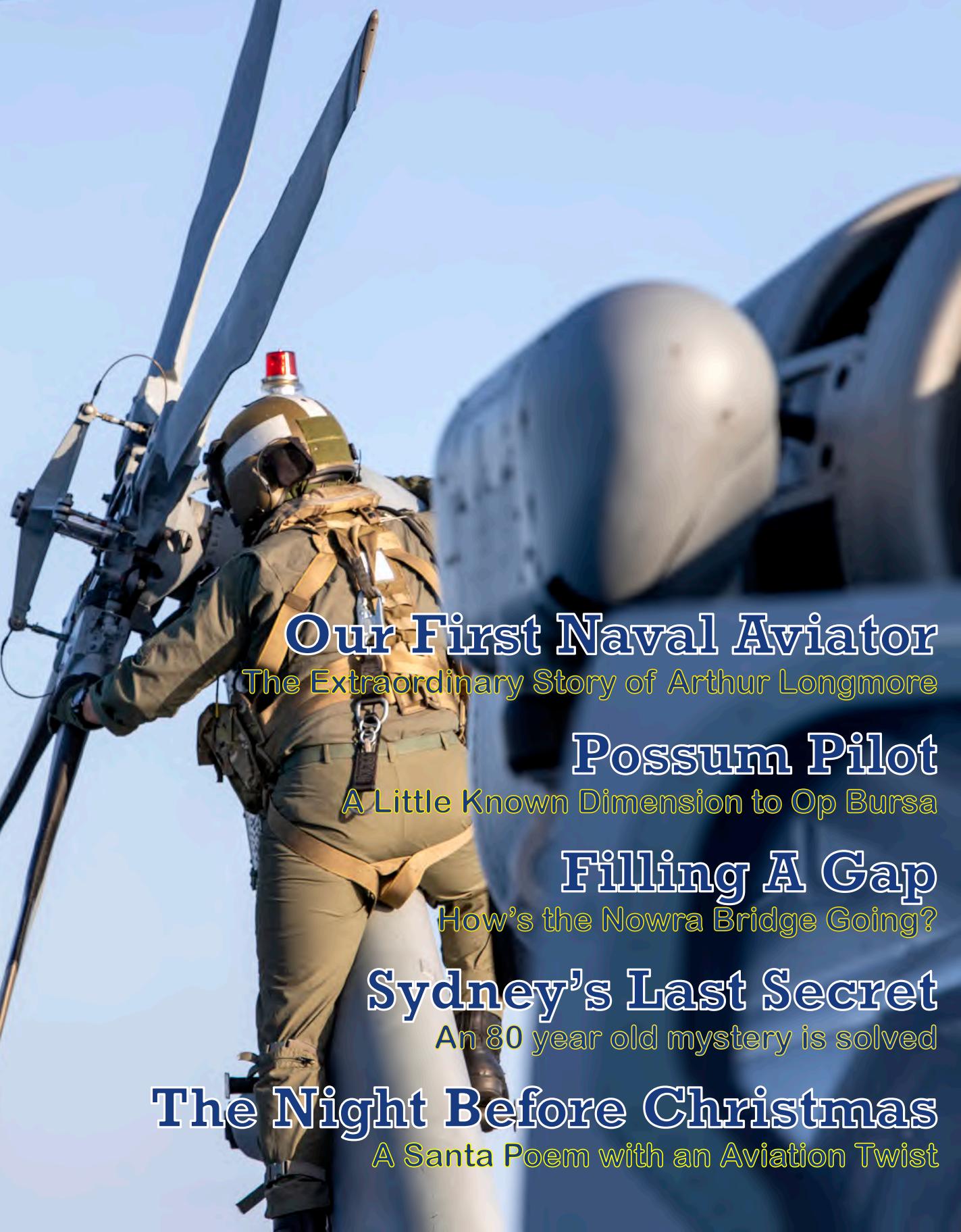




Edition 52 - December 2021

# FlyBy



## Our First Naval Aviator

The Extraordinary Story of Arthur Longmore

## Possom Pilot

A Little Known Dimension to Op Bursa

## Filling A Gap

How's the Nowra Bridge Going?

## Sydney's Last Secret

An 80 year old mystery is solved

## The Night Before Christmas

A Santa Poem with an Aviation Twist

# EDITORIAL

As we reach towards the end of what has sometimes seemed to be a very long year, it's worth reflecting on some of the positives that have come out of it.

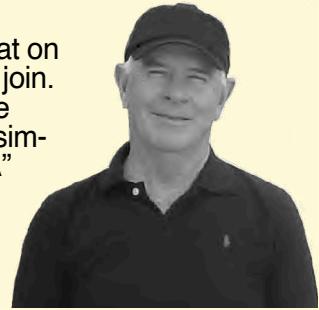
First, most people are out of lockdown at last, and some semblance of normality is returning. If you are double vaxed, you can travel within Australia to most States and Territories, eat out, go to the movies and visit friends. If you are not vaxed and have no medical condition that precludes it, then please - consider getting one! I type up Obituaries on the website all too often and don't want to see more names there if possible.

Second, we (most readers anyway) live in Australia which, despite the antics of a minority who seem to have an overrated sense of entitlement, has weathered the storm as well as just about any country on earth. If we all practice diligence and common sense then 2022 promises to be on the upward trajectory, in spite of the Omicron variant.

And third, the FAAAAA is growing! Only slowly, it is true, but we have reversed our downward path of the last four years and are showing a modest increase in our membership. There's a month left to cement this trend so please - if you are reading this magazine and you're not a member, then join up! It's cheaper than one cup of coffee a month and you should get no less than 16 (yes, SIXTEEN) magazines a year for your money as well as all the other benefits of our Association. That's got to be the best deal in the universe.

Also if you know someone who isn't a member, or who's never heard of us, put

your recruiting hat on and ask them to join. All the details are on our website: simply type "FAAAA" into your search engine and look for the "Join the FAAAAA" panel on our home page.



This edition of *FlyBy* is our fullest yet, with lots of stories, snippets, funnies and news items to (hopefully) appeal to everyone. If you like it, click [here](#) and tell me why and/or what you'd like to see different.

Over the next couple of months there will be some new material released for our "Heritage" series that will interest both fixed and rotary wing people, so keep a look out for that. Its going to be in an exciting new format too!

It remains for me to wish everyone a safe, happy and enjoyable Christmas...and please, don't forget to reach out to a mate who may be lonely in this festive season. Sometimes, just a simple "RU OK mate?" can make all the difference.

Marcus Peake, Editor. ♣



*Cover: Petty Officer Aircrewman Ian Gollop conducts pre-flight checks on HMAS Warramunga's embarked MH-60R Helicopter prior to a training flight.*

*Navy image. ♣*

*FLYBY is a periodical of the Fleet Air Arm Association. The views expressed within it are not necessarily endorsed by the Association or any of its agents.*

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# Sydney's Last Secret

*One of the wing-tip floats from HMAS Sydney's Walrus aircraft lies on the sea bed off the coast of WA. It was only found in a later expedition. Image courtesy of WA Museum/Curtin University.*



On the sandy sea bed off Western Australia, some 2500m below the surface, lies one of the floats of *HMAS Sydney*'s ill-fated Walrus amphibian. The image reminds us of the hundreds of young lives lost when the ship foundered after a short and brutal encounter with the German raider *Kormoran*.

We know that not every soul on board perished immediately. At least one escaped to a raft, only to die at sea and drift slowly to the waters off Christmas Island. He carried no identification and was simply referred to as "the unknown sailor". Just who he was became Australia's most enduring maritime mystery.

But on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021, exactly 80 years after the loss of the Sydney, he was named as 21 year old Able Seaman Thomas Welby Clark. The story of how he was finally identified is as enthralling as the search for the wreck of the Sydney herself had been.



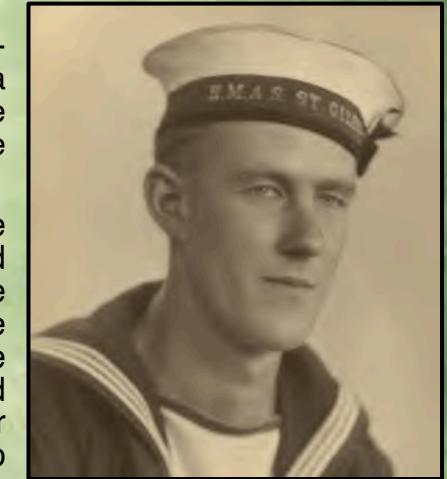
*HMAS Sydney's Walrus aircraft overflies Mum during a routine patrol. (Navy Sea Power Centre)*

When he was found off Christmas Island an investigation concluded he could not have been from the Sydney, and so his body was committed to a grave there, together with the mystery of his origin. The island was then occupied by the Japanese who destroyed local records, and the gravesite was lost.

But four decades later local man Brian O'Shannassy revealed a photograph of the gravesite, and the body was exhumed to extract bone and dental samples before being finally laid to rest in the war cemetery in Geraldton.

In the 15 years since then the quest to identify him has been relentless - but initially only mitochondrial DNA was available, which required a sample from a sister or female relative of the sailor. This limited the breadth of potential matches, particularly since the passage of time meant that relatives may themselves have died.

Advances in technology eventually allowed Y-chromosome DNA to be extracted from his teeth, which meant a broader range of people could be contacted to see if there was a paternal line. A living male relative was finally identified whose DNA matched that of his uncle. It was the culmination of thousands of hours of careful testing and detective-like work in specialties such as DNA analysis, forensic pathology and dentistry, ballistics, anthropology, archaeology and naval history. Over 200 people, including many volunteers, worked tirelessly for years to help identify the lost sailor.



When he was interred at Geraldton the following words were said: *"We do not know this man's name, but hope that one day we will. We do not know his rank or what his duties were. We do not know for certain whether he was a sailor, airman or civilian. We do not know where he was born, or precisely how and when he died. We do not know where he had made his home or when he left it for the Service. And we do not know his age or his circumstances; whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to serve his country; what religion, if he had a religion; or if he was married or single."*

Such is the indignity of having no name. Today, we know the answers to all of those questions, and, most importantly, the unknown sailor has had that dignity restored.

And what of the Ship's Flight? Their names are not recorded on our Roll of Honour as they did not fall during a Fleet Air Arm Operation; but they were of us, nonetheless. Young men engaged in the business of Naval Aviation; men with wives and sweethearts, hopes and dreams, and a desire to make a better world for their children.

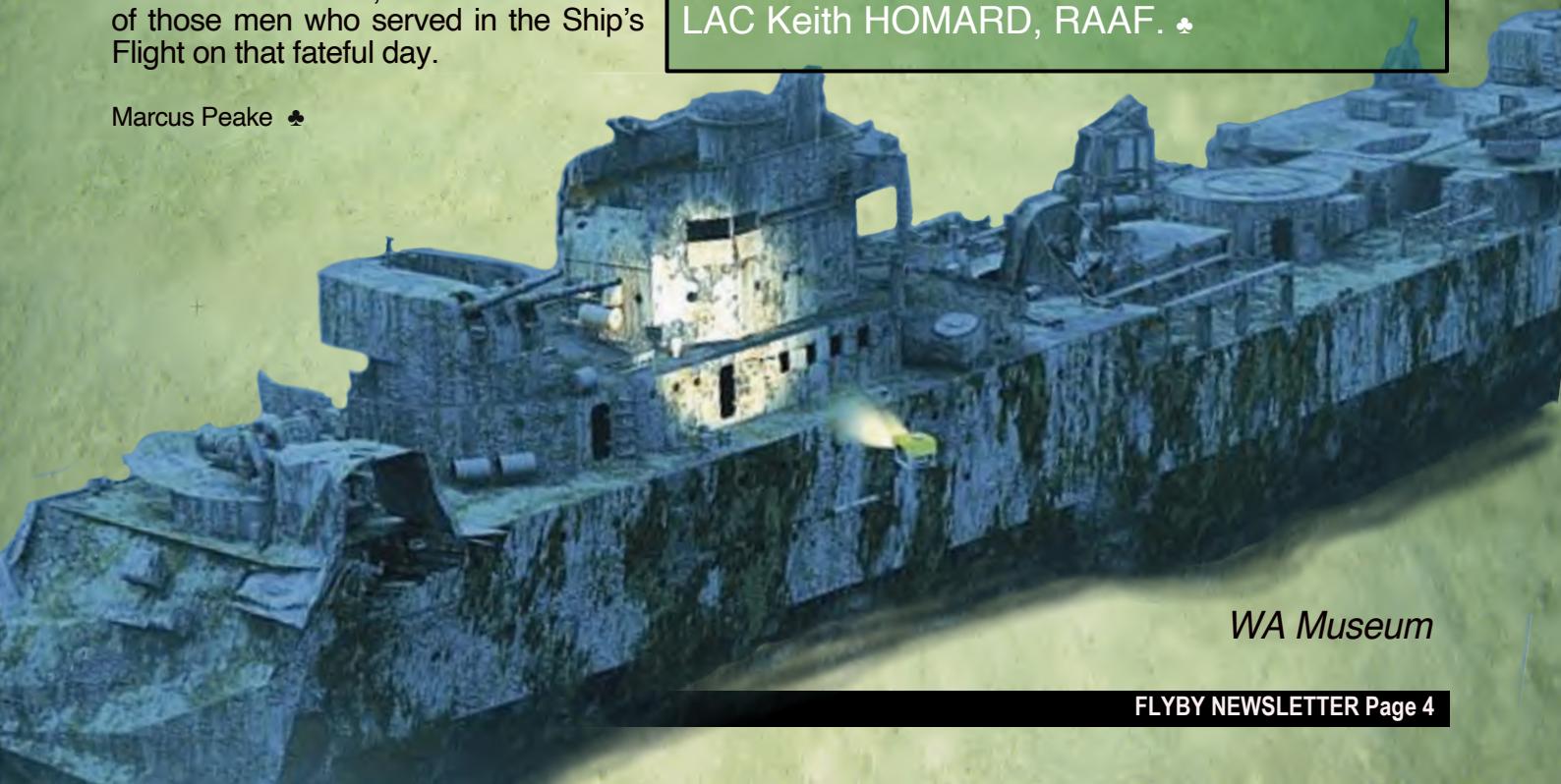
Some, like the Flight Commander, had already seen action; others perhaps not. We can only imagine what they felt as Kormoran's fury engulfed them. None survived, and the image of the single float separated from the wing of its aircraft hints at the savagery of the firepower that took their lives.

And so Sydney has relinquished her last secret, and we not only remember Able Seaman Tom Clark, but also the names of those men who served in the Ship's Flight on that fateful day.

#### HMAS SYDNEY SHIP'S FLIGHT ROLL

Lt Cdr Jack Cawston BACON, RN Observer  
FO Raymond Barker BARREY, RAAF  
Telegrapher William Sidney FIBBENS, RAN  
SGT Sidney MARLEY, RAAF  
CPL Roy Ebenezer FOSTER, RAAF  
CPL Arthur John CLARKE, RAAF  
LAC Richard DODDS, RAAF  
LAC Keith HOMARD, RAAF. ♠

Marcus Peake ♠



WA Museum

# 'Twas The Night Before Christmas

*An ode to Air Traffic Controllers on duty over the festive season*



'Twas the night before Christmas, and out on the ramp,  
Not an airplane was stirring, not even a Champ.  
The aircraft were fastened to tie downs with care,  
In hopes that — come morning — they would all still be there.

The fuel trucks were nestled, all snug in their spots,  
With gusts from two-forty at 39 knots.  
I slumped at the fuel desk, now finally caught up,  
And settled down comfortably, resting my butt -  
when the radio lit up with noise and with chatter,  
I turned up the scanner to check on the matter.  
A voice clearly heard over static and snow,  
Called for clearance to land, at the airport below.  
He barked his transmission so lively and quick,  
I'd have sworn that the call sign he used was "St. Nick."

I ran to the panel to turn up the lights,  
The better to welcome this magical flight.  
He called his position, no room for denials,  
"St. Nicholas One, turnin' left onto finals."  
And what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a Rutan-built sleigh, with eight Rotax Reindeer!  
With vectors to final, down the glideslope he came,  
As he passed all fixes, he called them by name:  
"Now Ringo! Now Tolga! Now Trini and Bacun!  
On Comet! On Cupid!" What pills was he takin'?  
While controllers were sittin', and scratchin' their heads,  
They phoned to my office, and I heard it with dread,  
The message they left was both urgent and dour:  
"When Santa pulls in, have him please call the tower."

He landed like silk, with the sled runners sparkling,  
Then I heard, "Left at Charlie," and "Taxi to parking."  
He slowed to a taxi, turned off from three-oh,  
And stopped on the ramp with a "Ho, ho-ho!"

He stepped out of the sleigh, but before he could talk,  
I ran out to meet him with my best set of chocks.  
His red helmet and goggles were covered with frost,  
And his beard was all blackened from Reindeer exhaust.  
His breath smelled like peppermint, gone slightly stale,  
And he puffed on a pipe, but he didn't inhale.  
His cheeks were all rosy and jiggled like jelly,  
His boots were as black as a cropduster's belly.  
He was chubby and plump, in his suit of bright red,  
And he asked me to "fill it, with hundred low-lead."  
He came dashing in from the snow-covered pump,  
I knew he was anxious for drainin' the sump.  
I spoke not a word, but went straight to my work,  
And I filled up the sleigh, but I spilled like a jerk.  
He came out of the restroom, and sighed in relief,  
Then he picked up a phone for a Flight Service brief.  
And I thought as he silently scribed in his log,  
These reindeer could land in an eighth-mile fog.  
He completed his pre-flight, from the front to the rear,  
Then he put on his headset, and I heard him yell,  
"Clear!"  
And laying a finger on his push-here-to-talk,  
He called up the tower for clearance and squawk.  
"Take taxiway Charlie, the southbound direction,  
Turn right three-two-zero at pilot's discretion"  
He sped down the runway, the best of the best,  
"Your traffic's a Grumman, inbound from the west."  
Then I heard him proclaim, as he climbed thru the night,  
"Merry Christmas to all! I have traffic in sight".



## Australia's first naval aviator

The Sydney Morning Herald of the 20th December 1940 printed Prime Minister Winston Churchill's speech in the House of Commons, giving thanks to the Air Officer Commanding Middle East for his operations against Italian forces in Libya:

*"I must not forget the work that has been done in this battle," he said, 'by Air Chief Marshal Longmore, who at the most critical moment in his preparations had to have part of his force taken away from him for Greece. Nevertheless, he persevered, running additional risks, and his handling of the situation and his co-operation with the Army has been of the highest value'.*

The subject of his praise, Arthur Longmore, had worn the uniform of the British services all his life, but was actually a New South Welshman by birth. Born of a generation that was to see two world wars, he led a life of extraordinary achievement and adventure.

Graeme Lunn, our newest contributing author, tells the story.

Among the announcements for the 8th October 1885 in the Colony of New South Wales the Sydney Morning Herald recorded 'at Catherine Cottage, Manly, the wife of Charles C Longmore, of a son.'

Janet Longmore and her husband had come up to Sydney from their Riverina station for the young mothers confinement. As mother and baby gained strength the boy was christened Arthur Murray Longmore at St Leonards Christ Church on 20th December, before the new family returned to their country homestead. A distinguished life of Imperial service lay ahead of the infant who, decades before he became Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Murray Longmore GCB DSO DL RAF was Lieutenant Longmore RN, Australia's first Naval Aviator.

Charles Longmore and Janet Murray had married in St James's Church Piccadilly in November 1884 and almost immediately embarked for the Australian Colonies in P&O's RMS Indus. Also taking passage was Rear-Admiral George Tryon RN.

The increasing wealth of the Australian Colonies had led to Tryon's appointment as a Flag Officer in command of an expanded Australia Station where he was to encourage

**Main Picture:** Despite earlier difficulties in getting airborne, Longmore's Short 160 Folder seaplane carrying a 900lb Mark IX 14" torpedo was finally coaxed into the air and on 28th July 1914 demonstrated the world's first successful airborne release of a live torpedo.

a common defence policy for the disparate colonies. Interestingly his accompanying Flag Lieutenant, William Packenham, would in 1915 hoist his flag in HMAS Australia to command the 2nd Battlecruiser Squadron of the Grand Fleet and was, briefly, Rear Admiral Commanding HM Australian Fleet.

Charles Longmore was Manager of Yarrara Station near the small settlement of Germanton (renamed Holbrook in honor of the submariner Lieutenant Norman Holbrook VC RN in 1915). It would have been a huge adjustment for the 22 year old Janet to life in the harsh bush conditions as Charles struggled to turn 40 square km of scrub country into a viable pastoral lease. We do not know why the marriage foundered but on 12th November 1891 Janet boarded the SS Bungaree in Port Melbourne and returned to the UK with young Arthur.

Educated at the school known as the 'Cradle of the Navy', Stubbington House, Arthur joined HMS Britannia as a 14 year old Naval Cadet on 15th May 1900. As a Midshipman he spent two years on the China Station in pre-dreadnought battleships. By 1910 Longmore, was an experienced Torpedo Boat commander having commanded TB.74, TB.76 and now TB.111. A keen hunter and rider he was the epitome of a dashing Edwardian Naval officer. Longmore's TB.111 was capable of propelling her 200 tons and 50m length at 25 knots carrying a crew of 32 with her 18" torpedoes having a range of 7000 yards. Reported as very zealous with good judgement and physically strong he was "an exceptionally able and keen officer strongly recommended for further service in T craft." Also an excellent disciplinarian Longmore was noted at the same time as being "very popular with both officers and men".

Longmore had become interested in aviation in the year following Blériot's 1909 crossing of the English Channel and keenly followed the aviation exploits of the day. Near his TB base at Sheerness was Leysdown where early flying was conducted and he would often wander there to watch the activities. The Royal Navy was anything but hidebound in these years as they sought technological advancement in all branches. Along with such matters as improved fire control for the emerging big-gun navy and marconi wireless telegraphy apparatus one thrust was to investigate the suitability of airships for scouting. Crew training had commenced in February 1910 for the still under construction HM Airship No.1. Meanwhile the Army formed No.1 Aeroplane Section, Balloon Company, Royal Engineers.

Admiral Sir George Neville

KCB CVO RN Commanding Reserve Fleet at Sheerness (Commandant of Victorian Naval Forces 1895-1898) was one of the senior advocates in persuading the Admiralty to further their interest in aviation. Neville arranged a lecture on flying at the base in November 1910 where the names of interested volunteers were taken. Although just posted to the new TB.24 (an oil fired twin screw turbine craft) Longmore ignored his Captain D's vocal derision about "...all this nonsense" and opted to pursue the new excitement of naval aviation.

Longmore was selected to join fellow RN Lieutenants Charles Samson and Reginald Gregory plus the Royal Marine Eugene Gerrard on the first formal flying training course in the Navy. All four were unmarried and had to agree to cover the repair costs of any damage they caused. Respectively Australian, English, Scottish and Irish born all would write British when entering nationality. The concept of being an Australian was subsumed in this era by the notion of Britishness and, if asked, probably the best description Longmore would give of his antecedents was Anglo-Australian.

On 1st March 1911 the four officers assembled at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey. The Royal Aero Club had lent the service two Short Biplanes and a Mr Cockburn offered his instructor services for free. Perhaps just as well because the only Admiralty funds allocated were going to Airship No.1. Across the field were the workshops of Short Bros. and the students received their technical instruction from Mr Horace Short himself. The aircraft did not have dual controls so the student would lean over the instructors shoulder and lightly follow his hands on the controls while watching his foot movements. Almost no verbal



*TB.74 and 76 that Longmore commanded were designated 'first class' torpedo boats, capable of independent inshore operations. Displacing around 105 tons they were powered by a single steam boiler driving one shaft, to give 170hp. On a good day they were capable of 16 knots. Pictured is TB80, similar to Longmore's commands.*



FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

*Above. One of the Short biplanes used to teach Longmore how to fly. It did not have dual controls, so the student would occupy the 'jump seat' behind the instructor and lean over his shoulders to lightly follow the movements on the controls. The pilot in the image above is Frank McClean, a civilian aviation enthusiast who loaned his two aircraft to the Navy to facilitate training the first course of pilots. Behind him is a friend along for the ride.*

communication was possible with the open structure and unshielded engine once airborne.

Shrugging off a crash on their second flight Cockburn sent Longmore solo after 2.5 hours. Seven weeks later Samson, as the senior, was the first to do his final test. Successful, he was immediately followed by Longmore who was awarded the Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificate No.72 on 25 April 1911. Meanwhile the nascent sailor and marine ground crews, being very short of tools, would distract the chauffeurs of the many high-society visitors and pilfer from their limousines' tool chests. A practice that ceased when one visitor was an unamused Admiral.

Inevitably Samson and Longmore accrued a remarkable number of British naval aviation firsts over the next few years. While collaborating with the Shorts brothers on early experiments Longmore was detailed by Samson to visit the Admiralty in September 1911. There he helped persuade the navy to formalise a Naval Flying School which commenced in October 1911 and the next group of four officers were selected for the first four to instruct. The navy leased ten acres from the Royal Aero Club and purchased two airframes. From this point the growth of naval aviation continued almost exponentially with Eastchurch remaining the main naval training establishment.

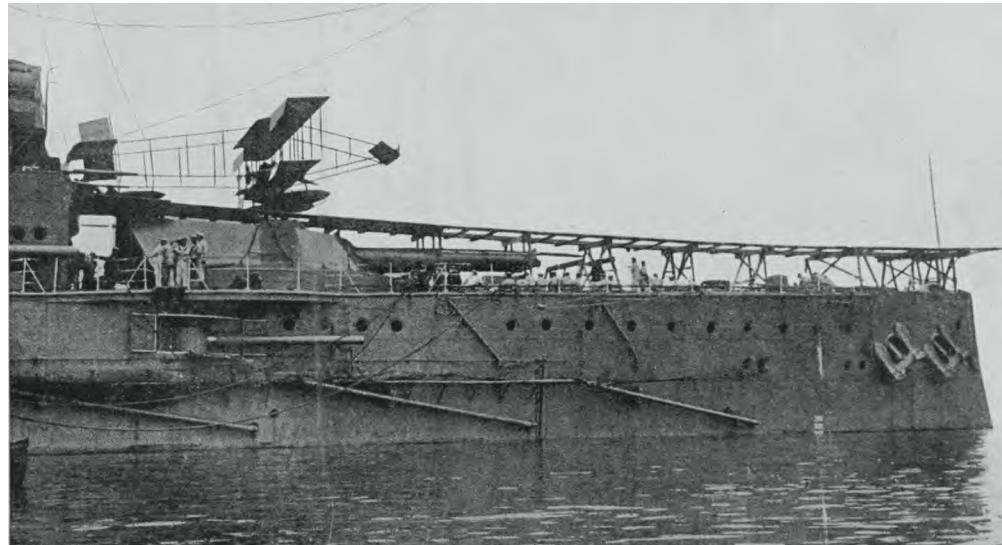
Oswald Short helped Longmore fit shaped air bags to the wooden undercarriage skids of his Shorts Biplane and, on 1st December 1911, Longmore performed the first successful water take-off and landing in a hydro-plane. In January 1912 Longmore made the first successful take off from water using structural floats. Also that month the newly promoted

Lieutenant-Commander Samson flew off a structure erected over the turret of a stationary Africa. In March 1912 Longmore won the Singer Prize of £500 when he managed to stay airborne for 3:15 and flew 180 miles. At the Fleet Royal Review in May 1912 Samson, in a world first, managed to get airborne off Hibernia while she was underway at 15 kts.

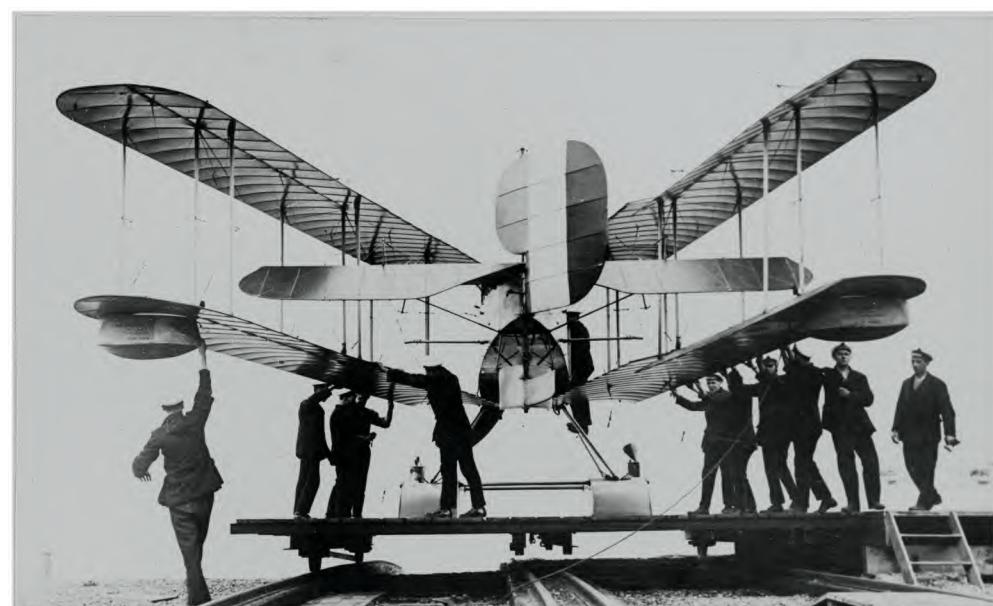
In April 1912 the Committee for Imperial Defence recommended a combined Royal Flying Corps with Naval and Military wings which was constituted on 13th May 1912. Captain Suetter RN, having witnessed the structural failure of HM Airship No.1 on 24th Sep 1911 before it even got airborne, was appointed Director of the Air Department at the Admiralty. That failure meant naval efforts were to be concentrated on land and sea machines for the next few years.

A Central Flying School was established on Salisbury Plain. When Lieutenant Longmore arrived with his air service rank of Squadron Commander at CFS for instructional duties he found that the Commandant was Captain Godfrey Paine RN who had been his vocal Captain D in 1910. Paine had quickly reversed his opinion and obtained Aviator's Certificate No.217 on 15th May 1912 at age 40.

One of Longmore's first pupils was Major Hugh Trenchard DSO (later Marshal of the Royal Air Force Viscount Trenchard) who gained Aviators Certificate No.270 and then became second in command of CFS. At the September 1912 Army manoeuvres Trenchard was Longmore's observer in a Farman Longhorn and they competently demonstrated to the attending generals the value of air reconnaissance. Their comradeship was such that Trenchard was best

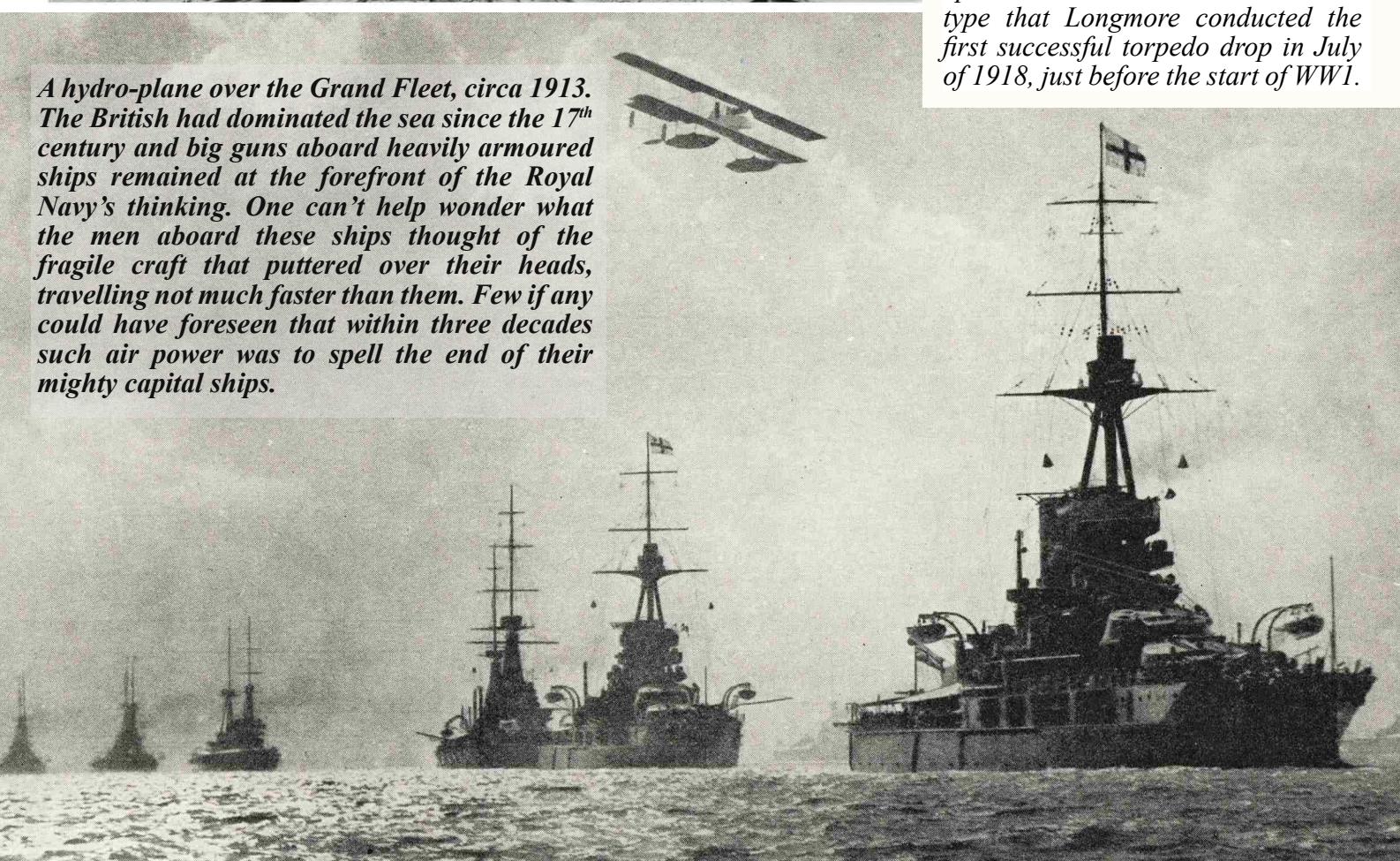


*Above:* A young Lt. Longmore RN.  
*Left,* Despite the fragility of the craft and the lack of power of their engines, the lure of putting an aircraft on a capital warship was irresistible. In 1912 Longmore made the first successful take off from water using structural floats. The same month Lt-Cdr Sampson, his classmate, flew off a turret of the stationary HMS Africa, and then, four months later in a world first, managed to get airborne off HMS Hibernia whilst underway at 15 knots. (Above left).



*A hydro-plane over the Grand Fleet, circa 1913.*  
The British had dominated the sea since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and big guns aboard heavily armoured ships remained at the forefront of the Royal Navy's thinking. One can't help wonder what the men aboard these ships thought of the fragile craft that pattered over their heads, travelling not much faster than them. Few if any could have foreseen that within three decades such air power was to spell the end of their mighty capital ships.

*Left.* Even from the earliest days of aviation, designers were mindful of Naval needs and attempting to cater for them. This picture shows a Short 'Folder', which was the first aircraft designed with folding wings to facilitate handling with shipborne operations in mind. It was in this type that Longmore conducted the first successful torpedo drop in July of 1918, just before the start of WWI.



*Below. The airship "Mayfly" in ruins. In the first decade of the 20th Century airships were favoured over aeroplanes, particularly as the British eyed up the successes of the German airship program across the Channel. HM Airship No.1 was built as an aerial scout for the Royal Navy. She was the first British rigid airship to be built, but when she was moved from her shed for trials she broke in two.*

*According to reports "...by 24th September [1911] ...disaster struck in the form of a sudden forceful beam-side gust causing the ship to lurch, just clearing the shed but laid her on to her beam ends. She righted and was then being pivoted so her nose would point back out to the dock when there were cracking sounds amidships and she broke in two. She started to rise in an inverted "V" formation but the crew in the after gondola dived overboard and the stern flew up in to the air." The ship was returned to her shed to rot, and many arguments were made in the Admiralty regarding the future of Airship operations. The incident proved to be the turning point for greater focus on fixed-wing aircraft operations. Unsurprisingly, following the accident sailors immediately christened the "Mayfly" the "Nofly."*



*(continued from page 8)*

man at Longmore's wedding in 1913. On leaving CFS Longmore was reported as a good instructor with "extremely good nerve".

Longmore was next posted on 7th May 1913 to Hermes in command of Cromarty Air Station. Hermes was a cruiser hurriedly modified to act as administrative parent ship for all naval aviation and used for evaluation of the usefulness of sea planes in the fleet manoeuvres that year. She had a seaplane hangar erected on her quarterdeck and later a platform on the forecastle. This aft hangar was the

impetus for Short Bros. to design and patent a wing folding mechanism.

At Cromarty 'Air Station' all Longmore found on arrival was bare land. He and the other two pilots, with twenty ratings as ground and handling crews, had to mark out the site, erect hangars and then take his 3 seaplanes, each a different make, on strength in July after their arrival by train. Launching and recovery was via trolleys over the beach.

Invergordon on the Cromarty Firth saw major Home Fleet activity and Longmore took every opportunity to

exercise with the warships and raise their interest in air co-operation. The station attracted many visitors including Vice-Admiral Sir John Jellicoe and the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill. Longmore flew Churchill several times and was quizzed about the development of flying as it would affect naval aviation while they walked together over the heather.

Longmore was a junior attendee at the November 1913 Conference where the Fourth Sea Lord, the now Rear-Admiral William Packenham CB RN, after stating that there was a lack of definition as to the functions of the naval wing, pronounced that the time had come to move from its experimental phase to taking a definite place in naval organization. Given that by January 1914, less than three years since Longmore first flew in a loaned aircraft, the navy now had 120 aeroplanes and seaplanes spread between seven stations this was not being unduly prescient of the Sea Lord.

In Jan 1914 Longmore took over command of Calshot Air Station. Established as an Experimental Station at a time when simply flying at night was deemed experimental the Station was a busy one for the 10 Officers and 44 men. Gunnery and torpedo experiments were made and they were achieving aircraft to ship W/T ranges of 6-8 miles. Longmore again flew the First Lord in February when he wanted to see first hand how the submarine visibility trials were proceeding. Churchill was embracing Naval aviation with his typical enthusiasm for new methods and the energy he was renowned for. The station had a very successful Admiral's inspection on 15th June 1914 and Longmore was promoted Acting Lieutenant-Commander.

On the 14th July 1914 the Royal Naval Air Service was established. Pleased with their assumption of full control of their machines from the Army the Navy, at their Review several days later, prominently moored 18 seaplanes out in lines with the warships. At this Review Churchill told Acting Lieutenant-Commander/Squadron Commander Longmore that he wanted the torpedo experiments speeded up.

Britain had warned Germany that it would side with France and Russia should war break out and on 27th July the Admiralty signalled that all available seaplanes were to proceed to east coast stations to prepare for North Sea and Channel patrols. At Calshot



*Above: Winston Churchill (centre), then First Lord of the Admiralty, flew with Longmore several times and displayed a keen interest in how the development of aircraft could affect naval aviation.*

they were working late that evening to improve the power output of a Short 160 Folder seaplane which had failed to get airborne earlier with a 900lb Mark IX 14" torpedo. The next day, 28th July 1914 Longmore recorded in his diary: "I took 121 out with torpedo and managed to get off the water and fire it successfully; torpedo made a good run". This was the world's first successful airborne release of a live torpedo.

Having flown his Station's last serviceable Short seaplane to the Isle of Grain on 3rd August Longmore returned to Calshot. At midnight 4th August 1914 he received the signal "War declared against Germany, report to the Admiralty forthwith".

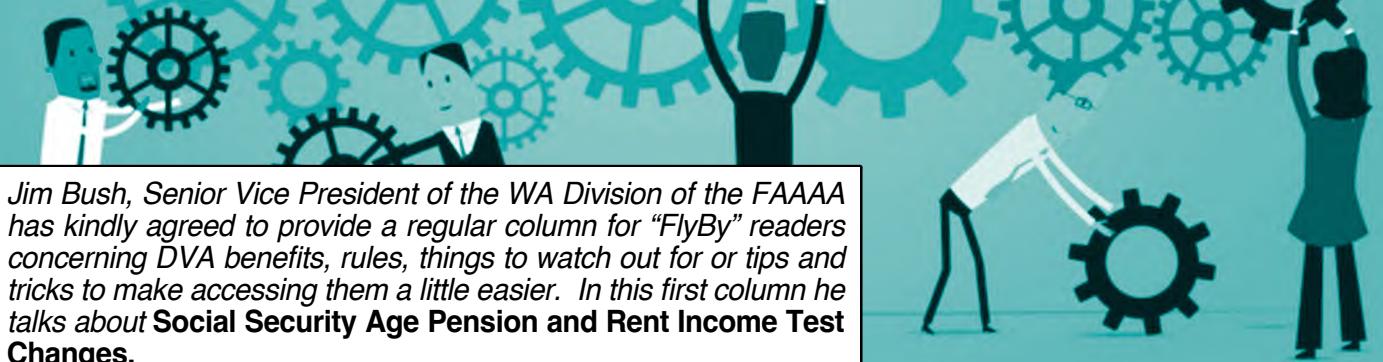
Life was about to get interesting!

## NEXT MONTH

Within a month of the outbreak of war, Arthur Longmore takes a motley collection of aircraft to France, where he joins Charles Sampson to form "the Dunkirk Circus". Together, they employ novel tactics to harass the enemy by land and air.

# Understanding Your Benefits

By Jim Bush



*Jim Bush, Senior Vice President of the WA Division of the FAAAA has kindly agreed to provide a regular column for "FlyBy" readers concerning DVA benefits, rules, things to watch out for or tips and tricks to make accessing them a little easier. In this first column he talks about Social Security Age Pension and Rent Income Test Changes.*

The Government has introduced measures that will introduce changes to the way veterans receiving a Disability Pension from DVA affects the amount of the Social Security Age Pension and the amount of Rent Assistance they receive under the Income Test provisions.

The changes were due to start on 20 September 2022 but after feedback from veterans, their families and the community, the Government has brought forward the time frame and the changes will now commence on **01 January 2022**.

The provisions commencing on this date include:

- Removing the disability income rent test, which results in severely disabled veterans receiving less rent assistance than those with lesser disabilities, because of the amount of compensation they receive.
- Exempting the Disability Pension received by veterans receiving the Social Security Age Pension from the income test, which means that payment of the Defence Force Income Support Allowance will no longer be required, and their Disability Pension will be treated under the income test provisions the same way as veterans receiving the Service Pension.
- Renaming the Disability Pension to the Disability Compensation Payment. This will clearly identify that the Disability Pension is not an income support pension but is instead a compensation payment for disabilities accepted by DVA as service caused.

Once these measures are implemented, a veteran's Social Security Age Pension will be equal to the sum of their current reduced social security age pension payment and their current Defence Force Income Support Allowance payment, and no veteran will be worse off as a result of the abolition of the Defence Force Income Support Allowance.

Some private renters may receive more than they previously did, and some veterans paying private rent may receive an increased rate of Rent Assistance depending on their individual circumstances.♦

## More Information

You can refer to DVA's Defence Force Income Support Allowance Information Sheet that will commence on 01 January 2022.

Click [here](#) to access this online.

**Budget 2021–22**  
Information sheet

**Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Veterans - DFISA payments**

This initiative brings forward the commencement of elements of a 2020–21 Budget measure to 1 January 2022, which were due to commence on 20 September 2022. These elements will simplify and better target support for the most severely injured veterans, and rename the disability pension to Disability Compensation Payment.

**Why is this important?**

The Government listened to feedback from veterans, their families and the community that they wanted to see earlier implementation of the measure announced in the 2020–21 Budget.

As a result of this feedback, the implementation timeframe has been revised, and elements of the measure will now commence on 1 January 2022. This will bring benefits to the most severely impaired veterans sooner.

The provisions starting on 1 January 2022 include:

- removing the disability income rent test, which results in severely disabled veterans receiving less rent assistance than those with lesser disabilities, because of the amount of compensation they receive;
- exempting the disability pension from the Social Security Act income test, which means that the payment of the Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA) will no longer be required; and
- renaming the Disability Pension to the Disability Compensation Payment. This will clearly identify that the Disability Pension is not an income support pension but is instead a compensation payment.

These changes will simplify the way income support payments are calculated and administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and Centrelink.

Once the measure is implemented, a veteran's social security payment will be equal to the sum of their current reduced social security payment and their current DFISA payment. Some private renters may receive more than they previously did.

No veteran will be worse off as a result of the abolition of DFISA.

Some veterans paying private rent may receive an increased rate of Rent Assistance depending on their individual circumstances.

**Who will benefit?**

All veterans who would benefit from the changes to payments will benefit from the commencement being brought forward.

Under the original initiative, veterans who receive Disability Pension, Rent Assistance and an Income Support payment may benefit from this measure.

**Date of effect?**  
1 January 2022.

**How much will this cost?**  
\$7.4 million over four years.



Dear Editor,

Many thanks for yet another fantastic FlyBy.

An interesting article on the Seasprites. I was in NHQ when they were chosen so many moons ago. I seem to recall that the RAN was offered a number of earlier model SH-2F as an interim aircraft, same as the RNZN, whilst awaiting for the final SH-2G. The RAN chose not to take this option. The RNZN needed to replace their aged Wasp helicopters so they went for that option as they were also looking to piggyback on to our acquisition. I understand they have had considerable success with both their aircraft models.

There is still a Seasprite in Australia - the Australian Federal Police purchased the 'training aid' airframe and have it at their field training area at Majura, ACT. Have a look at Google Maps/Earth and she is lying on her side. Might be an option for our Museum to obtain for our collection!

Cheers, Alan Earle.

By Editor,

Thanks Alan.

*There is indeed the remains of a Seasprite at the coordinates you provided - see Google Earth image below.*

*I was able to ask one of our readers to visit the site and some photographs will be included in the next edition.*



Dear Editor,

In the lead up to Remembrance Day 2021, I write to you all to extend my personal thanks to those who have served and their families, and to honour the sacrifice of those Australian service personnel who have suffered and died in wars, conflicts and peace-keeping operations for more than a century.



This year as we mark 103 years since the Armistice of 1918, I am drawn to reflect on that important moment in history, and how our Australian men and women serving overseas must have felt when they heard the news.

Our records, the personal histories and diaries from the time show that it was a moment of jubilation, tinged with the sadness of knowing that so many would not be returning to their loved ones. So many families had suffered, the number of Australians killed and wounded meant that hardly anyone remained untouched by the war and its devastating cost.

Perhaps more than anyone, those who have served and their families understand the importance of Remembrance Day in our history. It is a time when we gather to honour those of our service family who have suffered and fallen in the line of duty.

Here at the Department of Veterans' Affairs one of the important roles that we proudly undertake is sharing the history of our service men and women, to help future generations of Australians remember and understand the sacrifices made. Our Remembrance Day resources mail-out provided a range of information to ex-service organisations, community groups and schools acknowledge Remembrance Day. It is our hope that this information helps younger Australians to understand the tradition of remembrance and to embrace this tradition within their own lives and families.

If you would like to share the Department's resources with your members and their families, they are all available online through our Anzac Portal [here](#).

Finally, I know that Remembrance Day can be a difficult time for many in our ex-service community. Please remember that our services are available to all veterans and their families – Open Arms Veterans & Families Counselling 1800 011 046 is open 24/7 and there to support you and your members. Please reach out if you need support, and share this with your members.

On this Remembrance Day, and every day, we honour the service of all Australian service men and women. Lest We Forget.

Regards

**Liz Cossen AM CSC**

Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs

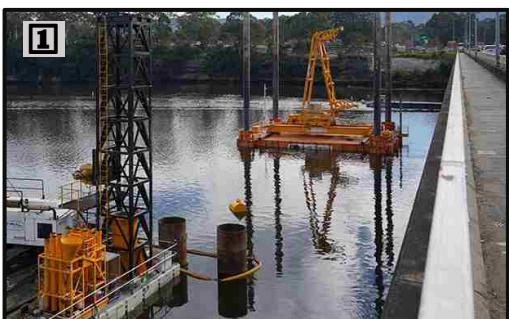
T: 02 6289 6735 Ext: 616735

Email: [Liz.Cossen@dva.gov.au](mailto:Liz.Cossen@dva.gov.au) ♣



# BUILDING THE BRIDGE

The new bridge over the Shoalhaven is proceeding at an astonishing pace, but have you wondered just how it is being constructed? Here's an explanation...



# Last Month's Mystery Photo



Last month's mystery photo was of a crash scene. We asked if readers could identify the aircraft and tell us a little of what happened.

The image shows what was left of Macchi N14-073 after an engine malfunction on 07 December 1972. The pilot **LEUT Murray Smythe**, closed the throttle on joining the circuit. The engine revs dropped below idle but wouldn't recover. It's a condition which was also experienced in the A4 and was known as 'idle undershoot'. He attempted to make the runway without power but it was a windy day and it soon became obvious that wasn't a possibility, so he ejected at 300 feet. Murray reports:

*"I remember the parachute opening, swinging once, and impacting the ground. THEN I had a chance to reflect on what had just happened. But not for more than a second or so because I had landed only a few metres from the wreckage and the wind was fanning the fire in my direction."*

*"By the time I had hobbled a safe distance away, there was a Wessex landing beside me to take me to safety. All over in less than a minute. I broke my ankle in the parachute landing, Bob Kyle rescued me from the fire, and farmer McMillan got compensated for his burnt grass."*

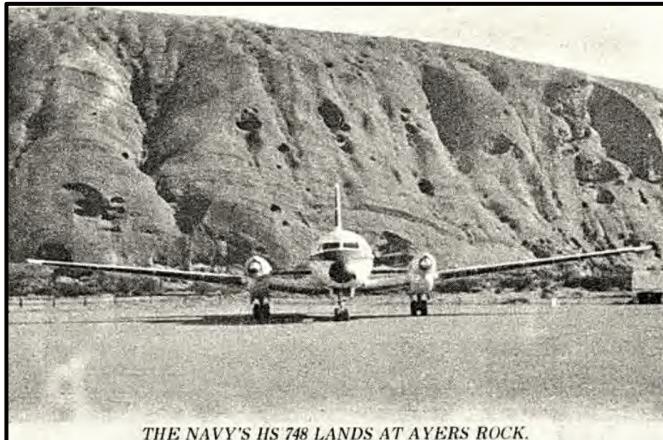
*The most interesting part of the story is that the aircraft was to be flown by Barry Evans, but we swapped at the last minute because the wrong aircraft had been "soloed" (prepared for solo flight). One year later, in HMAS Melbourne, Barry was my No 2 and when we arrived on the flight deck, the Skyhawks had been spotted in the wrong places. I told Barry to launch before me, orbit off the starboard side, and join up after I launched. As you know the catapult failed and Barry ended up in the water. So we took each other's accidents! Muz."♣*



# This Month's Mystery Photo



This month's Mystery Photo is of a strange looking bi-plane - but behind it was a fascinating story. Do you know what type of aircraft it was? Answers to the Editor [here](#), please.



THE NAVY'S HS 748 LANDS AT AYERS ROCK.

On page 24 of last months "FlyBy" we asked if anyone knew when the above 'Navy News' photo was taken, and what the 748 was doing there. Al Byrne responded as follows:

"We sometimes used Yulara (IE: Ayers Rock) or Newman (WA) as refuelling stops if winds at height were unfavourable for the sector Alice Springs - Learmonth. The EWTS aircraft regularly deployed 'up top' for Five Power Defence Agreement (FPDA) Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) exercises, usually operating from Butterworth (Malaysia), but sometimes Paya Lebar (Singapore). This generally meant four days of transit each way: Nowra - Broken Hill - Alice Springs - Learmonth - Xmas Island - Paya Lebar - Butterworth.

Naturally, we'd have to have a 'rest day' in Singapore, each way. If we were unlucky with the winds and/or temperatures, the heavy and 'draggy' EW bird would struggle to make some of the long sectors (AS-LM or LM-XM were the difficult ones). At least once, I remember pressing all the way to the calculated point of safe return between Learmonth and Xmas Island, and having to turn around, to arrive back at Learmonth with EXACTLY (trust me) minimum fuel.

*So, the Yulara photograph is, almost certainly, circa early-mid 1980s, and there's a good chance that it's the EW bird, although the clean bird would occasionally be tasked for runs to Broome or Darwin, so the photograph may be of either N15-709 or 710." ♠*

## SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

**Thank you to those readers who have paid their 2022 membership subscriptions to date.**

**For those yet to pay, please can we ask that you do so?**

**Subscriptions are the sole source of income for the Association, which uses every cent paid to further the services it provides. These include the production and distribution of "Slipstream" and "FlyBy" magazines; member services, website costs, company insurances and the like.**

**You can find how much to pay and how you can do so [here](#).**



*Above. A couple of months ago we featured a cartoon by the same unknown artist as the drawing above - does anyone know who it was? This one is also of the time when Political Correctness was greatly different to today, but it captures Jack's humour on a run ashore so grit your PC teeth if you are sensitive. We've all been there! Thanks to Johnny Mac for forwarding. ♠*

## The Hunchback Observer

Every now and again a snippet of history comes up which makes you long to learn the story of the extraordinary life behind it. Graeme Lunn recently sent in such an excerpt:

*'Another interesting character was an Observer, Jones, who was a hunchback and weighed only six stone.*

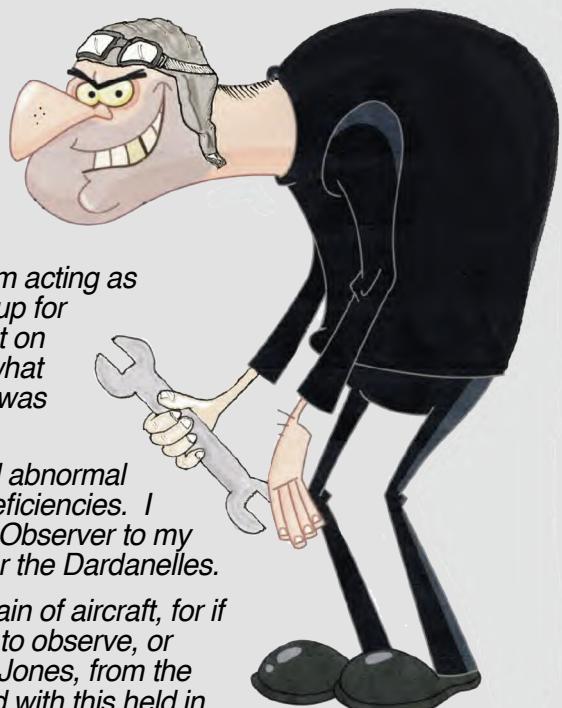
*He first came to the aerodrome at St.Pol in some sort of uniform acting as chauffeur to Sarel, the British Consul. He begged to be taken up for an operational flight and I sent him off with an experienced pilot on the Zeebrugge Coast reconnaissance. On his return I asked what he had seen and I got from him a most detailed report of what was inside Ostend and Zeebrugge harbours.*

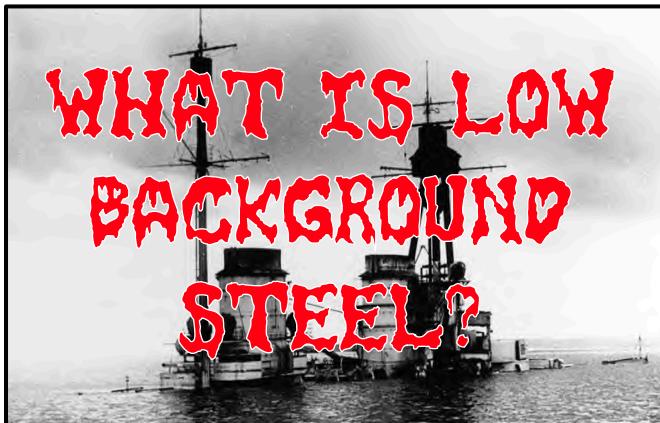
*No, he had not been using field glasses; it was just that he had abnormal vision, perhaps nature's compensation for his other physical deficiencies. I lost no time in getting him commissioned and appointed as an Observer to my Squadron, where he served for a few months before leaving for the Dardanelles.*

*I heard of him later as the one Observer who really was a captain of aircraft, for if the pilot did not fly sufficiently close to the objective he wanted to observe, or attempted to turn back too soon when things were getting hot, Jones, from the passenger seat behind the pilot, would produce a spanner, and with this held in close proximity to the pilot's head, would enforce his wishes.*

*This unsung hero was later lost in a seaplane during operations against submarines in the Adriatic, but what a glorious few months for this brave little fellow who served his country so very actively.'*

A. Longmore 'From Sea To Sky' 1947 p.48 (reference to No.1 RNAS Squadron in 1915). ♠





Last month we asked the above question of our General Knowledge question of our Engineering Community, just for interest.

For those like me who didn't know, the answer is somewhat surprising.

There were over 2000 nuclear-weapon tests in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including 528 above ground. The latter, in particular, spread radioactive particles throughout the atmosphere.

A side effect of this radioactivity is that any steel produced since '45 also contained a small amount of radioactive material. For the most part this didn't matter (eg for buildings or bridges), but some devices such as Geiger counters, medical equipment or satellite components require metal that is entirely free from this contamination. This is called "Low Background Steel."

Manufacturers of these devices either needed to produce steel that was without radioactive traces (which was very expensive) or obtain steel produced prior to July 16 1945. .

Common sources of Low Background Steel was from ships sunk during WW2 - for example, the German battleship Tirpitz was a rich harvest of such metal. .

Since the '60s there's been a ban on atmospheric testing and radioactive elements in the air have been decreasing. The main radioactive isotope in the air is Cobalt-60 which has a half life of 5.26 years, meaning the original 1945 Cobalt-60 is now about .008% as radioactive as its original level back then.

This reduction means that brand new steel now has a low enough count to allow it to be used for most radiation-sensitive applications, so the need for Low Background metal has virtually gone away...until some loony starts letting off nukes again. ♠



Thank you to those readers who lodged an expression of interest in buying 'Fly Navy' stickers. We have placed an order and expect stock to arrive early in December. Prices will be the same as last time, which is surprising as everything in the world seems to get more expensive. The prices are: \$1.50 per sticker for orders up to five, or \$1.30 per sticker for six or more. Minimum order is five. Post and packing is included in these prices.

So, for example, if you order 5 the total price is \$7.50, or \$13.00 for ten. Click [here](#) to order now. ♠

## The Deal

Yesterday I took my ten-year-old red cattle dog to our regular vet Lisa for his annual check up. "Do you think we should muzzle him?" she asked.

"Yes," I agreed. Last year he got a little anxious during some of the examination and as I had to clamp his head and jaws I felt a muzzle was a good idea.

Examination done, I put him in the truck and came back to the office to settle up.

Having paid the bill I started to say "Lisa there's something sensitive I need to talk to you..."

Cutting in she said, "I know. I'll make a note in his file that on your passing he is to be put down. As a cattle dog he is very bonded to you and he's not a rehoming candidate". "Aah yes, that was what I was going to say," I replied.

I took the dog home to a quiet corner of the back yard where the spring flowers still danced in the late afternoon breeze. Kneeling beside him I quietly said to him "Here's the deal - I go, you go." I left him to his thoughts.

*(Printed with the permission of one of our veterans who is fighting an aggressive form of cancer).*



## REST IN PEACE

Since the last edition of FlyBy we have been advised that the following people have Crossed the Bar: **Kevin Raddatz, Max Stace, Rick Collins, Kevin Wright and John Green.**



You can find further details by clicking on the image of the candle.

We have also been advised of the [Memorial Arrangements](#) for **Bob Steele**, who left this life on 02 April 2021

# Around The Traps...



Forthright".

The original Squadron was formed in Nowra 3 August 1954. And disbanded 13 January 1958. She flew Fireflies as a training Squadron. No record exists of them ever wearing a badge.

On 7 June 1966, future Squadron badge design was begun by the Heraldry adviser, Mr Vic Cassell, following design advice from the Ships' Badges, Nomenclature and Honours Committee. The design was to be in keeping with the 725 Squadron's Winged Mail gauntlet. The mace was chosen as the mace is a 'weapon of offence capable of breaking through the strongest armour.'

The 851 Badge design was finally approved by the Ships' Badges, Nomenclature and Honours Committee and Chief of Naval Staff in 26 April 1968.

I think you are confusing badge designs, with the flaming sword being part of the WWII version of 850 Squadron badge, see attached.

PS. An item of Naval heraldry in the Royal Australian Navy and all Commonwealth countries are referred to as a **Badge**, although the incorrect Americanised term *crest* is sometimes used.

The error lies in that a crest is a device borne on the helm of a coat of arms." ♠



sold the following year to the Brazilians who gave her a major upgrade to allow her to operate jet aircraft.

*Minas Gerais* remained in Service until 2001. Several attempts were then made to sell her - including on Ebay - but there were no takers and she was sold for scrap and taken to Alang (in India) where she was broken up.

The Colossus class were designed and built as 'disposable warships, to be scrapped at the end of (WW2) hostilities, or within 3 years of entering service. *Vengeance/Minas Gerais* served for a total of 55 years making her the longest serving aircraft carrier on record.

Our thanks to **Ron Marsh**, who collects stamps with an aviation feature and thought this might be of interest to our readers. ♠

We are always fascinated by the lexicon of Heraldic things, and so when **Kim Dunstan**, our historian, asked the Navy Badge people about the origins of the 851 Squadron badge the answer delighted:

"Thanks for your enquiry. Please find attached the sealed pattern for 851 Squadrons badge.

The description is "Sable, A Spiked Mace Palewise Argent, Winged Gold; and for a Motto: 'Be

Forthright'".

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Every now and again a bit of aviation history comes up which reminds you of our heritage. In this case it was a Brazilian stamp bearing the image of the *NaeL Minas Gerais*, a Colossus class light aircraft carrier operated by that country's Navy for some 40 years.

So what's that got to do with us? Well, prior to her life in Brazil she was the *HMS Vengeance*, built by the Brits for the Royal Navy. She was completed before the end of WWII but did not see active service. In 1952 she was loaned to the RAN as *HMAS Vengeance* as a temporary replacement for the delayed *HMAS Melbourne*. She was returned to the RN in 1955 but never went on the ORBAT there, being





HMAS Brisbane alongside at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, Monday, Nov. 1, 2021.  
**Photo: Daniel Betancourt/Stars and Stripes**

## HMAS Brisbane stops at Navy base in Japan to replace helicopter lost at sea

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The guided-missile destroyer *HMAS Brisbane* steamed into the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet for the first time on Friday. On Thursday, the crew expects delivery of an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter to replace one lost at sea last month. The aircraft is being prepped for the trip at Yokota Air Base, the U.S. airlift hub in western Tokyo, where it arrived Saturday from Naval Air Station Nowra aboard an Australian C-17 Globemaster III.

A Seahawk aboard the *Brisbane* was ditched in the Philippine Sea during a military exercise Oct. 13, the Australian Department of Defence announced the next day. All three crew members were rescued within 20 minutes and treated for minor injuries.

The cause of the crash is under investigation, *Brisbane*'s skipper, CMDR Aaron Cox, told *Stars and Stripes* on Monday. He said a team of investigators recently came aboard the ship to collect evidence gathered by his crew. "And they've returned to Australia this morning to continue their investigations," he said.

The Australian government agreed to a \$985 million deal to purchase another 12 Seahawks from the U.S. on Oct. 8, according to a same day announcement from the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Australia currently has 24 (23!) Seahawks, which it purchased for approximately \$2.2 billion, according to the Australian Navy website. ♣

## DVA 21-22 Survey

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is currently preparing for the 2021 Client Satisfaction Survey, which will be held in November 2021 to February 2022.

The survey seeks to understand how clients feel

about their interactions with DVA, and how they can improve the provision of services and support to veterans and their families. Approximately 2,000 clients will be contacted by ORIMA Research to respond to the telephone survey. The survey calls generally take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The 2020 Survey results indicated that more clients are willing to interact with the department online. As a result, DVA will also be piloting an online version of the survey with up to 20,000 randomly selected clients being sent an email inviting them to participate.

All information will be collected and stored in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*. Answers given by participants are completely confidential and any personal details which may identify participants in any way, will not be passed to DVA. Answers will not in any way affect benefits or services which participants are entitled to from DVA.

Information about the survey can be found on DVA's website [here](#). You can also email [client.survey@dva.gov.au](mailto:client.survey@dva.gov.au) or call the general enquiries line on 1800 838 372. ♣



## HMAS Success - Aussie to the End

*HMAS Success* was the largest ship ever to be constructed at Cockatoo Dockyard, and gave 33 years of Service before reaching the end of her economical life.

At the end she was spared the ignominy of being towed away to India or China for destruction, where many other grey funnel vessels have ended their lives out of sight and out of mind.

Instead, she was dismantled at Port Pirie and Whyalla in SA by McMahon Services. You can see the entire process in a beautifully filmed YouTube segment [here](#).

It's always sad to see the end of a ship, particularly if you served on one or more of the many of the FAA Flights aboard her, but it's comforting to think that right to the end she served Australia - and has been recycled back into our economy, rather than someone else's. ♣



## Probe after British F-35 fighter crashes in Mediterranean

18 Nov 2021 BBC News

A British F-35 fighter jet has crashed into the sea during a routine operation in the Mediterranean, the Ministry of Defence has said. The pilot ejected and has safely returned to the Royal Navy aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* and an investigation has begun.

The incident occurred at 10:00 GMT over international waters and no other aircraft were involved. The MoD said it would be inappropriate to comment during the investigation.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said the jet came down soon after take off. He said: "We are pleased the pilot is safe and well and back on board." Mr Wallace added that operational and training flights onboard *HMS Queen Elizabeth* are continuing despite the incident.

There are eight UK F-35Bs on the carrier and 10 from the US Marine Corps. They have conducted around 2,000 take-off and landings on board *HMS Queen Elizabeth* without any major incident over the past six months."

Seven F-35 total losses so far: (causes only briefly shown)

- F-35A - USAF - 23 Jun 14 - engine fire
- F-35B - USMC - 27 Oct 16 - in-flight fire.
- F-35B - USMC - 28 Sep 18 - fuel tube failure.
- F-35A - JASDF - 9 Apr 19 - crashed in sea (pilot dead).
- F-35A - USAF - 19 May 20 - crashed on landing - burnt out.
- F-35B - USMC - 20 Sep 2020 - Collision with KC-130.
- F-35B - RAF - 17 Nov 21 - crashed in sea.♦

There's an interesting article [here](#) about the attempt to salvage this fighter. ♦



## CAN YOU HELP?

A researcher is trying to find the relatives of:

Petty Officer (Airman)  
**WILLIAM GEORGE MacLEAN MID - FX85866**

who died aboard HMS Emperor on 24 August 1944 at the age of twenty.

He was the son of Robert Gordon and Cissie MacLean of Glasgow. It is believed that he had a brother and sister.

If you can help in this matter, please contact [Ed Boyle](#).

We also have someone looking for **Gary Brown**, who was a JR Aircraft Handler in '63. He hailed originally from Toongabbie NSW. If you know of him or his whereabouts, could you contact [Russ Pantin](#) please?

## Eating Well This Christmas



With Christmas just around the corner and with New Year's resolutions following closely behind, it is timely to provide some important information on Nutrition. We have arranged with **Jacqui Cleghorn** from the NT to give a presentation on food and wellbeing.

In Jacqui's presentation we will learn all the easy and practical tricks to make healthy eating easy. It doesn't matter if you are new to nutrition and cooking or consider yourself a master chef of wholesome delights, Jacqui will inspire you to stay well-nourished to get your body moving!

Jacqui Cleghorn is Clinical Nutritionist with a passion to empower people with knowledge that makes healthy eating accessible and simple for everyone. She has extensive experience in not only a clinical setting but in public speaking and has focused the last 5 years on promoting healthy eating in the veteran community. Jacqui invites you to join her in a 45 minutes presentation to inspire you to look at your food differently, with an opportunity to ask questions.

We look forward to seeing you all on the Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 14:00 Sydney time to talk about food and wellbeing. To join this presentation it is as simple as clicking [here](#), or calling (02) 6188 4842 for audio only (conference ID 479 164 19#)

John Macartney  
NSW/ACT Volunteers' Representative  
DVA's MHPE Program

# Attention A4 People!



Help wanted!

A project has begun to write a book on the service of the A4G Skyhawk in the RAN. It will be in the style of the line of books made popular by "Buccaneer Boys". As such it will be focussed on the stories of the people who flew, maintained and supported the Skyhawk during its life on VF805 and VC724.

If you fixed, armed, fuelled, polished or pushed the aircraft, or rode in the backseat of a T-bird, or talked to the pilots in any capacity, you will undoubtedly have a story to tell. We would like to hear from you.

**David Prest** and **Peter Greenfield** are the collaborators on this project: easy peasy, tap out your story in your own words, and send it to us via email.

The project concept is to produce a hard cover illustrated book, with proceeds assigned to the Naval Aviation Museum.

Finally, I believe that it is a first of type for Australia, so let's beat Air Force again! David and Peter. ♠



## The Fleet Air Arm Roll of Honour

### RICHARD SINCLAIR

Seventy years ago this month, Sub Lieutenant Richard Sinclair lost his life in action off Korea. He was 22 years old

A West Australian by birth, he abandoned his university studies for the lure of flying in the Fleet Air Arm. After completing training in the UK he was posted to 805 Squadron which became part of the Carrier Air Group assigned to HMAS Sydney in support of UN Resolution 82 concerning the communist invasion of South Korea.



On 07<sup>th</sup> December 1951 he was patrolling the coast off Chinnampo when his Sea Fury was struck by an explosive shell. His aircraft caught fire and a short while later entered an uncontrollable dive. S/Lt Sinclair managed to exit the aircraft and his parachute was observed to open at about 100ft, but on reaching the ground he displayed no sign of movement.

A helicopter from Bromide-Baker reached him a little later and his body was recovered. Medical examination revealed he had been struck by the tail of his aircraft on bailing out, and his parachute burst open by the impact.

S/Lt Sinclair was committed to the deep at 1745 local time on 07 December 1951 with full Naval Honours in position 37 35' North, 124 30'E. We pause for a moment to remember his sacrifice. ♠

## OP BURSA UPDATE

CAPT Andrew Whittaker, RAN

Conditional upon state and Defence regulations with respect to cross border travel, the final presentation ceremonies to award the Australian Service Medal (with clasp Counter Terrorism) for Operation Bursa, have been planned as follows:

- **Nowra** (Fleet Air Arm Museum) – Monday 13 Dec 21
- **Canberra** (HMAS Harman) – Tuesday 14 Dec 21
- **Melbourne** (RAAF Laverton) – Friday 14 Jan 22
- **Brisbane** (HMAS Moreton) – Friday 21 Jan 22



So far over 360 ASMs have been awarded under this project. Those who have received their medals or are in “processing” are:

- **Batches 1-9** - notified (eg “received and registered” email from the Team) between 29 Jan 21 and 30 Sep 21 - medals received
- **Batch 10** - notified between 1 Oct 21 and 1 Nov 21 - processing
- **Batch 11** - notified after 2 Nov 21 - processing

If you are in any of Batches 1-9 and have not received your medal, tell the Team [here](#).

The Directorate of Honours and Awards (DH&A) has done a great job in supporting award recipients and I highlight a couple of examples. The turn-around time from Batch 9 being submitted by the Team to Navy

Honours and Awards (who confirm the list and send to DH&A), to medals arriving in the mail, was about six weeks. Additionally, DH&A has discovered a significant number of members who were entitled to the Australian Defence Medal, but had not received it (overwhelmingly, due to leaving the Service before the medal was incorporated). These were processed by DH&A without additional paperwork by the members.

On the next page you will see an article written by **Ken Gwynne** on Army Kiowa operations in support of OP Bursa. This was really gutsy work and the OP Bursa Team was only too happy to include those “Possum” pilots with the Navy list of veterans.

The OP Bursa Recognition Team will close down on 25 January 2022 and handover ongoing management to Navy Honours and Awards. In order to get as many OP Bursa veterans processed by that time, by a dedicated ASM CT/SR team, tell your mates who may qualify to apply via our website [here](#). ♠



# POSSUM PILOT



## The Unknown Story of 161 Recce Squadron's support of Operation Bursa

By Ken Gwynne

What follows are the recollections of a Possum pilot from a time nearly forty years ago.

I was assigned to Op Bursa in November 1982, with 161 Recce Sqn maintaining two modified Kiowa aircraft on a similar notice to move as the RAN Wessex aircraft. These Kiowas were fitted with auxiliary fuel, fixed floats, an SASR Command and Control radio system, life rafts, and the pièce de résistance, a basic rad-alt to ensure that low level flight could be "safely" conducted over water at night! Op Bursa was not the only CT tasking for 161 Recce Sqn. The SASR CT capability was rapidly evolving in the early eighties and the squadron was also required to deploy aircraft to WA in support of training activities at Swanbourne, HMAS Stirling, and other locations.

As part of the CT training, I conducted float ops on Pittwater and low-level night unaided flight training within the Holsworthy range area. Pittwater, with its mild surface chop, in no way resembled Bass Strait, but it did allow safe training to be conducted at a considerable distance from any shore cues, something not possible when operating from dams.

Our primary Op Bursa task was to fly a SASR Command and Control element. It took a considerable effort to monitor and coordinate the progress of various SAS teams, (including the RAN clearance divers), once an assault on an oil rig had been launched. The aircraft usually carried a crew of three: pilot, the SASR Alternate Commander for the assault and another SASR officer. The SASR crewmembers manned the communications links between the various elements, necessary for coordinating the assault. The Alternate Commander

would also take over in the event that the assault did not unfold according to plan, especially if one (or more) of the Wessex aircraft went down.

Although the Wessex aircraft had strategically placed cyalume sticks to provide formation flight cues, my Kiowa flew without any lighting at all, as I was positioned at the rear of the formation. Flying at the rear of the line astern formation at night could also be a hair-raising experience. The Wessex crews had to hang in fairly close to prevent losing sight of those dim cyalume sticks and this was very hard work. On more than a few occasions, some alarming concertina ripples occurred at the rear of the formation. I eventually found that I was able to position my Kiowa much higher and still keep the cyalume sticks in view, a move that considerably lowered the stress levels.

Once the assault order was given, I would break off from the Wessex holding pattern and descend to 50 feet to keep well clear, and then head towards the rig. This part of my mission was always pretty "exciting" and there were plenty of heart stopping moments when the rad-alt fluctuated wildly with those Bass Strait waves! Being in a holding position near the rigs at 50 feet, made my Kiowa almost invisible to those on the oil rig some 100 feet higher than me, and also to the inbound Wessex, which I could only dimly glimpse when they were skylighted above the horizon.

We flew these missions with enough fuel for a two and half hour plus sortie (my longest being 2.6 hours), as it was not possible for my aircraft to land on until after the SASR troops had retaken control of the oil rig. Typically, there would be a significant



*Above. A photograph of an Army B206 Kiowa taken at Merimbula during a fuelling stop enroute to the Bass Strait in the mid 80s. Of note were the floats - enormous accessories that not only induced significant drag, but were also heavy and robbed more power in the hover due to the rotor downwash impinging on their large surface area. Note also the 'range extender' behind the two figures on the LHS. This was simply an elbow shaped filler tube with the cap located on top, which allowed the internal tank to be filled completely. Image: Rod Newnham (far right).*

delay from when the last Wessex disgorged its troops until we could safely land on, and sorties of around two and half hours in duration were not uncommon.

A heavily laden Kiowa on floats has to be flown carefully. It has very little power margin, can vibrate considerably at speed, and must be kept in balance as any yaw can cause the aircraft to roll. It is also a cold and uncomfortable experience with all of the doors removed, in case of ditching. My greatest fears when flying these Op Bursa missions at night were inadvertently descending into one of those notorious Bass Strait waves or experiencing an engine failure. When conducting float training with Kiowa pilots in broad daylight, I had to be ready to take over to prevent any undue yaw and roll developing on entry to autorotation. The natural tendency of pilots is to oppose this roll with cyclic however, as it is generated by the floats, this could potentially lead to catastrophic mast bumping. How any of us Possums supporting Op Bursa would have reacted to a sudden engine failure at night over the blackness of Bass Strait, let alone from a height of fifty feet, is anyone's guess!

When discussing Op Bursa today, aviators are often

aghast at the very thought of all that unaided night flying. I had actually instructed on NVG while posted to Fort Rucker in the USA during 1981/82, and believe that we could have obtained those NVG for Op Bursa, had we wanted. So, why didn't we?

Although NVG devices are a no-brainer today, it was a very different story back in 1982. Those early goggles, known as full-face PVS-5 NVG, were actually designed for use by infantry with both feet firmly on the ground. They were held in place by a harness that went under the flying helmet and, being fully sealed around the face, provided no peripheral vision at all. Pilots had to frequently focus one tube "inside" in order to scan the (generally unlit) instruments and then, back out again to infinity to see where they were going. This was most unsatisfactory and some pilots attempted to fly with one NVG tube permanently focused "inside". I had also tried this and found it very disconcerting, and quickly abandoned the idea.

Part of the NVG face shield could be cut away to enable glances under the tubes to check instruments or map read, but for this to work the cockpit lighting had to be NVG compatible. Those early NVG tubes would shut down completely with

even the dimmest of red instrument lighting. There were numerous other shortcomings, including difficulty in estimating distance to other close aircraft, but the biggest limitation of all was the extremely poor image quality in low ambient light conditions. Given all of this, it was fairly clear to me that those early NVG were not a viable option for pilots on Op Bursa.

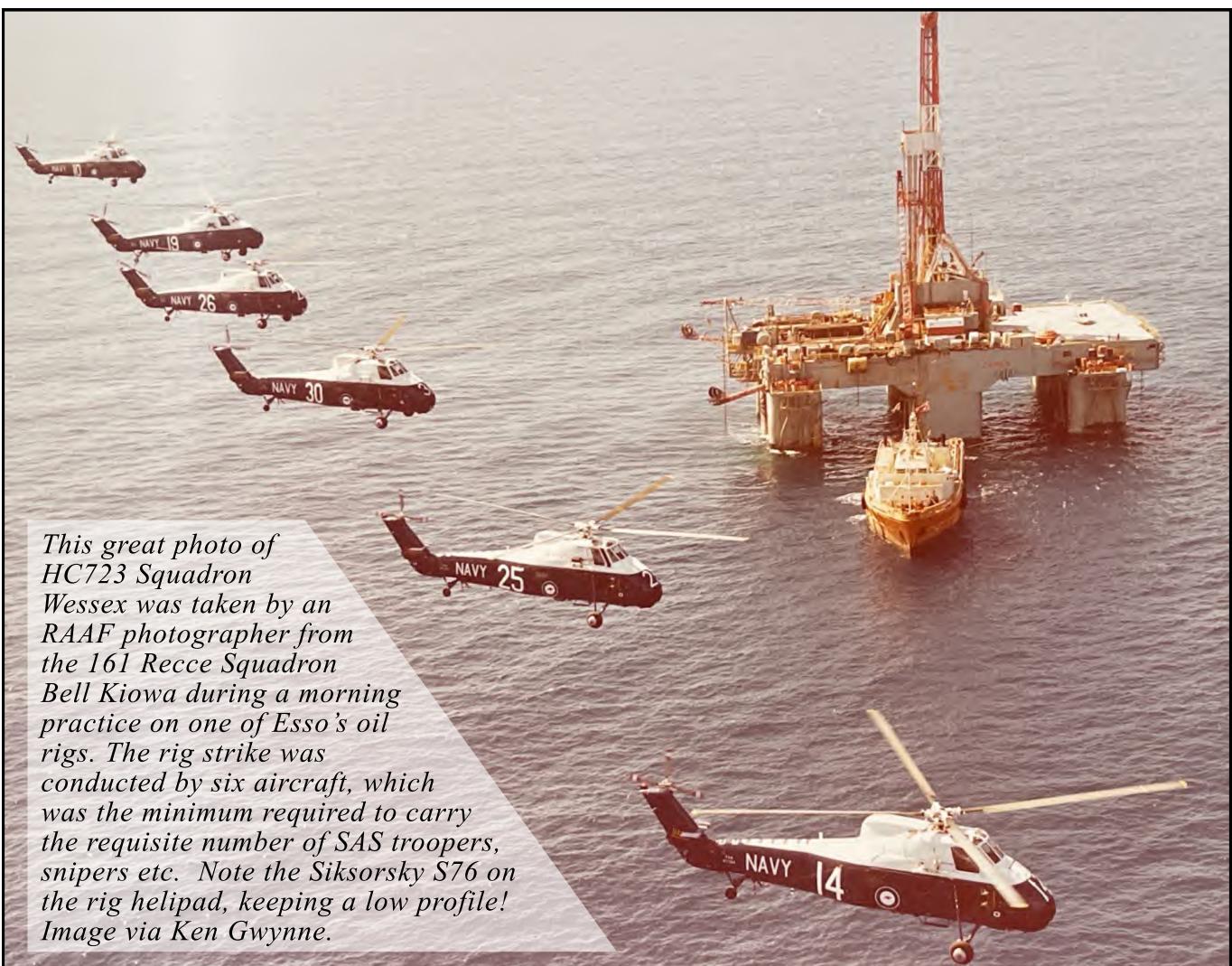
Despite industrial relations sensitivities at the time, from my perspective, Esso seemed genuinely cooperative with Defence when it came to the conduct of these Op Bursa exercises. I personally, had been provided with briefings by ESSO staff and was also given two lengthy check and training flights conducted in Esso aircraft, to familiarise me with all of Esso's Bass Strait oil rigs. This subsequently proved quite useful as I occasionally received tasking to the outer oil rigs that were not involved in the actual assault training. There were limits to the disruption that ESSO could tolerate though, and they firmly warned me that should my aircraft develop a problem and be unable to depart an oil rig helipad when they needed to transfer workers, they would have no hesitation in pushing my little Kiowa over the side!

As far as military cooperation was concerned, many of us Possums personally knew, or were on friendly

terms with, members of the SASR CT teams. Additionally, our routine flying training requirements out of Holsworthy meant that we were frequent visitors to NAS Nowra, where we got on very well with the RAN aircrew.

We also seized every opportunity to conduct deck landing training by both day and night, on the (then) newly commissioned HMAS Tobruk (L 50) as it sailed past Sydney. It was unsurprising therefore, for me to discover that all of the Op Bursa pilots from 161 Recce Squadron were offered a front seat ride in a Wessex at some stage during these Bass Strait deployments. I even took two Wessex pilots up for a flight in my Kiowa on an ad-hoc sortie during one deployment. You could do things like that back then and, at a grassroots level, I think it genuinely broadened our understanding of the other services.

Looking back now, I wish I had some photos of the Squadron involvement in Op Bursa. Army was strict on security though, and we Possums were not allowed to even write the name "Op Bursa" in our Pilot's Log Book. Of course, pilots being, well ... pilots, there was little hope of preventing endless late-night stories in the bar, even though the veracity of such tales was widely recognised as being inversely proportional to the quantity of beer consumed!



My memories of those Op Bursa deployments remain vivid. They were notable for being very high risk by today's standards and sadly, lives were lost. However, the tragic events of 1996 (Black Hawk mid-air) were to remind us all that the inherent dangers of aviation related CT training can never be fully eliminated.

*By Editor. I'm very much obliged to Ken for this article, not only for the interest of our readers but as a part of the history of 723/816 Squadrons' Bursa engagement. It reveals a part of the story that was not widely known, and which is worthy of recording in perpetuity. I've now added it to the Op Bursa chronicle on our website.*

*From a personal perspective, flying the Wessex in unlit night close formation was some of the most challenging flying I ever did. But at least we had two pilots and good rad-alt, and as Navy aircrew were familiar with low-level ops over the sea. Flying a single-pilot float-hampered Kiowa in such circumstances would have been truly demanding.♦*



## About The Author

Ken Gwynne went on to a staff posting before proceeding to 5 Squadron, RAAF, at Fairbairn, where he taught RAN and RAAF (and eventually Army) courses on Squirrel and Iroquois aircraft.

He was the Second-In-Command of 5 Aviation Regiment in Townsville when it was being raised from scratch and also instructed on Black Hawks before being posted, once again, to Fort Rucker, Alabama USA. Here, he was assigned as the Utility Helicopter Branch Chief within the US Army Aviation Directorate of Evaluation and Standardisation for two years prior to returning to Australia on appointment as the Senior Flying Standards Officer for the Australian Army Aviation Corps.

Later, he held a variety of postings, including three years in Montreal on the Black Hawk Simulator Project, before ill-health intervened and led to early retirement. Ken and his wife Mim now divide their time between their home in Toowoomba and an apartment on the coast at Caloundra.♦



## Why Possum?

Call-Sign "POSSUM" was born into the annals of Army Aviation in Vietnam in 1965

When 161 Recce Flt arrived in Vietnam waters off the coast of Vung Tau aboard HMAS Sydney the two Bell 47 Sioux helicopters were flown from the ship to Vung Tau airfield in the hands of two intrepid aviators. The aircraft were desirous of some swinging, compass-wise that is, and this intricate exercise necessitated an overnight stay at Vung Tau.

161 Recce Flt was to be part of the 1 RAR Group at Bien Hoa under the operational control of the US Army 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate). The Brigade had a tradition that units on the Brigade command net both radio and line used pro-words to their call-signs beginning with the letter 'P'. For example, the Brigade HQ switch board was 'Parachute Switch', the Support Battalion was 'Provide' with others like 'Punch' and 'Prowler' being used.

When 1 RAR joined the Brigade in mid 1965 they chose 'Platypus' which met the 'P' requirement and had a distinctly Australian National flavour.

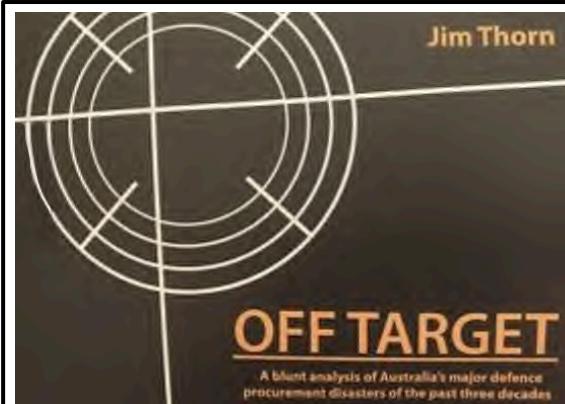
On the 29 September 1965, Captain Bevan Smith, the senior of the two aviators with the aircraft, was advised he had to select a suitable call-sign beginning with the letter 'P' before the aircraft could fly north. In a flash of brilliance he chose 'POSSUM' and this word has become enshrined in the annals of Army Aviation history.

During the period of Op Bursa, 161 Recce Sqn was located at Holsworthy Army Airfield in Western Sydney and equipped with Kiowa aircraft. Today, the Squadron is located at Robertson Barracks near Darwin and is equipped with Tiger aircraft, but it continues to use the Possum callsign.♦

## Operation Bursa

You can read the full story of Operation Bursa on our website:

**READ ARTICLE**



The Editor is keen to get his hands on the book "Off Target" by Jim Thorne, which is about various Defence Procurements that have not gone well. If anyone has a copy they are prepared to loan/sell him please contact the webmaster [here](#). ♦

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**WA DIVISION** has declined to publish its payment details. If you have any queries please contact the Secretary, Keith Taylor.

# Great Photographs

No.1 by POIS Thomas Gibson

Extracted from the book "Grey Shutterbugs" by LEUT Singer, which showcases images by Navy Imagery Specialists along with insights into their lives and some fascinating personal anecdotes from this unique Navy profession.

You can view the book [here](#).



“Members of 816 Squadron conduct morning maintenance on a Royal Australian Navy S-70B-2 Seahawk Helicopter during Exercise KAKADU 2014 at RAAF Base Darwin, Northern Territory. The idea of this photo was the brainchild of ex-Imagery Specialist Petty Officer Imagery Specialist Paul McCallum, who came up with the idea to photograph a Royal Australian Navy S-70B-2 Seahawk Helicopter at sunrise during Exercise KAKADU at RAAF Base Darwin. Sadly, he was unable to complete the task, as he was sent to sea and I was tasked to fill in. I enjoy this shot because it involves the challenges of organising everything in the dark, shooting at sunrise into the direct sun and using multiple flashes to fill in the subject. Add in a tight timeframe to capture the shot before the sun rises too much, giving you a window of about 5 minutes. All in all, this shoot encapsulates everything I love about photography, capturing an image in a very tricky situation.”