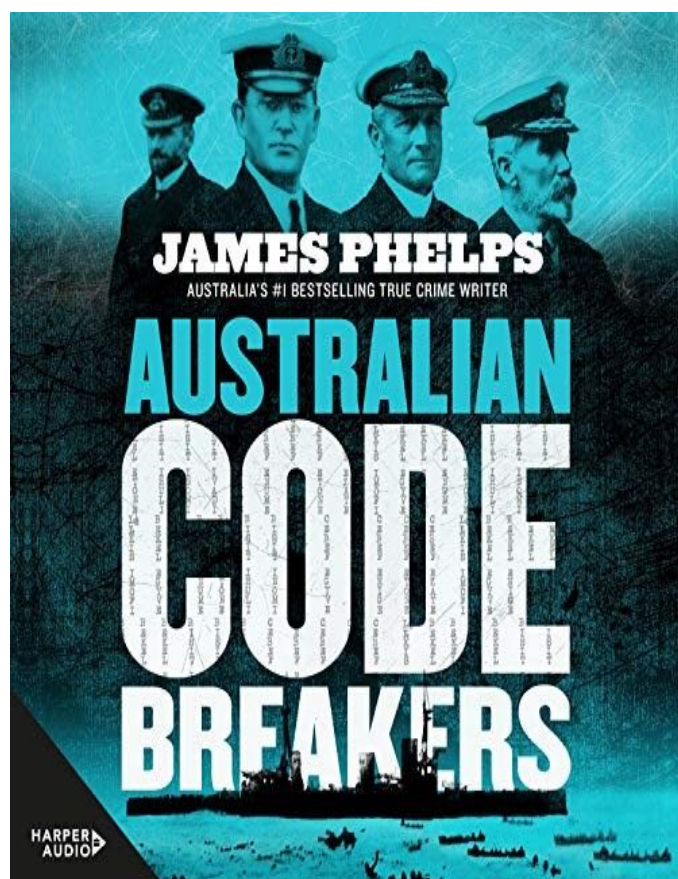
At the time, RADM George Patey Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet was searching for Germany's East Asia Squadron in the South Pacific.

Having broken the code Wheatley et al analysed and assessed, from coded signals that the main body of German warships intended heading for South America. However, the British Admiralty did not accept the Australian intelligence, resulting in a battle off Coronel. This cost Britain two warships and the loss of 1660 lives, the first battle the RN had lost in 102 years. The then First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill refused to accept blame.

Henceforth, the Admiralty took note of Australian intelligence! The First Sea Lord ADML John Fisher asked for 200 German code books for all RN ships. Germany continually updated their codes. On each occasion, Wheatley with the help of his team of women linguists were able to break the new codes.

The German Sqn's next objective was to take the radio station on the Falkland Islands. They were surprised to be faced with a large fleet of British

BOOK REVIEW



warships. The German Sqn was destroyed by the British Fleet in the 'Battle of the Falkland Islands.'

It wasn't until 1934 that Wheatley discussed with an Australian Newspaper, the events that occurred at the end of 1914. British newspapers interviewed CAPT Thring (living at the time in the UK) in 1936 and he verified the Wheatley story which prompted headlines in British newspapers: 'Coronel Disaster – Australian Advice Ignored' and more.

The book details the methods used for decoding, however, some aspects of Phelps writing 'style' and research proved problematic. Hence, inaccurate terminology and references of senior officer responsibilities regarding ship command. Other examples were: 'the battleship' HMAS *Sydney* (a light cruiser); referring to CAPT Thring then later in the book as CMDR Thring; also an 'RAN ship going to 'Battle Stations' (American) rather than to 'Action Stations' (RAN/RN). Frustrating also was Phelps use of the 'first person' in speech attributed to personnel, usually confined to novels in books rather than a recount of factual events.

However, aside from these minor irritants, the book is recommend to members for the insight it describes into a little known but important episode of World War I.

Paul Shiels

The Moth and the Mountain

by Ed Caesar

When I was a young buck in the Royal Navy, I briefly met Lieutenant Commander Ben Caesar, a fellow pilot. He was, I recall, a mountain of a man: tall, bearded and irrepressible.

Over forty years later it is strange coincidence that an adventure novel entitled *The Moth and the Mountain* should cross my desk, penned by his son, Ed Caesar. It is not about his father, who by then had lost his life in a tragic accident, but another irrepressible soul who took up flying - not for the love of it, as Ben had done, but as part of an impossible dream - to reach the summit of the world's highest mountain.

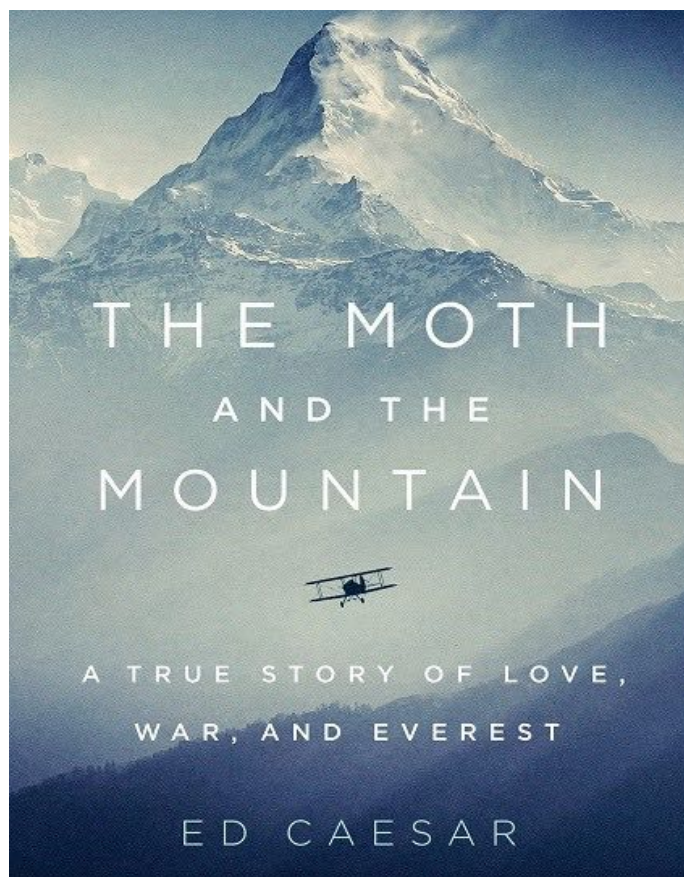
The canvas of the novel is of stunning breadth, from the textile mills of Bradford to the battlefields of France; the lonely hours alone in the cockpit of a Tiger Moth and then, ultimately, to the frozen heights of Everest where it reaches its thrilling conclusion.

The central character is Maurice Wilson, a Yorkshireman, born just before the turn of the century. He was drafted into the Army in 1917, missing the butcher's bill of the Somme but destined for the trenches, nonetheless. He was awarded the Military Cross for action at Wytshaete, where he survived innumerable odds - one of just a hundred of his original Battalion. He was later wounded and profoundly affected by neurasthenia, the early name for the mental turmoil known as shell shock. He emerged from the war broken, driven by a need to reach for something impossible to give direction to his wandering life.

His eyes turned to the mysterious heights of Everest, that tallest of mountains as yet unclimbed, and he resolved to be the first to do so. He was alone and had no skills, but was full of courage and resource. He could not journey legally to Nepal as borders were closed to him, so he resolved to fly there and bought his own Tiger Moth. He was derided and scorned, but pressed on.

Wilson was not a natural pilot. He struggled through rushed training to gain his private licence -

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and then, barely in control of his aircraft, set off from England. Over the next few weeks he navigated through Europe and the Middle East, fighting weather and British officials determined to stop his foolhardy plan until, at last, he touched down in Northern India, alone and broke.

The final chapters tell of his crossing into Nepal disguised as a monk and his lone assault on the mountain that had drawn him half way around the world - and there you learn of the outcome of his extraordinary adventure.

The Moth and the Mountain is more than just a good yarn, however. In its beautifully researched pages you understand the forces that drove an ordinary man to such astonishing lengths - the trauma and obsession, determination and perseverance, and the love lost. It is, ultimately, not just the story of an amazing journey, but of the human spirit that drove one man to achieve it.

Marcus Peake

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