



Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia
Edition 58 - June 2022

Fly By

COMFAA Update

What the Fleet Air Arm has been doing with itself

Remembering the Blackhawk Disaster

The night we lost 18 soldiers

Training Challenges

We Hear From Some of Our Readers

The First Naval Observer

A Look at a Missing Piece of Our History

EDITORIAL

This month's edition of 'FlyBy' features a very welcome update from COMFAA, with news of what the 'real' FAA has been up to. It's the first from the new administration under CDRE Frost, who has promised us regular (quarterly) updates.

There's also important news in this edition on forthcoming reunions and events. Specifically, page 5 gives details of an Albatross Open Day scheduled for July 3rd to mark the 75th Anniversary of the FAA. This should include a range of activities including handling displays from the primary aircraft types now in service as well as from other elements based at the Air Station.

In August John Macartney plans a Veteran's reunion in Old Bar (page 11), and then over a couple of days in October there's a smorgasbord of activity planned at Nowra, including (we hope), a Naval Institute seminar on the future of the FAA; the book launch of "Flying Stations II", bringing that seminal 1986 publication up to date; a Freedom of Entry march through the streets of Nowra, and the FAA Association's Annual General Meeting. More about that in the next few months, but set aside dates in the calendar as per page 10 of this magazine.

This edition also brings you the latest work from Graeme Lunn, who has brought to light the previously unpublished story of Henry Chesterman, the RAN's very first Observer. This work joins a growing library of articles also now available on our website here.

We also remember the 26th Anniversary of that dreadful night in June of 1996 when two AAC Blackhawks collided during a Special Ops training mission, with the loss of 19 young lives. None were in the FAA

but each of them shared our values and were bretheren.

Finally, I'd like you all to think about COVID. Yes, I know we're all over it! Nobody wants to talk about it

any more, and the ability to socialise, shop or even just walk in the streets without that pesky mask is something we all enjoy.

But turning a Nelsonian Blind Eye to what's going on is foolhardy. Australia currently has one of the highest daily infection rates in the world - generally around 50,000 new cases a day, and our death toll so far this year is as bad as it was in the height of the pandemic.

Throw in winter and the start of the influenza season (a particularly nasty strain from all accounts), and the situation is not good by any measure. And yet there are virtually no public health measures any more.

So, its up to you. Wearing a mask when it gets busy in the shops is not difficult, but it is a proven way to reduce risk. And if you haven't has your third/fourth boosters AND your 'flu shot, please see to it. Not tomorrow, but today. You know it makes sense. →



Cover: Leading Seaman Aircrewman Peta Large on the flight line at HC723 Squadron, HMAS Albatross (Defence image). →

CONTENTS

COMFAA Update	3
Blackhawk Disaster Remembered	7
75 th Anniversary Arrangements	8
Letters to the Editor	9
Coming FAA Events	13 & 14
Understanding Your Benefits	14
Mystery Photos	15
Around The Traps	16
Wall of Service Update	19
Training Challenges	20
The First Observer	23

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. →



COMFAA

UPDATE



Regrettably we have missed a previous update for *FlyBy* and the following update reflects on the later part of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. The summer period, now characterised by High Risk Weather Activities, witnessed great variation in FAA contribution.

Sailors and Officers from the FAA have been Force Assigned to the Aged Care Task Force, OP COVID Assist and OP Flood Assist, many in a general duties capacity to aid the civilian community. It is important to highlight the work the FAA does in conjunction with deployable flights, and contributions to some of these continues at present.

An event receiving considerable media attention was 816SQN's response to OP Flood Assist. Working alongside NSW SES (with embedded RAN FAA Liaison Officers) and the Australian Army, approximately 150 missions were flown over the entire operation by the MH-60R and Army helicopter crews.

With the successful introduction of the Child Rescue Capsules in late 2021, 816 SQN MH-60R crews (ACMN below) conducted multiple rescues involving small children out of flood affected areas.

As identified in this publication, 03 Jul 2022 marks the 75th anniversary of the Fleet Air Arm. ANZAC Day was a suitable opportunity for HMAS *Albatross* to march in record numbers through Nowra, to show thanks for the strong partnership between the Fleet Air Arm and the Shoalhaven Region that has been built these past 75 years, especially as COVID related restrictions of the previous years begin to ease their grip.

Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS)

822X SQN completed their First Of Class Flight Trial for ScanEagle on the MATV in 2022. A three-week activity that provided invaluable experience for the UAS team, and helped consolidate their embarked procedures. These endeavours are critical for the burgeoning capability. Importantly the SEA129-5 announcement to proceed with the S100 Camcopter means 822X, in conjunction with the FAA, can direct their focus on the future UAS path and capability for the RAN.

Right from Top: [1] A Navy Seahawk assisting with the evacuation of civilians during Op. Flood Assist. [2] Crewmen are now using new rescue capsules which allow a safer approach to evacuating small children. [3] The S100 Camcopter at a display last year. The RAN recently announced it will be proceeding with the type.✈



Maritime Support Helicopter - MRH90

In November 808 SQN's Ready Team (RT) 2 embarked in HMAS Supply, the fleet's newest Auxiliary Oiler Rig (AOR), with a contingent of 816 SQN, AMAFTU, 808 SQN personnel, a MH-60R, and a MRH90 in preparation for FOCFT. Almost immediately the MRH90 was tasked to conduct the AOR's first ever MEDEVAC to Brisbane International Airport. There after the trials were a great chance for the aviators to work closely with ship's company and upskill their fleet colleagues on all things naval aviation and operations at sea.

In January, RT1 was rapidly deployed to join the ADF's response to the widespread damage caused by the eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano on 15 Jan 22. RT1, with a single MRH90, operated in in *Adelaide* and later *Canberra* from 17 Jan – 29 Mar 22. Throughout the deployment the helicopter maintained an unprecedented 100% serviceability, meaning no missions were lost due to aircraft defects. During the 52 days on station the MSH conducted a wide variety of relief tasks; importantly, transport of the much needed COVID-19 vaccines and medical staff to the outlying islands surrounding Tonga, single-handedly boosting the rollout of the vaccine by four months and one week.

The government's announcement of SEA9100 Phase 1 with the replacement of the MRH90 with MH-60R (Seahawk) helicopters means that 808 SQN will commence a massive transformation in all respects. The unit and its personnel have demonstrated unwavering professionalism to deliver capability and the FAA looks to learn from their vast experience as they transition platforms. Strength in Unity!

816SQN — MH-60R (MCH)

Below is a brief snapshot on what each of the Flights have been undertaking.

Below. 1. HMAS Success. 2&3. The FAA works in Tonga following the volcanic eruption there in January 2022. Bottom: HMAS Warramunga's embarked Seahawk christened "Sabertooth" lands on Mum's Flight Deck. ➔



Flight 1. Quarter 4 2021 saw “Sabertooth” (the Flight’s MH-60R) track north in *Warramunga* to conduct exercise Malabar in the Philippine Sea with our Japanese, American and Indian partners. On completion the flight proceeded north with HMAS *Brisbane* and HMCS *Winnipeg*. During a period on OP ARGOS, Sabertooth flew 75 hours over 10 days, disrupting ship-to-ship transfers in support of United Nations Security Council sanctions on North Korea. The flight took part in Japan’s largest exercise, ANNUALEX before returning to base.

This year, Flight 1 has been based back at HMAS *Albatross* and participated in Exercise TIGERFISH. TIGERFISH is a SQN based exercise that provides critical lethality development and experience for MH-60R crews and maintenance teams, specifically focussed on weapons employment.

Flight 2. Deployed in *Brisbane*, Flight 2 was also on RPD21-4. Regrettably in Oct 916, Seahawk “Nomad” ditched in the Philippine Sea. Fortunately, all crew members were recovered safely with only minor injuries. The incident is subject to ongoing investigation. Importantly it reminds us of the dangers that embarked aviation presents, and the incident will inevitably illuminate important lessons.

Flight 2 has since returned to flying duties. In 2022 the flight participated in Exercise TIGERFISH firings before embarking in *Parramatta*, where the flight participated in a long range MEDEVAC from a Merchantman off the NSW South Coast, demonstrating the flights continued motivation and professionalism.

Flight 3. 125 days at sea with COVID restrictions and the crew of Flight 3 received their well-earned rest in late September 2021 before preparing for the upcoming High Risk Weather Season. The Flight participated in the decommissioning activities for HMAS *Sirius* in Sydney Harbour, and Ex TIGERFISH.

Flight 4. In Q4 2021, Flight 4 joined HMAS *Brisbane* whilst on RPD and ensuring a continued anti-submarine capability. Flight 4 incrementally returned Brisbane to flying ops post the ditching and contributed to ANNUALEX alongside *Warramunga*.

In 2022, Flight 4 have assisted with OP FLOOD ASSIST and embarked in HMAS *Hobart* for fleet exercises.

Flight 6. Flight 6 were a highly efficient flight team and were able to contribute to the extremely high flying rate of 180 AFHRs flown across 3 months, in support of RPD 21-3 and IPE 21. A deployment highlight saw the helicopter “Beserker” reconfigured with ALFS to support the high-end warfighting exercise BERSAMA GOLD 21. This permitted Beserker to flex its ASW capability tracking live assets. The Flight were also tasked with a wide array of challenges ranging from a VERTREP from a desalination plant to a remote Indonesian community to locating and rescuing a stricken Indonesian fishing boat off WA.

2022 demanded a continued tempo with operations from HMAS *Albatross* supporting Australia Day, flood support, and Ex TIGERFISH, before embarking in *Warramunga* for fleet exercises.

Flight 7. In late September, Flight 7 embarked in HMAS *Ballarat* in Darwin, enroute to Singapore to join the USS *Carl Vinson* carrier strike group for Exercise MALABAR. This Exercise was a series of surface and under-surface warfare evolutions with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Indian Navy, and US Navy.

This year the Flight has embarked on HMAS *Arunta* and participated in major events: RPD 22-1 and Exercise MILAN (Visakhapatnam).



816 Squadron personnel re-arm an MH-60R Seahawk maritime helicopter at HMAS Albatross, near Nowra, New South Wales, during Exercise Tigerfish 2022.

Flight 8. Joined AMAFTU and 808 for the HMAS *Supply* First of Class Flight Trails. The crew achieved a 100% serviceability rate during the deployment and aided the successful completion of the trials.

This year the Flight focus is still to support AMAFTU and their FOCFT. To add to the mix the Flight have also supported OP Flood Assist, HMAS *Canberra's* ASSA, and Exercise TIGERFISH before moving west in preparation for the next deployment.

What's Next?

The Fleet's thirst for aviation capability is demanding and asks a lot of our personnel. This will remain unchanged however there is significant work required at Albatross to navigate the recent announcements and set the trajectory for the FAA to move from 11 capability flights to 26, in a combination of UAS and MH-60R, where the later will be operated by three separate squadrons. 2022 marks a significant growth trajectory of the FAA, a transformation that must maintain current capability and sequence the efforts for a magnitude of stakeholders. Transition, Integration, and Optimisation will keep the FAA on track and aligned with wider Navy as it looks ahead under the Command of Commodore David Frost, RAN. →

All photos courtesy of Department of Defence.

FAAAA members may be keen to know that the FAA has launched the Instagram account this month and welcomes any and all interested parties to follow the FAA story. Use your phone to open the QR code below to access. →



Blackhawk Disaster Remembered

On 12th June 1996 two Australian Army Blackhawks collided during night operations near Townsville, QLD.

Twenty-six years on we pause to remember the eighteen souls who lost their lives that night, and those they left behind.

Soon after dark on that day, six Blackhawk helicopters were participating in a SASR counter-terrorist training exercise near Townsville. The pilots used night vision goggles as they flew in tight formation towards the target area. Just 30 seconds from the landing zone, one helicopter veered right and clipped the rotor of another.

One Blackhawk crashed immediately, killing 12 personnel, while the other was able to land but burst into flames, killing a further six soldiers. In addition to the 18 deaths, many others were seriously injured.

Like our brethren in the Army Air Corps, we understand the risks inherent in military aviation.

We understand too the terrible burden carried by those who survived that night, and the timeless grief of those who lost loved ones.

We remember, and we pay our respects. ➔



CPL M. AVEDISSIAN	SASR	LCPL G.D. HAGAN	SASR
CPL M.C. BAKER	5 AVN REGT	CAPT K.J. HALES	5 AVN REGT
CAPT J.B. BERRIGAN	5 AVN REGT	LCPL D.A. JOHNSTONE	SASR
CPL M.J. BIRD	SASR	TPR T.J. MCDONALD	SASR
LCPL G.A. CALLOW	SASR	CPL D.R. OLDHAM	SASR
TPR J.G.S. CHURCH	SASR	SIG H. PEETERS	SASP
CPL A. CONSTANTINIDIS	SASR	CAPT T.J. STEVENS	SASI
SGT H.W. ELLIS	SASR	CPL D.J. SMITH	SASR
LCPL D.B. FROST	SASR	CPL B.S. TOMBS	SASR



In July of 1947 the Australian Government approved the formation of a Fleet Air Arm together with the purchase of two Majestic class carriers, Sea Fury and Firefly aircraft and associated equipment, two onshore Naval Air Bases, and the recruitment and training of maintainers and aircrew.



To commemorate this 75th Anniversary the Fleet Air Arm will be holding an Open Day at HMAS Albatross on Sunday 3rd July 2022, from 1000 to 1300. This will be open to the general public. Details of the program are in the final stages of approval but are hoped to include:

- **MH-60R AWE Flag Fly welcome to visitors.**
- **Welcome to Country Smoking Ceremony.**
- **AVN Demonstration at LHD Dummy Deck.**
- **898 (Iroquois of the Naval Heritage Flight) handling demonstration (TBC).**
- **Federation Guard Display.**
- **844 (Tracker of the Naval Heritage Flight) flypast & handling demonstration (TBC)**
- **RAN Band Marching Display.**
- **EC135 Handing Demonstration.**
- **MH60R Flying Display to conclude**

Parking will be at the Fleet Air Arm Museum Car Park and no prior approval is required to enter the area designated for the above events.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate the 75th birthday of the Fleet Air Arm and readers are all cordially invited to attend.



Howard Mitchell



Dear Editor,

I thought this photo of a 'HURRICAT' may be useful for your archives along with this text:

"Merchant ships supplying Malta and North Africa were sometimes fitted with catapult-launched aircraft. This is a Hawker Sea Hurricane Mark 1, V6733. on the fo'castle catapult of Merchantman SS Empire Darwin, in the Mediterranean. The catapult was angled to starboard over the ship's bows to prevent the blast from the rockets hitting the superstructure and reduce the risk of the pilot being run over by the ship, should the aircraft ditch into the sea. Photo by Sgt C J Dawson, IWM via Getty Images.

Cheers, **Phil Thompson** →

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed the latest FlyBy, particularly as my time (on and off) at Nowra encompassed the same period as the Macchi service.

As a comment on Ian McIntyre's excellent article on the subject of the paint scheme, particularly his comment "...as all who knew Nobby would understand." I am sure he knew the reason but is too polite to put it in writing.

I was in the Wardroom bar one Friday afternoon ('nuff said) and Nobby was in attendance doing his "thing" when the subject of the aircraft paint colour(s) was mentioned. His reply to the question was typical of his direct manner in all things :-

"They're my f\$%^ing aircraft, I'll paint 'em whatever f%&ing colour I like".*

I can only assume that Command gave in, rather than get into a fight with Nobby, one of the greatest Captains I ever served under.

Regards, **John "Bomber" Brown** →

Dear Editor,

For the realisation of a diorama I'm looking for a photograph showing a Fairy Gannet standing on the elevator, ready to go below deck, or just coming up.

I searched the net and several books like 4+ Publication/British Carriers but could not find one picture of a Gannet on the elevator.

I would appreciate some form of response.

Highest Regards from The Netherlands,

Dirk Derks

By Ed. Unfortunately the FAAA's extensive library of Gannet photos could not help this gent, so I'm throwing it open to our readers. If anyone has any photographs of a Gannet on Melbourne's lift, could they scan it and send to me [here](#) (or send the original copy and I'll promise to return it by the next post). Scans should be at a high resolution please. →



By Editor. Last month **Ray "Beachball" Godfrey** asked if anyone knew what the ordnance on the starboard wing of the A4 in the picture to the right was. **Andy Brown** and **Peter Greenfield** both responded to advise the Skyhawk was carrying a Practice Multiple Bomb Rack (PMBR), fitted with six Mk.76 or Mk.106 practice bombs.

Phil Thompson did a whole bunch of research to find better photos, which are shown below, to the right. He concluded that the PMBR was carrying two SUU-44 Flare Pods.

Thank you to all those who took the trouble to help out. ➔



Dear Editor

I read with interest the article by **Ray Guest** in edition 57 of "Fly By" regarding the passing of Bernie (Big Jules) Jeffrey.

It started me thinking of the enormous effect sport had on all serving members particularly during the early years. When you consider the number of personal that have passed through the FAA, both Upper and Lower deck, sport had a binding effect bringing everybody together. My memory is struggling to recall all of the clubs that featured in the back of the fortnightly pay day issue of *Slipstream*. I'm sure others can remember. They covered a multitude of sports to cater for all different likes and abilities.

I hesitate to name those at the top of the tree for fear of missing out on others who rightly deserve a mention but here is just a few. **Brian Smith**, Golden Gloves title boxing. **Charlie Morris**, Olympic shot-put. **Ralph Turner** and Leon (Big Swampy) **O'Donnell**, both of these fellows were champion Australian Rules players, each one captained the NSW side at different times.

The list goes on not only in the football codes but pretty much any sport you can think of. Sailing, Gliding, Tennis, Cricket, Hockey, Basketball, Athletics, Rugby, Soccer and many more. Not only did sport give us a place and a reason to mix with others it gave us memories that will never be forgotten.

Who can recall the sometimes terrifying trips to Sydney in the old blue pusser's bus to flex our muscles against other ships and establishments. Then the twice as terrifying trip coming back down Mt. Ousley after a good time was had by all. We survived and were all the better for it.

As a matter of interest the photo submitted by Ray is of the 1961 Inter-service Aussie Rules team in which at least fifteen players were from HMAS *Albatross*. Most of those were affiliated with Sydney Naval or South Sydney clubs at the weekends.

We can't turn back time but we can enjoy the memories good and bad. A big thank you to you Marcus for your efforts.

Cheers, **Col Poulton** ➔



Dear Editor,

Thanks for sending the latest FlyBy through. Refreshed some fond memories of my time as a "lecky" working on our Macchis and Scooters.

Good to see 844 flying again. While part of the historic flight we used to maintain the Dak, Sea Fury, Firefly, Tracker etc. Great times especially operating the radome and MAD Boom at the various airshows.

Not many maintainers could say that they had that opportunity to work on a diverse range of aircraft and then actually get to fly in the airshows!! I feel really blessed to have had the chance to be part of the FAA,

Cheers, **Zed** ➔



Dear Editor,

Thank you for your approval to post the photo of the 'Vennet' (FlyBy, April 2022) to the De Havilland Vampire and Venom Appreciation Society Face Book group. Here are a response from **David Watkins**, author of books on the Vampire and Venom.

"A number of Sea Venom FAW.20s were relegated to instructional airframes for use at various Naval-training establishments. However, the majority were passed to the AHU at Abbotsinch, where they languished in long-term storage until being sold for scrap between 1958 and 1963.



A few redundant airframes were also used for fire practice but several were given a temporary reprieve when they formed the basis of the conversion of the navy's "top secret, experimental aircraft" - the DH "Vennet" - which was also variously referred to as the "Fairey Nuff" or "Sea Snipe". Preparing for the 1961 Open Day, the engineers of No.12 Hangar at Abbotsinch, under the direction of the AEO, Lt Ted Cottle decided to build a spoof aircraft. The conversion involved removing the tail booms and tip tanks from a surplus Sea Venom, while the rudders of two Fairey Gannets were fixed to the boom attachment points and connected to the rudder pedals by adapting the control cabling. Dummy missiles were

also fitted, together with an extended nose, into which a standard tubular office chair - or "pilot's" seat - was bolted to the cockpit floor.

The "Vennet" was described as the Fleet Air Arm's 'latest rocket-powered, high-altitude fighter, capable of flying over Mach 3' and would be making its maiden test flight in front of the public during the forthcoming Air Day. As an "experimental aircraft" it was kept at a discreet distance from the crowd line when the pilot, Lt Paul Stevenson, taxied to the main runway and accelerated away at 90 knots. With smoke and flames pouring from the condemned Ghost engine, a



bemused public was told that the aircraft had developed an "engine failure" and because of repeated trouble with the "super-heat ignition system" the test flight would have to be abandoned!

The following year, the technicians of 10 Hangar produced the "Vennet Mark II" as a successor for the Mark 1 for the 1962 Air Day. With Sea Venom and Gannet airframes again used as the basis for the conversion, the main alterations included the fitting of wing-tip ramjets, modified rudders, a nose-type intake and the addition of two guided weapons. The "aircraft" was painted white indicating the strike role with a yellow "P" on the fuselage. Unfortunately, the "ultrasonic version of the previous supersonic world beater" failed to take off for the planned Air Race and was returned to the hangar for further modifications!"

Cheers, **Nicholas Cale**

By Ed. The photo David provided (below, left) would have been an earlier/different version of a Gannet/Venom conversion as it sports a pretty much unchanged Venom fuselage aside from the aft section, where the twin booms have given way to a single Gannet tail. The tailpipe had a long extension and the undercarriage is in competition with a 747! Perhaps Abbotsinch had a bit of a competition going on for different groups of engineers?

Nicholas provided a second photo (above). It's not great quality as it was lifted from an Abbotsinch magazine of the time, but it gives a better impression of the Vennet Mk. 2.

Thanks to Nicholas for a bit more information on this quirky bit of FAA history. ➔



Left. 'FlyBy' doesn't normally involve itself with politics, nor strives to favour one brand of it over another...but the photo of a very fast-response advert by Ikea ticked the Editor's sense of humour. Thanks to Mac for sending it in. ➔



Dear Editor,

You published an article in May 2022's *FlyBy* magazine re the **Defence Ombudsman Scheme**, and the deadline for reporting of 22 June 2022.

I was wondering if you could print a reminder as time for veterans seeking to lodge a claim is running out.

Warm regards,

Tammy Allwood.

Executive Assistant to Adair Donaldson

(07) 4580 0900

tammy@donaldsonlaw.com.au

By Editor,

The full details of the Defence Ombudsman Scheme to which Tammy refers can be found on page 6 of last month's *FlyBy* [here](#). (Note that this article suggested the deadline was 30 June, but it is now confirmed as **22 June**).

In a nutshell:

- The scheme seeks to compensate Veterans who experienced Trauma during their time in the ADF.

- The previous Scheme (the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce) ceased in 2015 but many veterans were unaware of its existence. The process has therefore been reopened under this Defence Ombudsman Scheme.
- Trauma could have arisen from practices of the time such as "Hazing" or Induction Ceremonies, or assaults by fellow members of the ADF. Examples include being attacked in showers, being made to hang from rafters, being humiliated in front of fellow soldiers or being assaulted with different items.
- Many of that generation of ADF members regard such events as 'normal for the time' and have put it behind them. It is not OK behaviour, though, and you are entitled to appropriate compensation and an apology if you experienced such events.
- Tax free payments of up to \$50K may be made to eligible victims. These payments will NOT affect any other entitlements such as pensions or DVA card benefits.
- Veterans who experienced trauma as a result of such behaviour must lodge an application to the Defence Force Ombudsman by the **22 June 2022**.
- Failing to do so means you will be barred, and lose your chance.

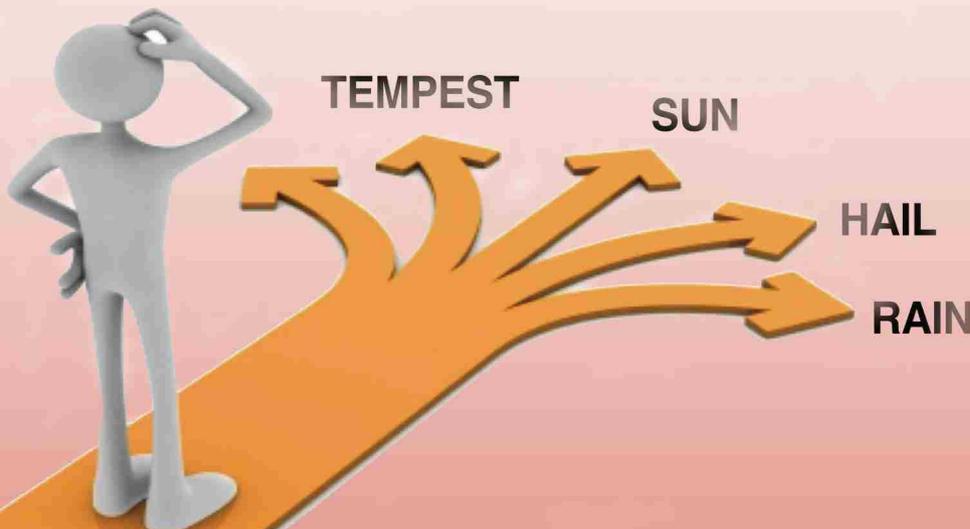
If you believe you were a victim please contact Tammy by phone or email. Details are at the signature block to the left.

She will be able to offer advice and assistance, but have an early conversation noting that the deadline for any subsequent claim is 22 June 2022. →

Attention Met Men!

Bill Delaney, ex MET Branch, is looking to put together a short history of the Branch together with a number of smaller articles around a "Day In The Life of a Met Man" theme. He is interested in hearing from all ranks.

Your input could be an anecdote about a particular day/experience you had, or about working in a particular posting, or your thoughts on your job more generally and whether you liked it or not (excuse the pun!). You get the drift!



Like all things, these priceless memories will be lost if we don't make an effort to capture them before we all get too old to keep our marbles.

So, why not put a few words together and send them to Bill [here](#). →

Were You A QHI?

History of Training of Qualified Helicopter Instructors – 1962 to 2022

Trevor Rieck has embarked on a history project to trace and document the training of helicopter instructors in the RAN. He seeks to gather information from far and wide and asks *Flyby* readers to offer any information along the suggestions below.

There have been five strands of QHI training in the RAN from 1962.

1. The exchange program with the RN Basic Helicopter Training Squadron at 705 Squadron in Helston, Cornwall, between 1963 and 1996. QHI training was conducted at RAF Tern Hill with the RAF Central Flying School, Helicopters (CFS(H)). The newly qualified QHIs proceeded to two years exchange with 705. Meanwhile, many undertook that training but returned directly to flying instructional duties at Nowra. Any contributions on this period from stories, experiences and so on from those who participated would be most appreciated.
2. CFS(H) UK - 1996 - 2018. Training with the Central Flying School (Helicopters) continued, in a small way, when the exchange program at 705 finished. The first was a Lynx exchange with RN702 beginning in 1996, and the last pilot (so far) to be sent was in 2018. There is a major gap in information and participants for this period and any comments on this period would help immensely.
3. ADFHS - 1993 - 2001. Indigenous QHI training began at 5 Squadron RAAF with the formation of the Australian Defence Force Helicopter School (ADFHS). It would be of great value for any and all those who trained as QHIs at ADFHS to offer their story. Of help would be to shed some light on the training program.
4. AATC - 2001 - 2019. QHI Training for Navy and Army was moved to Oakey in 2001 under the Army Aviation Training Centre. Now here is a vacuum. RAN pilots trained for 18 years in sunny Queensland and QHIs were graduated from the Centre. For those QHIs who were trained at Oakey it would be a great asset to hear from you and your experiences.
5. HATS - 2019 - to present. Training was transferred to the Navy under the ADF Helicopter Aircrew Training System (HATS) in 723 SQN. From 2019 to 2022 many QFI(H) have been trained at 723. Once again it would help in the gathering of the story to hear from any and all who have trained back at Navy.

He would also like a list of 'retread' personnel who transferred to the RAN as QHI qualified - so if you are one of them (or know of any) perhaps you could let him know.

Trevor can be contacted at tkr717@gmail.com. He lives in London so the telephone might not be convenient.

He would be most appreciative to hear from any and all to build up the project. ➔



Dear Colleagues,

The Fleet Air Arm Association Federal Council Meeting (FCM) and triennial election of Office Bearers will take place on Saturday 22nd October 2022 at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, HMAS ALBATROSS commencing at 1000.

This FCM will be the first in three years to be held 'in-person' and there will be a Zoom stream to enable observers from Divisions to view the meeting 'live'. The Guest Speaker will be Commodore **David Frost**, RAN, current Commander Fleet Air Arm (COMFAA).

An exciting aspect of this year's event will be a series of concurrent activities tailored to appeal to current serving Fleet Air Arm members, veteran members of the Association and the general public.

On Friday 21 October the Australian Naval Institute (ANI) will be conducting a special Fleet Air Arm Seminar. The launch of the book "FLYING STATIONS II - A History of the Fleet Air Arm 1998-2022" will take place in the FAA Museum, and HMAS ALBATROSS and HMAS CRESWELL will exercise their FREEDOM OF ENTRY to the City of Shoalhaven. Timings for these two latter events are yet to be publicised.

Plans are also being formulated for social activities and a dinner, so please encourage your wives and partners to come along and make this a 'Back To Nowra' long weekend. Division FCM delegates, observers and family members are urged to start making travel and accommodation arrangements.

Best regards,

Terry Hetherington OAM ➔ [see next page also]

**Coming
FAA
Events**

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2022

This year is the 55th anniversary of the formation of the RANHFV, so John Macartney, who has done such a good job organising past annual reunions, approached the local Mayor for the RANHFV and 9 Squadron Detachment be given Freedom of Entry on VV Day in August this year. He is pleased to report that the approval has been given.

So, this is a heads up to start packing your bags for a trip to Old Bar in August.

Dates will be Tues 16th (Meet and Greet), Wed 17th (Dinner) and Thur 18th (Freedom of Entry and possible evening social event).

Please note these dates in your diaries and keep an eye on this column for further updates.

REST IN PEACE

Since the last edition of FlyBy we have been advised that the following people have Crossed the Bar:



Colin Mackenzie, Jack Duperouzel, Brendan Hill MBE.

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



We still have a dwindling a stock of "Fly Navy" bumper stickers for sale.

Made from high quality vinyl, these 200x60 mm self-adhesive stickers will provide bright, fade resistant service for many years for your car, luggage or anywhere else you choose to stick them!

The price is \$1.50 each for up to ten stickers (minimum order 5), or \$1.30 each for ten or more. These prices are inclusive of postage anywhere in Australia.

To order, click [here](#), then fill out the little form and press the SUBMIT button. You will receive an email in return with payment details. Turn around is normally within 24 hours.

The last batch we ordered went very quickly so don't delay! →

Understanding Your Benefits

By Jim Bush

Service Pension Benefits

DVA may pay a Service Pension for eligible veterans with qualifying service, and a partner service pension for their partners at the veteran qualifying age 60.

Where eligible, the veteran and their partner are not subject to meeting the age pension age (65, increasing to 67 dependant on the person's date of birth) as DVA recognises that the impact of Service may reduce the time veterans can keep working.

In certain circumstances the qualifying age for partners may therefore be at a lower age. These circumstances briefly are;

- Age 50, where the veteran partner is in receipt of a disability pension at above the General Rate under the Veterans Entitlements Act (VEA), and at 80 impairment points under the Military Rehabilitation Compensation Act) MRCA compensation schemes.
- At any other age, with a dependent child at the time of applying, and/or the veteran partner is receiving the special rate (TPI) disability pension, and the special rate disability pension (SRDP) under the VEA and MRCA compensation schemes respectively

I have attached a link to the DVA Web Page information sheet, "Service Pension for Veterans" which sets out the eligibility criteria for payment of service pensions that may be read [here](#).

Further information on the eligibility criteria for partner service pensions is set out in the DVA Web Page information sheet, "Service Pension for Partners," that may be read [here](#). →

Last Month's Mystery Photo



Last month we asked if anyone knew where the above naval base was, and what went on there.

It is a photo of **HMS Condor**, near the town of Arbroath in Scotland, and it would be familiar to many of our FAA veterans of the Sea Fury and Firefly and perhaps the Gannet era. The picture appears to include the central parade ground with a march-off after Divisions.

The base was first constructed as a [Fleet Air Arm](#) base in 1938, when it was known as RNAS Arbroath (HMS Condor). It was opened on 19 June 1940. From the outset it was a training outfit, primarily involved in the training of naval aviators. A purpose-built 'aircraft carrier' sized landing area was

constructed on the airfield and it, along with another similar facility at nearby East Haven, Angus, (HMS Peewit) was used to teach aircrew deck landing operations.

Flying stopped in 1954 and the base became the home of the Royal Navy Aircraft Engineering Training School which had transferred from HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent, Hampshire. It continued in this role until 1 April 1971 when it became the home to 45 Commando Royal Marines.

Does anyone remember it? Why not put a few words down telling us of your time there? Send them [here](#).

Image courtesy of Mike Kirwan. Ref: Wikipedia. →

This Month's Mystery Photo



This month's Mystery Photo shows an RAF Vulcan bomber somewhere over the skies of the UK.

But what was it doing, and why?

Click [here](#) to lodge your answer. →

Around The Traps



UAVs are proving to be a potent force multiplier in the Ukraine, so its no surprise work is afoot to expand their utility. While our own 822X Squadron works to test the utility of our UAVs, the Royal Navy has pushed two different drones to their limits to show how they could be used on front-line operations.

The Malloy Aeronautics T-600 quadcopter and Windracers Autonomous Systems' Ultra drone proved their abilities to carry heavy payloads of 100kg over long distance and more than 250kg over a shorter distance.

The trial aims to encourage industry partners to see what equipment they have which could be adapted for use by the Royal Navy to deliver supplies such as humanitarian stores, first aid, ammunition and spare parts to the front-line.

And the aircraft impressed in the most recent trials which saw the Malloy T-600 fly with a 250kg payload while the fixed-wing Windracers Ultra dropped a 100kg payload 1,000km away to a platform replicating a Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier flight deck. It was able to slow on approach and drop its package with pinpoint accuracy. →

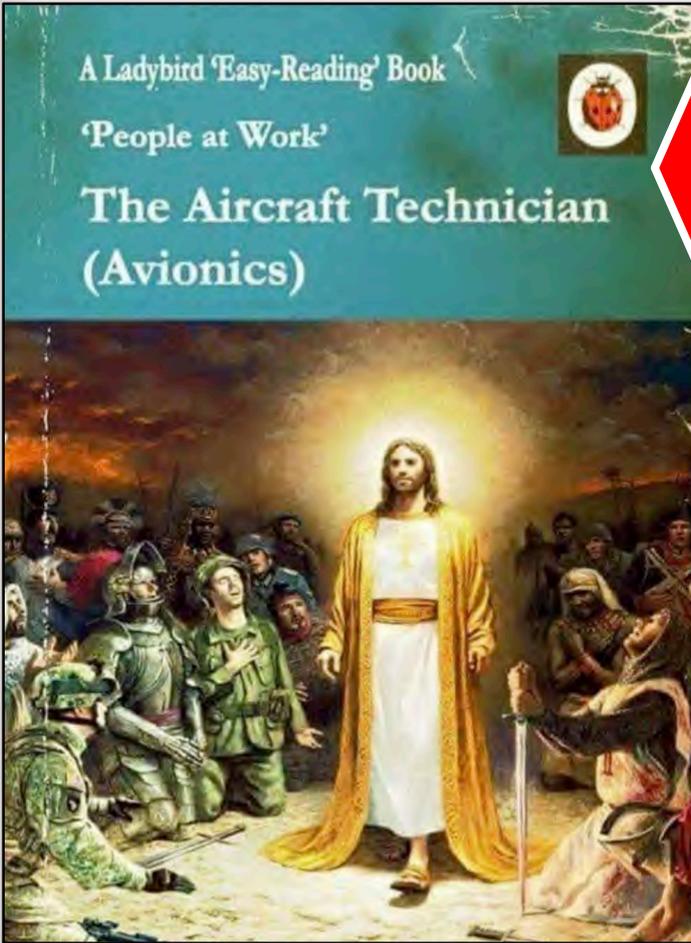
QUICKSINK DESTROYS SHIP

Speaking of new capability, the US has just tested a new concept in anti-ship capability. Nicknamed "Quicksink", it is a low cost, air delivered capability for defeating maritime threats.

Basically, a stand-off guided weapon is placed alongside the target vessel, which then detonates underneath it. This generates a massive steam bubble that expands rapidly under the hull, lifting it and weakening the keel. When the bubble collapses, the vessel falls into the resultant void, breaking the ship's back.

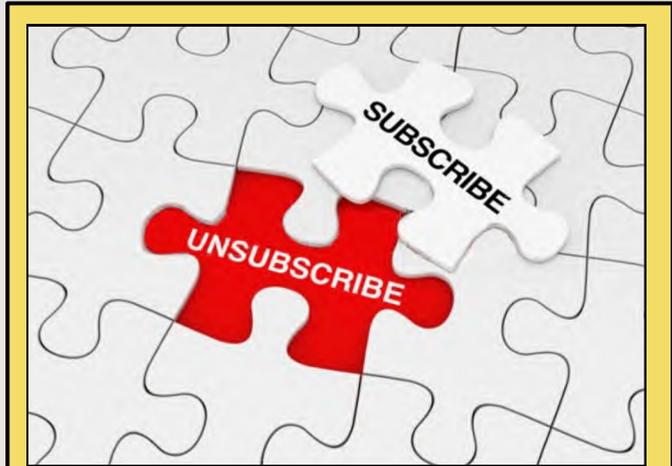
You can see a live test of Quicksink on a full-sized target [here](#), or a simulation explaining it in more detail [here](#). →





Those readers who don't keep a close eye on various FAA related FaceBook sites may have missed the recent item by **Mal Alexander**, who re-posted an image (left) of a popular Ladybird Reading Book, somewhat irrelevantly amended.

The post spawned a number of comments including one from **Tony Guyatt**, who remarked: "Ah, I get it. The avionics technicians are all kneeling when an ATA arrives. Makes sense to me..." →



FLYBY MAGAZINE UNSUBSCRIBE

The 'FlyBy' notification email sent to you each month contains, in small print at the very bottom, an unsubscribe link. Its there to allow recipients to opt out of receiving any further emails of that type.

I occasionally get an unsubscribe from someone who just isn't interested any more and that's fine. But I'm also getting an increasing number of inadvertent unsubscribes from people who are regular readers.

If I'm able to discern these I generally write to the person and invariably get an 'oops' message back. I can then reverse the unsubscribe.

This is actually quite a laborious manual process when it occurs several times a month so please, have care where you click on that notification email!

If you do hit the link by mistake, you can do the reversal yourself. Go to our website, scroll down a bit to the "FlyBy" library graphic (a picture of the latest magazine), click on that and then click on the SUBSCRIBE button at the foot of the text.

Thanks for your assistance.

Editor. →



Apache & Seahawk Acquisition

More details have emerged on the Government's proposal to acquire Boeing Apache AH64-Es to replace the Army's Struggling ARH Airbus 'Tigers', and Sikorsky MH-60R Skyhawk Romeos. The latter will supersede Navy's existing Airbus MRH-90 'Taipans' plus an additional airframe to replace the existing Seahawk lost in 2021.

In a statement on 9 May, the Government announced a commitment of AU\$2.5 billion for the projects, with deliveries expected in 2025. A further AU\$360m has been set aside for 'expansion of facilities' at HMAS *Albatross*, where the Seahawks will be based.

The MRH-90s have had a troubled history since their introduction. 'FlyBy' understands that logistics and configuration problems were significant to the point where the type was deemed to be no longer sustainable. →



HARS

Those lucky enough to live in the Illawarra would have seen much activity in the skies over the Historic Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS) in recent weeks, especially on those occasional days when the rain gave way to brilliant sunshine. Many of the vintage aircraft we've observed once served in the Fleet Air Arm.

HARS relies on donations to keep going, and has asked if anyone can assist them with a couple of big bills. These are:

Flight Status Insurance

Every Year the annual insurance bill has to be paid to keep our NHF aircraft in flight status, and is approx. \$A7000 p.a.

Routine Supply of Oil

Our Beloved Tracker 844 consumes aviation grade oil regularly each time it flies! Can you help donate or sponsor our aviation oil please?

The oil specification is O-120 Aero Engine Oil, and approx. \$2200 per 205 litre drum!

Can you help with any of the above requests please?

Even small donations genuinely help, and they really do want to keep these magnificent warbirds flying

Please donate through the HARS shop website [here](#), and click on Donation. Just a few dollars would be very welcome.

Michael Hough HARS NHF Project leader. →





Ahoy Korea and Vietnam Veterans!

The NSW Government is hosting an afternoon reception for the Korean and Vietnam War veteran community on **Saturday 23 July**, in Sydney.

If you are a Korean War veteran and would like to attend the event please email Nick Young [here](#) by close of business **02 June 2022**.

The short notice is regretted but we did manage to negotiate an extension to even allow this June date. →

AVCAT Scholarships for Veterans' Kids/Grandkids

Wouldn't it be great if you could help your children or grandchildren with a funded scholarship to help with the cost of their education? Well, you might be able to, simply by filling out a form or two.

AVCAT scholarships, including the Long Tan Bursary, are tertiary scholarships for the children and grandchildren of Australian ex-serving veterans. Scholarships are \$4,000–\$6,000 per year for three years. Applications open on **18 August 2022** and close at midnight AEDT on **31 October 2022**. You can apply online at avcat.org.au

Applicants must be:

- Enrolled or planning to enrol in a full-time course for one or more academic year's duration at university TAFE, or RTO in 2023.
- An Australian citizen or permanent resident.
- The child, stepchild, foster child, or grandchild of an Australian ex-serving veteran.
- In receipt of, or eligible to receive, Centrelink payments including Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY, Austudy, VCES or an accepted means-tested Commonwealth government payment in 2023.

The Bursary is sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs. View the complete list of AVCAT Scholarship sponsors [here](#).

Find information about scholarships, the application process or eligibility at avcat.org.au. →



Do You Need Something to Do?

Do you find yourself with time on your hands, and are you civic-minded? If so you might consider helping the Fleet Air Arm Association.

The New South Wales Division is urgently in need of a **Treasurer** and a **Secretary**. Both positions are nominally vacant, and both are vital to the efficient running of the Division.

Duties would include:

TREASURER

- Keep accurate records of all moneys received and expended.
- Balance the financial records by the first (1st) day of January.
- Present a financial report to the Annual General Meeting.
- Prepare an annual budget each January.

SECRETARY

- Receive, dispatch and record all correspondence.
- Keep accurate minutes of all Meetings.
- Maintain the Association Membership Register.
- Hold the master copy of the Constitution,
- Inform members of date and times of meetings.



Anyone who's done any administrative duties will quickly see that neither position is onerous. You'd be looking at a couple of hours a week tops, and it can be done remotely so you don't need to live in or around Nowra.

Advantages? Well, you'd be giving something back to the Veteran Community and helping an Association which is committed to connecting with our FAA members, past and present.

Please contact the Editor [here](#) if you want to hear more. ➔

WALL OF SERVICE UPDATE

The Wall of Service is a way to preserve your name and details of your Fleet Air Arm Service in perpetuity, by means of a bronze plaque mounted on a custom-built wall just outside the FAA museum. The plaque has your name and brief details on it.

There are over 1000 names on the Wall to date and, as far as we know, it is a unique facility unmatched anywhere else in the world.

It is easy to apply for a plaque and the cost is reasonable. Simply click [here](#) for all details, and for the application form.

Order No 50 for Wall of Service plaques (not 49 as previously reported in these pages) remains open, with names so far as follows:

Cummings P.T. R104121 CPOA Jul69-Sep90
Young C.R. R118661 CPOA Jan76-Jan96
Garside T.P. O122656 CMDR Apr77-Apr22
Gugliotti D.J. S116274 POATW3 Sep74-Sep84
Schmidt M.A. O129938 CAPT GLEN(AE) Jan81-Jul11
Dudley J.B. A45206 LEUT (O) May 51-Jan60
Fiedler, G. OAM O126802 CMDR (ATC/O) Jan80-Apr21

We need 12 names before an order can be sent to the Foundry, so it's getting close. If you've been thinking of buying one, now is a good time if you want to avoid a long wait. ➔



TRAINING CHALLENGES

Last month we asked our readers what the most challenging part of achieving their Aviation Qualification was. The following responses were received:

1. Carrier Qualifications

By far my most challenging event was CARQUAL on USS Lexington in the Gulf of Mexico flying the T28 Trojan.

With around 150 hours, a couple of dual Field training trips, a handful of solo field trips off we went one Friday morning a flight of four students led by our instructor.

He would trap, secure his aircraft and wave us to the deck.

The sequence, if completed correctly, was one canopy closed, gear down, hook up, wave off. This was followed by two canopy open, hook up touch-and-goes, then four traps.

This sequence was accomplished more by good luck than good aviation skills as delays on the deck often meant you missed out on a perfect 4.0. My log book shows I got lucky.

Some points - base turn not go below was 73 IAS or the dreaded approach turn stall with resultant roll on back and dive into oggin would occur - I found myself shoving the throttle forward during one such approach. Neptune must have been smiling that day!

No catapult for the T28 - kick it straight up the axial and following deck instructions - throttle to 30 inches - check Sump (magnetic) Plug - nod to deck hand - full throttle 52 inches (first time power above 48 inches was allowed to be used) - Do Not look at IAS as you cross the bow!! Marvellous how much 53 inches will skull drag into the air - the R1820 was the same engine the Tracker had two of.

An interesting side light- one of our Australian pilots in my flight wanted me to give him a small koala I had which used to accompany me on every flight. His intention was to shove the koala into a condom and cast the object onto the deck during his first arrest. I denied his request, demanding whether he'd been asleep during the numerous FOD lectures or had ignored the FOD posters that adorned almost every spare bulkhead space in the squadron buildings!

Post flight to the bar - jugs of Tom Collins consumed and the strange ritual of having your tie cut in half by your instructor!

A sobering thought - it was not a rare occurrence that a student died at the boat.

Cheers, KJ →

A T28 Trojan doing a CARQUAL landing aboard USS Lexington, as described by Ken Vote. (Photo: Graham Pring)



2. Social Disaster

My biggest challenge in becoming a pilot was not to let training get in the way of my social life.

From Point Cook through to Pearce I was constantly challenged by the need to show that I could maintain a hectic social life unhindered by the drudgery of pilot training.

On arrival at Pt Cook we were told when the students mess ie bar would be open and that if we kept our instructors well lubricated we had a good chance of getting our wings.

So every Friday night we dutifully held happy hour for our worthwhile instructors.

The second challenge was that the junior course had to hold a farewell party for the graduating course. (Might be a bit confused there but who cares). Any excuse for a party.

So we set about organising a Roman Orgy complete with the required reclining lounges ie. mattresses and a continuous supply of nourishment for both body and soul which included a 10 gallon milk can of 57 cse Sangria which was allowed to ferment for several days.

We were surprised how bright aluminium becomes when subjected to fermented fruit.

Dress for the occasion was compulsory togas with sheets/pillowcases provided for those who arrived in inappropriate rig.

A great night was had by all. The next morning was a different matter as we also had to clean up the aftermath.

Then there was the weekends. Who wanted to study over the weekend?

The regular hangout on a Saturday afternoon was a great bar in downtown Melbourne where

plans were made for the rest of the day. Melbourne was still 6 o'clock closing in '65.

One memorable Sunday night with my FHT due on Wednesday was a night to remember until 0800 on a wet and windy Monday morning. I was told that due to the weather the junior course would not be flying and that I was to change into flying rig for my FHT with the CFI.

S—T I was still half (?) under the weather but you could not tell your instructor (Bill Callen) that, so up I went. Needless to say I spun out of a stall, did six landings per circuit and sundry other cock ups.

The silence in the Winjeel was deafening on the way back. Bill was summoned to the CFIs office and I was ordered to wait outside. Half an hour later after hearing much shouting from the CFI and 'I don't know whys' from Bill I was summoned and asked to explain. Throwing myself on their mercy I pleaded 'But, the test was two days early and I wasn't prepared, plus test nerves'. Dismissed and told to await judgement I sweated out the next 15 minutes before I was told my fate.

Quote " You will have three more sorties with Flight Commanders and then a scrub ride". PHEW!!!!

Anyway, first up stalls & spins which I nailed followed by circuits which I also nailed, whereby my instructor asked WTF happened? I stuck to my story and never heard another thing except that I was the luckiest trainee on course. Many years later over many beers I told Bill the true story.

This attitude continued through to Pearce where we also had to throw a party as the newbies. This was a little more subdued but not much!

Cheers, **Beachball.** →

3. Technical Training

Putting up a show that we were dutifully settling down to study was a very challenging for some of us in the electrical mechanics course at Albatross in 1970. That and the fact some of the other trainees were actually keen to learn something about the job they would be expected to do.



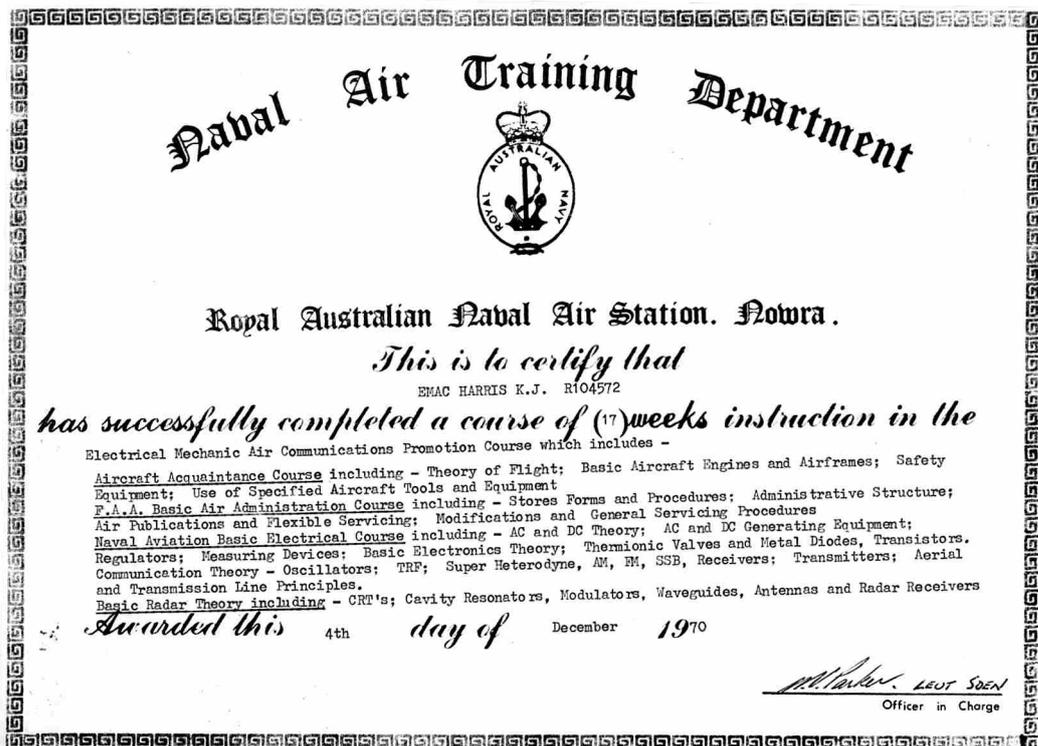
A lot of us in the class (ACs and AWs) had spent 1969 at Leeuwin, then very soon after, time as ordinary seamen on a trip up top on the *Melbourne*. After exposure to and sometimes in Singapore, Hong Kong, Subic Bay, Kobe, Osaka and Sattahip (not in any order strategically, chronologically or enjoyably), how could we be expected to concentrate on ohms, amps, currents, diodes or oscillators? What's that song..." how you gonna keep 'em down on the farm..." We hadn't seen Paris, but we had seen stuff best kept out of our aerogrammes to Mum and Dad at home.

The completion certificate we were issued with (copy attached) notes a successful 17-week instruction in becoming acquainted with aircraft, basic air administration, a basic electrical course and basic radar theory. I can't remember any test or exam to merit the alleged success, nevertheless, the proof of it lies in the attestation of LEUT Parker.

The conditional 'basic' accords with my recollection of understanding the course content. Never much good at maths or physics, I was surprised I even made the course. I could handle a soldering iron well and envisaged a FAA career soldering wires to places they ought be attached.

The practical training on HT 725 was the best, no soldering involved either. In the care and control of experienced EMs and LEMs, the theory course was quickly forgotten, replaced by lessons in how to bend our arms into places that anatomy hadn't provided for, so we could undo plugs at the back of U/S sonar black boxes and refit others magically fixed in the mysterious 'avionics workshop'.

Interestingly, the theory course didn't touch on the everyday day aspects of squadron life: like how best to push a Wessex over a drain on the hangar apron so we could lower a U/S transducer and replace it; splash and splurge sticky blue substances over the skin of demanding



31Bs; make perfect NATO standard brews for the said caring EMs and LEMs, or beg plead and grovel for the tools of our trade from the LAMAE in the toolshop, who doled them out as sparingly and reluctantly as if they were his.

One lesson I do remember, a senior EM grudgingly showed a rabble of us EMACs and EMAWs how to use a pair of lock-wiring pliers - an ungainly long implement. At the end of the lesson he added "Just use your hands, these things are useless, but we have to teach them 'cos they were invented by some ex-greenie and pussers paid him heaps." The last bit may even have been true - certainly they were awkward and slow.

The draft between 725 and 817 squadrons, as random as they appeared to us, did mean an eventual revisit uptop- not just chipping paint or polishing brass.

Kim Harris. →



Meet Mbugua

As millions of people around the world tighten their belts because of Global Warming, War, Famine and Disease, it is easy to be overwhelmed by calls for help. Sometimes it just seems there are too many for any of us to make a scrap of difference.

The answer, of course, is to take one small step at a time. Even if we can only help just one person, then it is a start - and one precious life changed for the better.

Meet Mbugua, who lives in Kenya. He was suffering from childhood cataracts which were shutting down his ability to see. His single Mum couldn't even afford a consultation, yet alone treatment. His future looked impossibly bleak.

But then one of the locally trained staff from the **Fred Hollows Foundation** visited his village and Mbugua was taken to a local clinic where, in a short operation, new lenses were inserted into his eyes. He can now resume school, learn to read and write and in time will support his family.

The cost of the operation was about what we would spend on a bottle of quaffing wine, but it has completely changed his young life.

You can see Mbugua's story [here](#). And, if you have the charity to help another young life like his, you can make a small donation there too. →



NEXT MONTH

Concorde, surely one of the most beautiful aircraft to ever grace the skies, became a legend over the 27 years of her life.

But what was it like to fly in her?

Graeme Lunn, an ex FAA pilot who went on to a long and distinguished career in British Airways, describes his experiences with this extraordinary aircraft and the culture in which she was operated. It's an exclusive insight that you won't read anywhere else.

FlyBy - July - 2022.

Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia HERITAGE FEATURE



OUR ORIGINAL OBSERVER

The Story of Commander Henry Chesterman RAN
By Graeme Lunn

Queen Elizabeth II, only two years into her reign, arrived at Brisbane Airport by Qantas Constellation on 9 March 1954. After she had inspected the Guard of Honour Lieutenant General Sir John Lavarack, Governor of Queensland, presented to Her Majesty the State's Premier, Chief Justice and General Officer Commanding Northern Command. He next presented the Resident Naval Officer - Commander Henry S Chesterman (O) RAN.

Whilst being a Resident Naval Officer (RNO) is often a final posting, with duties wide ranging and frequently social, it is no sinecure. Henry could be inspecting the site for proposed naval facilities in Cairns one week, then running recruit interviews before having debutantes presented to him while presiding at a Ball the next.

Such a posting is a rewarding and fitting end to an often arduous service career and Henry had been Naval-Officer-in-Charge and then RNO in Brisbane since 1948. Although only 53 years old, he had worn naval uniform for 40 of them having entered as a 13-year old Cadet Midshipman in January 1915. His long service had included attending a Court Levee in 1927 where he was presented to the young Queen's Grandfather, King George V. Henry had attended that Court Levee as a result of being a founding member of the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm. He was our original Observer!

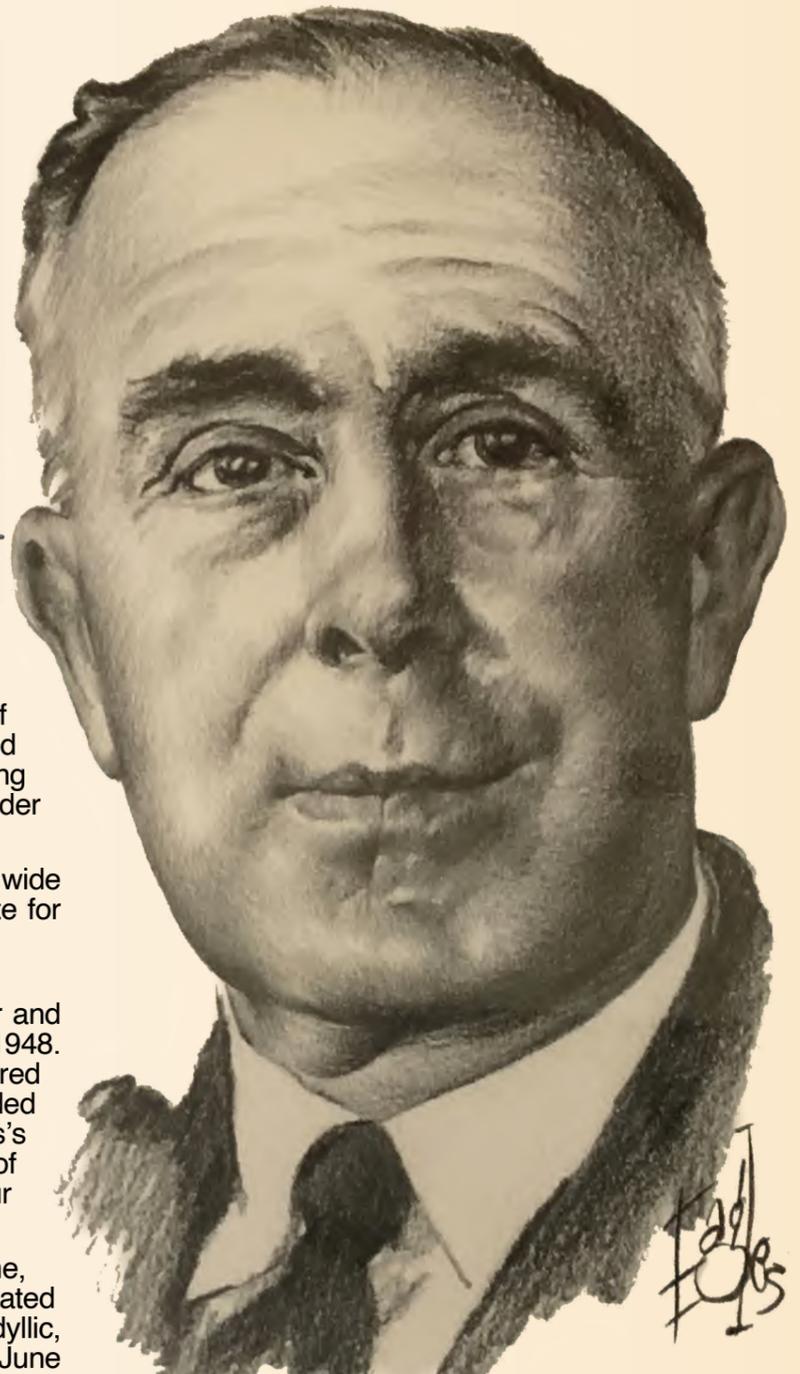
Born on 15 February 1901, not far from Williamstown Naval Depot in Melbourne, Henry joined the 1915 Class of the Royal Australian Naval College. Newly relocated from Geelong to the remote Jervis Bay the four demanding, yet intermittently idyllic, years at the College were marred by the arrival of Captain Charles Morgan RN in June 1915. Quoted as saying "I shall teach these Australian larrikins discipline" the accepted physical disciplining of the boys became harsh, despite the moderating influence of Commander Duncan Grant, the Executive Officer. One father even withdrew his son from the College on the grounds of excessive punishment. Morgan was eventually removed in August 1917 and replaced by Grant, newly promoted to Acting-Captain. Describing the man many years later one of Henry's classmates, Air Vice-Marshal Joe Hewitt, bluntly called Morgan a sadist and a discredit to the RN.

At the end of 1916 Henry's class paraded for the graduation of the pioneer 1913 Class. Feeling envy as they saw the newly promoted Midshipmen depart for active service abroad with the Grand Fleet they speculated on how much longer the war would last! The Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918 and at the Naval College, amidst the celebrations, there was some disappointment at 'missing out'. Yet the 1915 class was soon to experience a breadth of operational service and see sights in remote lands that would be the envy of many of their immediate predecessors, who had languished for long grey wartime months at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands.

The 29 newly graduated Midshipmen sailed on Australia Day 26 January 1919 in the SS *Marathon* from Port Melbourne. Daily duties included 4" gun drill on the stern mounting which had been fitted when she had been taken over for troopship duties. Assisting with coaling the vessel in Albany and Durban, the final leg of the voyage was in the old wool cargo hold to make space for repatriating soldiers from Durban to Southampton.

Arriving at Whale Island, Portsmouth, on 19 March 1919 the next six weeks were arduous. The Victorian era Royal Navy had put bluejackets ashore in landing parties and naval brigades throughout the empire, and the hard learnt field craft was well entrenched at the Gunnery School of HMS *Excellent*. The Midshipmen little imagined, as they did live firings with pistol, rifle and Lewis machine guns while undertaking field exercises and battalion drill, that within the year they would use these new skills ashore on active service.

Henry joined the battleship *Ramillies* under the imposing Captain John Luce at Devonport 13 May 1919 with five of his classmates - Hewitt, Dowling, Hall, Rorke and Rosenthal. She sailed three days later for Scapa Flow where 72 ships of the German High Seas Fleet were interred. *Ramillies* joined *Revenge*, flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Sydney Fremantle (whose naval forebear lent his name to Fremantle, Western Australia), along with *Resolution*, *Royal Oak* and *Royal Sovereign* making up the 1st



Battle Squadron of the Atlantic Fleet. Or, as the lower deck would have put it, the *Millie* joined the *Rammer* along with *Rezzo*, *Woody* and the *Tiddy Quid*.

Mounting eight 15" and fourteen 6" guns with a crew of 1187 officers and men *Ramillies* had a large gunroom of over 30 Midshipmen and junior officers. This included Gorrige, a young RAF pilot, as *Ramillies* still mounted a flying off platform atop X turret. As junior 'snotties', the lowest of the low, the welcome would not have been a warm one even for RN Midshipmen, but as a burly group of Australian 'larrikins' there was added wariness towards 'Chesters' and his mates. It was six weeks before they ceased being referred to as 'bloody Australians' and the English reserve gave way to the start of lifelong friendships.

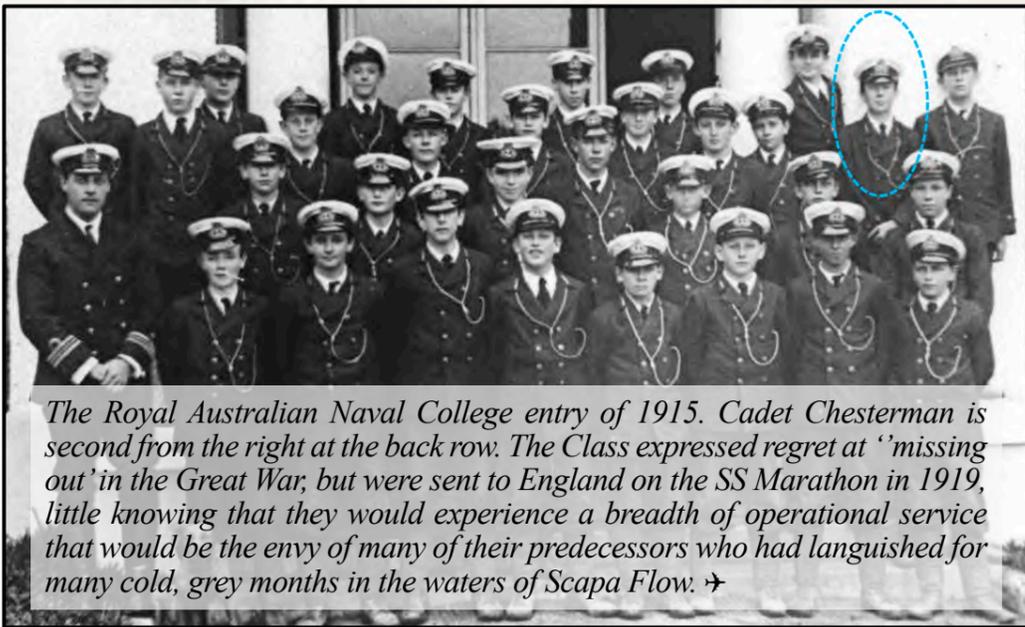
Welcome or not they were soon a part of one of the defining moments in naval history - the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet. The Battle Squadron was conducting torpedo drills on 21 June 1919 when, as Henry records in his diary: 'At 12:45 received wireless message that all German ships were sinking. We proceeded back independently at about 18 kts'. Steaming into Scapa at 14:30 with armed parties mustered on the quarterdeck and boats ready to be lowered: '...only 6 left out of 70 odd ships. Saw one ship go down beautifully - the *Bayern*'. Not counting those successfully beached 52 of the 72 interned vessels were sunk by their crews. Hundreds of German prisoners were taken onboard the trawlers and drifters and transferred to the battleships. Under guard on the quarter deck Henry declared 'They are



Young Chesterman (inset, left), wearing the white patches of a 'snottie' (Midshipman), joined HMS Ramillies in May of 1919, which was then part of the 1st Battle Squadron of the Atlantic Fleet. Just five weeks later he was to witness one of the defining moments of Naval History when 52 ships of the interned German Fleet were scuttled by their crews at Scapa Flow. Within a year Ramillies and her crew of 1187 officers and men was engaged in action in the Greco-Turkish war, to protect British interests. ➔



The German battle cruiser Bayern being scuttled in Scapa Flow on 21 June 1919. HMS Ramillies, with Midshipman Chesterman aboard, was in the open sea conducting drills when the event took place, but hurried back in response to frantic signals from Scapa Flow. By the time they arrived only about six German ships remained afloat. Hundreds of German sailors were transferred under guard to the British battleships, where their meagre belongings were searched (below). ➔



The Royal Australian Naval College entry of 1915. Cadet Chesterman is second from the right at the back row. The Class expressed regret at 'missing out' in the Great War, but were sent to England on the SS Marathon in 1919, little knowing that they would experience a breadth of operational service that would be the envy of many of their predecessors who had languished for many cold, grey months in the waters of Scapa Flow. ➔



an awful looking crowd tho'. The next day the prisoners were taken to Invergordon for POW camps ashore: 'Got underway at 6am. German baggage searched in the morning. I didn't get any loot as I was on watch.' The teenage gunroom obviously desired souvenirs and Hewitt acquired an escape dagger which is now in the collection of the Australian War Memorial.

Peace Day, 19 July 1919, was celebrated with a seven mile long procession in London while 700 miles north *Ramillies* 'dressed overall' and the Midshipmen were excused duties for the day. As news of operations in the Baltic filtered back to Scapa it was obvious to the Royal Navy that they were entering a period later referred to as 'the Wars of Peace'. On 6 November 1919 Henry noted that '*The Glory*

entered harbour from Russia', where she had been the flagship of the North Russian Squadron in the Baltic supporting the White Russians against the Red Bolsheviks during the confused situation after the Revolution of 1917. The ongoing Russian Civil war, and the Greco-Turkish War which had commenced in May 1919, were about to envelop *Ramillies* and her crew.

February 1920 found the Spring Cruise interrupted and the Squadron drilling their seaman battalions and marines ashore in Malta, from where they sailed on the 17th to be part of the Allied Occupation Forces in Constantinople. Steaming past the Dardanelles the ruined forts and battle debris from 1915 was much commented on. For the Midshipmen picket boat and cutter duties plus 'ceremonial' marches

ashore made for arduous days. As the situation worsened the five ships landed 4000 officers and men on the 16 March 1920 to occupy Constantinople: 'Fell in with the battalions from the other ships....wearing our tin helmets and had plenty of ammunition'. The *Ramillies* battalion under their Executive Officer took possession of the Turkish War Office, Henry did his sentry rounds in C company, and field guns were placed in the square until they were relieved by the Cheshire Regiment the next afternoon. The squadron picket boats armed with Maxim guns stopped shipping in the Bosphorus.

By April the ships were operating out of Batum, Georgia, protecting British interests as Bolshevik troops advanced. On 18 April 1920 the guns at Trebizond were destroyed. Moving on to relieve *Resolution* off Chanak the Australian flag was seen to be proudly flying over the Australian War Graves Commission building. Conditions were stable enough to tour the Gallipoli battlefields where many of the Australian Midshipmen had family members serve. With ongoing conflict between the Anti-Nationalists and Young Turks the Midshipmen continued to exercise their initiative and leadership on shore patrols and in the ships boats.

Fighting flared around Izmid in the eastern Aegean 13 June 1920, and for the remainder of the month *Ramillies* bombarded Turkish nationalist positions with her 6" and occasionally 15" batteries. Seaplanes from the accompanying carrier *Pegasus* were aloft for scouting and spotting duties:

- 14 June. 'There was a lot of fighting and bombarding going on ashore...When we landed we marched to the Arsenal...Bombarding started about 8pm from a position to the east of us...and continued for a couple of hours.'
- 15 June. At the Arsenal 'Turned out at 3am...Bombarding recommenced and the *Ramillies* opened fire with 6"...Returned onboard arriving about 10am...We were bombarding at intervals most of day. I started running Picket Boat after dinner...Had to stand by searchlights in case of action so slept in Lower Chart House.'

Heavy gunfire became routine and the Australians had time to form a victorious gunroom water polo team with an RN goalie. A few days later *Ramillies* put out a kedgeree anchor:

- 17/18 June. 'The ship's stern was hauled around to get all the starboard guns to bear...During all this firing there has been no instruction for mids...Closed up at Action Stations to fire on a...Nationalist headquarters. We used 6" and 15" guns...The shooting was very good and the village caught fire...Plenty of swimming continues morning and evening.'

With the start of the Greek Summer Offensive on 19 July 1920 *Ramillies* supported a Greek landing near Rodosto, by the Sea of Marmara in Eastern Thrace. *Ramillies* then proceeded independently through the Black Sea to southern Russia and the Crimean peninsula. Amid the refugee chaos Henry still managed to see much of Sebastopol and Yalta in August before returning via Athens, Malta and Gibraltar to reach Plymouth 27 October 1920. Although the British Empire was 'at peace' entitlement to the Victory Medal had been extended to include post-armistice Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War until July 1920. Nineteen year old Henry was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his service.

Dressed in a round 'bumfreezer' jacket and dirk Henry's oral seamanship exams commenced on 6 January 1921 onboard *Neptune*. Promoted Acting Sub-Lieutenant 15 January 1921 the various exams continued through the Spring Cruise to Gibraltar in March. Exam nerves were forgotten for a while when Hall (also a future RAN aviator) won the middle-weight title at the Battle Squadron Boxing Championships 21 February 1921. Successful in his exams Henry left *Ramillies* and joined the destroyer *Sorceress* for four months where he was promoted Sub-Lieutenant 15 July 1921.

Almost a year was spent on further study at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, before the now Lieutenant Chesterman (seniority 15 April 1922) arrived back in Australia in September 1922. After leave Henry joined the light cruiser *Adelaide*.

Right: Amongst the very earliest days of organic aviation was the embarkation of a Fairey IIIID aboard the survey ship *HMAS Geranium*. It was clearly too large and cumbersome for a vessel of that size, but despite its shortcomings the mission was deemed a success. Crewed by Hewitt and Kennedy, the aircraft greatly assisted with a survey of part of the Great Barrier Reef. ➔

The Commonwealth Naval Board had been stuttering towards an Australian Naval Air Service for almost a decade since June 1913. In 1921 the Government approved the purchase of Fairey IIIID seaplanes for the RAN, apparently unconcerned that Fairey had only come third after Vickers and Supermarine at the 1920 Air Ministry competition for amphibians. Launched with Australian Naval Aviation Serial numbers ANA-1 to ANA-6 the airframes were subsumed into the RAAF on its formation in March 1921.

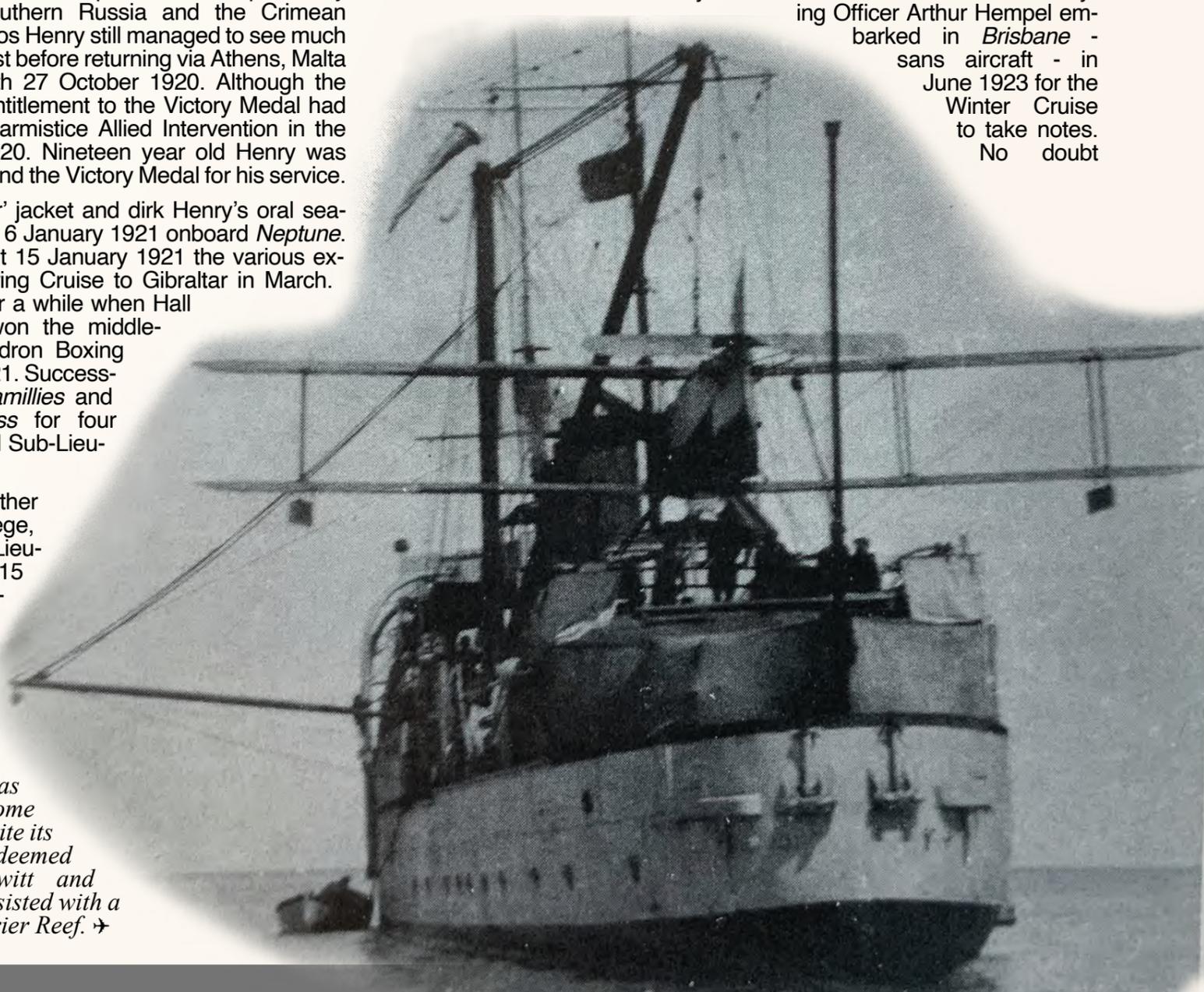


The Committee of Imperial Defence in 1923 recommended that the RAN acquire a seaplane carrier to use as a mobile aerial base and repair shop. They further recommended that future Australian light cruisers be built to carry amphibians and that one existing light cruiser be fitted to carry a small seaplane. Such materiel recommendations of course presupposes trained personnel.

Above: Number 1 Observer's Course at Point Cook in 1923. Lieutenant Henry Chesterman is on the right, accompanied by Lt. Vincent .E. Kennedy on the left. By a quirk of programming, Henry passed out a week before Vincent, thus becoming our first Observer.

Although the RAAF had followed the RAF lead in deciding they would be predominantly an all-pilot aircrew force the RN, and therefore the RAN, realised that the Royal Naval Air Service lessons of WW1 - commencing with No.1(Naval) Squadron led by the Australian Wing Commander Arthur Longmore in 1915 - had firmly established the need for specialist observers. Under pressure from the Naval Board the RAAF offered a short Observers course for RAN officers, based on information received from the RN about aerial 'naval co-operation'. This would be run at RAAF Base Point Cook where Henry's fellow gunroom messmate aboard *Ramillies*, Lieutenant Joe Hewitt RAN, had commenced No.1 Pilots Course with 11 army and air force officers in January 1923.

Henry and Vincent Kennedy, another 1915 classmate, volunteered for the Number One Observer Course. Covering some 30 flying hours mainly in the Fairey IIIIDs, now sporting RAAF serial numbers A10-1 to A10-6, the instruction concentrated on navigation, wireless/telegraphy, reconnaissance, bombing and photography. The first part was at Point Cook 4 April 1923 - 9 June 1923 and the second commenced 29 September 1923. The RAAF only had 346 officers and men at this time and resources were so limited many of their aircraft remained in crates. Flying Officer Arthur Hempel embarked in *Brisbane* - sans aircraft - in June 1923 for the Winter Cruise to take notes. No doubt



Henry Chesterman managed to fly in some of the ugliest aircraft ever in service, including the Avro Bison, shown here. Like all early flying machines it was prone to failure, as his did in January 1928 when it caught fire at 3000 feet. The crew of three survived after clinging to the wreckage for an hour and a quarter before HMS Vivacious picked them up.



Whilst being trained as founding member of the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm, Henry attended the Royal Levee of 15 March 1927 at St James Palace to be presented to King George V. This required full ceremonial dress rig, including a cocked hat which he bought for £2, a considerable sum for the times. →

due to the vagaries of weather and cancelled sorties Henry graduated a week before Kennedy on 26 October 1923, becoming the first RAN officer to gain Observer qualifications.

With the Third Naval Member of the Board adamantly opposed to adding the weight of aircraft, derrick and hangar to any existing light cruiser there were no Observer billets on graduation so Henry was posted in January 1924 for staff duties at Navy Office in Melbourne. Kennedy returned to *Anzac* as Navigator. From his desk Henry watched as Kennedy was posted to *Geranium* for surveying duties 'and as observer specialist' in May 1924. Rather precariously embarking a

Fairey IID *Geranium* sailed north. With Joe Hewitt as the pilot they operated from sheltered waters and assisted with the Great Barrier Reef Survey.

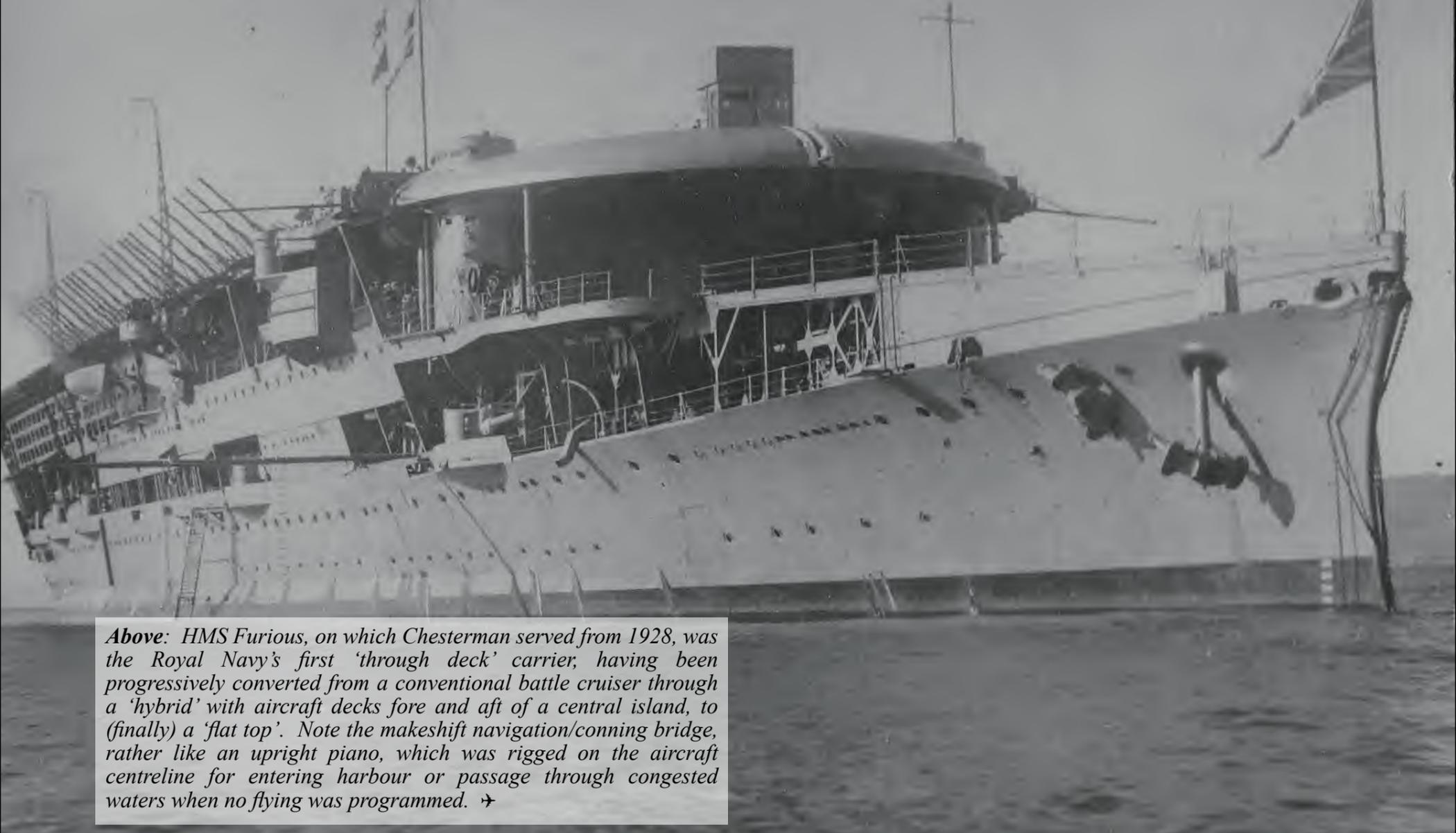
Henry, perhaps slightly bored at his desk, entered the 1924 Naval History essay competition. Coming third in this Empire wide competition he received a £20 prize from the Australian Naval Board, the equal of one months salary for a Lieutenant. Then, as later, lauded for his staff administrative abilities he was not able to escape the clutches of Navy Office until January 1925. What saved him was a further paragraph in that 1923 CID document on 'Empire Naval Policy and Co-Operation' which mooted 'a regular system of exchange, whereby the ships and personnel of the RAN spend a proportion of their time on other stations'. It also recommended 'that officers and men of the RAN be regarded as interchangeable in all respects with those of the RN'.

The 1915 class had been winnowed down by the defence cuts of the early 1920's so Henry was needed onboard the 5400 ton *Brisbane* as a seaman officer. *Brisbane* sailed in February 1925 as the exchange cruiser for six months on the China station while HMS *Concord* joined the Australia Station. As part of the 5th Cruiser Squadron she assisted in quelling civil unrest in China and Hong Kong. Entering Yokohama harbour *Brisbane* became the first RAN ship to visit Japan. Also visiting Borneo and Malaya she was decommissioned on her return to Sydney. The crew were transferred en-masse to *Melbourne* when she was brought out of reserve and sailed to the UK as the next exchange cruiser.

Henry, with only a 'local' qualification as an Observer, and with no apparent opportunity for actual Observer duties, submitted preferences for Torpedo and Signal specializations in March 1925 in response to a general Navy Order. The Naval Board recognised that his short RAAF course was not sufficient qualification for Henry to be fully interchangeable with RN Observers so the Second Naval Member, needing to qualify at least six Lieutenants as Observers for the proposed carrier, informed Henry that if he remained a volunteer an exchange was possible after attending a 'long' Observer course with the RN. Posted off *Melbourne* to the battleship *Repulse*, Henry remained in the UK.

Henry commenced No 11 Observers Course 4 October 1926 where he found himself the senior officer. After three weeks of classroom instruction the course moved in the New Year to the old RNAS Station at Lee-on-Solent. Now called the RAF Naval Seaplane Training School Henry drew his flying clothing, books and instruments on 3 January 1927 and commenced almost daily flying. Still operating in a Fairly IID with its open cockpits, he was feeling the cold of an English winter, so drew another pair of silk gloves and thigh boots from stores several weeks later. Even that did not suffice so Henry dipped into his own wallet and paid 21/- for a pair of fur lined gloves.

We get a partial feeling for his course flying, along with its inherent dangers, from his brief diary entries:



Above: HMS Furious, on which Chesterman served from 1928, was the Royal Navy's first 'through deck' carrier, having been progressively converted from a conventional battle cruiser through a 'hybrid' with aircraft decks fore and aft of a central island, to (finally) a 'flat top'. Note the makeshift navigation/conning bridge, rather like an upright piano, which was rigged on the aircraft centreline for entering harbour or passage through congested waters when no flying was programmed. →

- 1 Feb 1927 'Flying - took 3 films with gun camera. Spotting and R/T operator in afternoon.'
- 4 Feb 1927 'Flying in forenoon, after we got back in attempting to take off again machine hit a mooring buoy and sank, self and two others were unhurt and were rescued by motor boat.'
- 2 Mar 1927 'Flying - had some dangerous flying with Overbury. Damaged undercarriage of one machine and transferred to another. Wrote letter to C.O. asking that Cobbold and self not in future be detailed to fly with Overbury.'

Henry attended the Court Levee at St James Palace on 15 March 1927 in full dress uniform wearing a cocked hat that he had purchased for £2. In a ceremony that was discontinued in 1939 he joined the queue into the Throne Room where, as his name and rank were announced, he bowed to the seated King George V.

After completing the long 'O' course 13 May 1927, and taking leave, he was posted for 10 months consolidation training as an Acting-Observer in the aircraft carrier *Eagle*. Whilst in *Eagle* he also carried out Signal duties and volunteered to dual qualify with a Long (S) course as happened occasionally in the UK with its large carriers where they found such dual qualifications useful. Despite being strongly recommended by his Captain the RAN had no vacancies in the Signals Branch.

Operating in the Mediterranean *Eagle* normally embarked the Avro Bison spotter aircraft and Henry went for his second swim:

- 26 Jan 1928 'Proceeded to sea - all machines in the air. I was doing navigation exercise and just started photography when machine caught fire at 3000 ft - cleverly brought down by pilot Lea and force landed in sea - picked up by destroyer 'Vivacious' after hanging onto machine for about one and a quarter hours - was shaken and bruised but crew - Pilot Lieutenant Lea & Brett had lunch in destroyer - 'Eagle' returned to harbour in dogs. Wasn't feeling too fit, began to feel bruised - had sandwiches in lieu of dinner, hot bath and pill and turned in about 2030.'

On 21 March 1928, having survived his consolidation training, the RAN's first fully qualified Observer Lieutenant Henry Chesterman (O) joined the aircraft carrier *Furious*. Still very much the early days of naval aviation it was less than two years since *Furious* had achieved the first night deck landing with a Blackburn Dart on 6 May 1926. She embarked as fighters a flight of Fairey Flycatchers while Henry would have flown in Blackburn Blackburn or Avro Bison spotters, Fairly IIIFs in a spotter/reconnaissance role and Blackburn Darts as torpedo bombers. The Avro and Blackburns incidentally were some of the ugliest aircraft to ever embark on a carrier. Before his return to Australia Henry married Evelyn Lansdown on 24 November 1928. Evelyn came out to Australia after their two week honeymoon in a passenger liner while Henry took passage by warship. Their son Edwin 'Teddy' was born in Melbourne in October 1931.

Henry arrived back in Australia 4 February 1929 onboard the newly completed 10,000 ton cruiser *Canberra* - six years away from being



After the terrible double tragedy of losing both his wife Evelyn and young son Teddy in 1938 Henry married nursing sister Charlotte Lawrie in 1940 and they had a daughter Ann, whose godfather was Rear-Admiral John Crace RN. Charlotte died young and Henry remarried again just before his retirement. →



On return to Australia Henry was posted for three years to the newly commissioned HMAS Albatross (I) - the RAN's first dedicated aircraft carrier, although both it and the aircraft it flew (Seagull III, inset) were obsolete by then. Bringing a new warship up to standard was hard work, compounded by the new concept of multi-aircraft operations as an integral part of the ship's capability. Her service life with the RAN was foreshortened by the Great Depression to only four years but by then Henry had moved on to other postings. As is the way with Navy, he was never to serve in an Aviation capacity again. →

fitted with a catapult for embarked aircraft - to find the new 6000 ton seaplane carrier *Albatross* (7th of her name) had commissioned 23 January 1929 under Captain Denham Bedford RN and was awaiting her aircraft and aircrew. On 4 March 1929 Henry stepped aboard *Albatross* in Port Melbourne as the Senior Observer (SOBS) of her three commissioning Os - Chesterman, Kennedy and Brooks (RANC 1917). The previous week six Supermarine Seagull III aircraft plus stores from Point Cook had been loaded into her hangars. The Seagull III, a biplane amphibian with folding wings, had been purchased by the RAAF for seaplane training and survey work so it was entirely fortuitous that they fitted through *Albatross's* deck hatchway into her hangars. The Navigator of *Albatross* was his RANC 1915 classmate Jeff Walker.

In July 1929 Lieutenant-Commander George Deverell (O) RN arrived from the UK and became SOBS. Accompanying him was Lieutenant Ian Elliott (O) RN to make up the required number of ship's Observers. In the embarked 101 Fleet Co-operation Flight RAAF under the now Squadron Leader Arthur Hempel were eight pilots. These included Flight Lieutenant Joe Hewitt (who had transferred to the RAAF in 1928) and Flying Officer's Philip Bailhache (Lieutenant RAN) and Frank Crowther (Paymaster Lieutenant RAN). Under the byzantine rules being imposed on the Naval Board Kennedy had gone on to do a Pilot's course after *Geranium*, but was compelled to revert to Observer duties after two years with the RAAF. Hewitt had decided to transfer permanently to the RAAF instead, and both Bailhache and Crowther would in turn face the same career decision. Joining the wardroom from August 1929 for just ten weeks was another RANC 1915 classmate, Geoffrey Hall, who had completed the pilots Long Air Course in 1927 and flew with the RAAF until April 1929. He undertook acting Observer duties before passage to the UK for a Long Observer course.

Any warship on a first commission works hard and that was compounded in *Albatross* where the introduction of a seaplane flight meant new drills and evolutions for the whole ship's company. Operating from the smooth waters of Port Phillip Bay, Hervey Bay, Norfolk Bay, or Jervis Bay working up exercises and evolutions made for many 12 hour duty days. Tasks for the aircrew were reconnaissance, gunnery spotting, torpedo tracking and survey

work. Among the 450 crew complement were six volunteer Telegraphists who had recently trained at Point Cook for aviation duties.

Taking the Governor-General Lord Stonehaven and Lady Stonehaven for a vice regal tour of New Guinea in July introduced tropical conditions to *Albatross's* seaplane operations. A Wackett Widgeon was embarked for trials on this deployment in addition to the Seagull IIIs. This amphibious biplane had been entirely designed and constructed in Australia by Squadron Leader Lawrence Wackett, the brother of Ellis Wackett of Henry's RANC 1915 Class. Ellis, while at the RN Engineering College Keyham, had transferred to the RAAF in 1923 and rose to the rank of Air Vice-Marshal.

For three years until April 1932 Henry laboured with his RN and RAAF colleagues to entrench an embarked aviation capability into the RAN. A capability which it had last experienced with the Grand Fleet in the closing years of World War I. Inevitably it was not without loss. On 19 March 1930 Seagull A9-4, one of four aircraft airborne spotting for a gunnery shoot, entered a spin and crashed into the bay. Deverell was specially commended for gallantry when his pilot landed beside the crash site and the SOBS dived into the wreckage to rescue the badly injured Pilot Officer Gordon Grant and Lieutenant Ian Elliott. [Leading Telegraphist Donald McGowan](#) was lost. Grant's spinal injuries caused him to be invalided out of the RAAF, while Elliott did not fully recover and returned to the UK where he was transferred to the RN Retired List as medically unfit.

Henry was promoted to Lieutenant-Commander on 15 April 1930 and again became SOBS in *Albatross* under Captain Cuthbert Pope from June 1931, while the senior pilot was Squadron Leader Joe Hewitt who had commanded 101 Flight from February. Visiting Adelaide in October 1931 Hewitt and Chesterman were featured in the local press when they flew the Governor, Brigadier Sir Alexander Hore-Ruthven VC at 2500' over the city and environs.

Albatross only stayed in commission until 26 April 1933 before the financial stringencies and economic stagnation of the early 1930s, coupled to the delay in suitable replacement aircraft, led to her being placed in reserve. With the fleet much reduced and, at most, two aircraft intermittently embarked on the cruisers *Australia* and

Canberra as 101 Flight was pared down there was now a surplus of Observers. Among that group Henry was too senior, and too good a staff officer, to avoid a posting back to Navy Office from April 1932 to December 1933, where he was initially tasked with writing a history of Flinders Naval Depot.

With nine ships in reserve Henry was fortunate to be posted to the flagship *Canberra* (Rear-Admiral Wilbraham Ford) at the end of 1933 for two years as the Training Officer and a senior watch-keeper. Lieutenant-Commander Geoffrey Hall, returned from his Long O course with the RN, was the ships Observer and Flying Officer James Alexander embarked with his Seagull III flight. Still without a catapult the embarked aircraft operations were marginal and while proceeding to Hobart 5 April 1935 Seagull A9-8 was extensively damaged in a gale. With *Canberra's* 1935 Spring Cruise encompassing New Guinea and New Britain, Henry had now accumulated first-hand knowledge of many of the waters over which the forthcoming war would be waged.

When he came ashore at the end of 1935 Henry was to gain the experience in his next two postings that, almost serendipitously, ensured his later notable achievements in operational staff duties serving in the Headquarters of the US Seventh Fleet. From March 1936 until August 1940 he was Staff Officer (Operations and Intelligence) to the Captain-in-Charge Sydney where the major units and establishments of the RAN were based. He played an increasingly vital role as the navy gathered resources and prepared for hostilities after the September 1938 Munich Agreement and in the first year of World War 2.

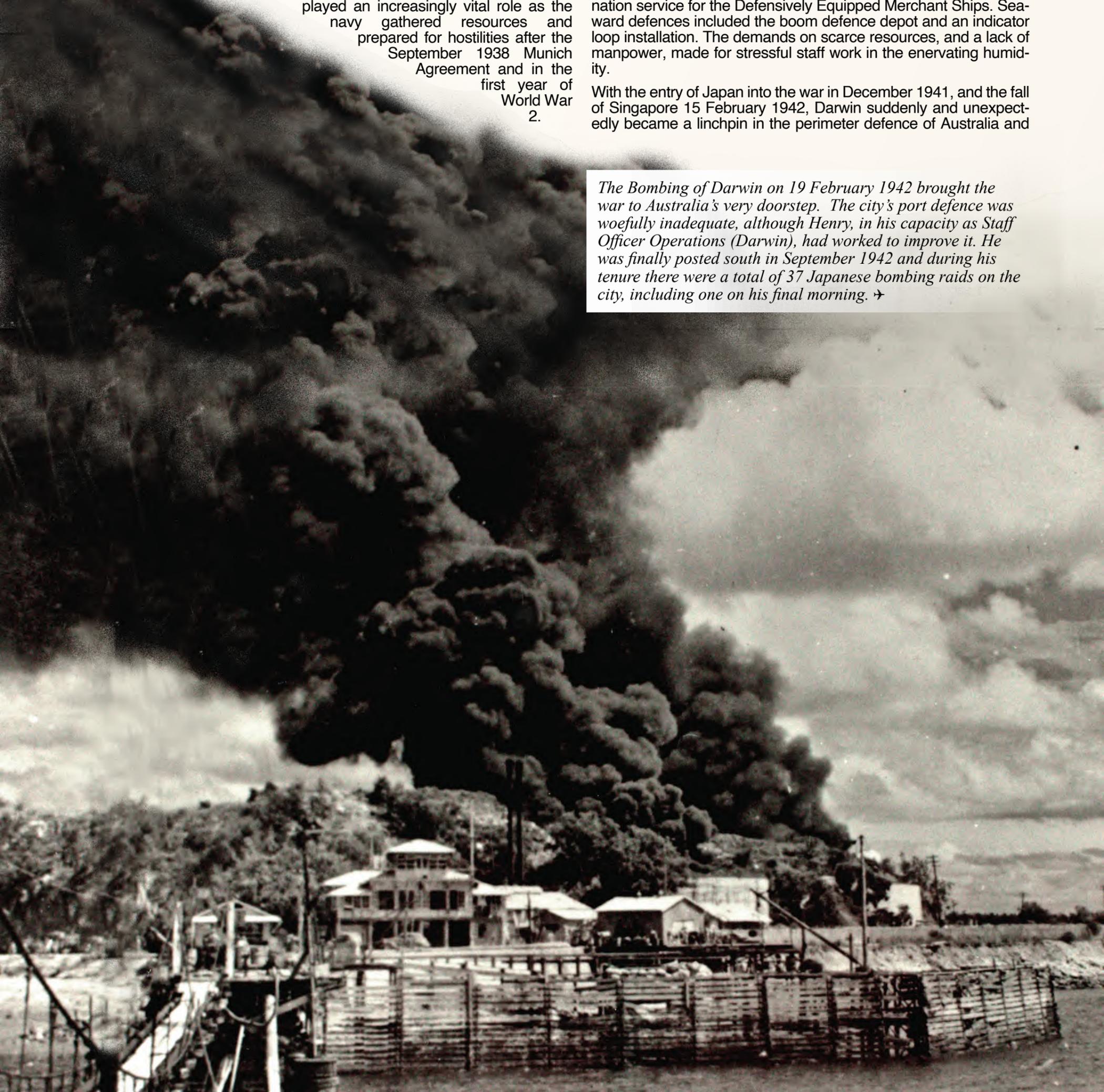
In December 1938 Henry suffered a terrible double tragedy when both his wife and son, seven year old Teddy, died while he was in hospital for a minor operation. He was fortunate indeed to find love again when he married Charlotte Lawrie on 6 February 1940 at St. Paul's Church in Lismore. Charlotte had recently returned from being a nursing sister at the European Hospital in Wau, New Guinea, while her sister Evelyn was serving as a theatre sister on a hospital ship in the North Sea. Their daughter Ann, whose godfather was the Australian Rear Admiral John Grace, was born that November and was to also qualify in nursing.

In September 1940 Acting-Commander Chesterman was posted to Darwin as Staff Officer (Operations and D.E.M.S.) under the District Naval Officer Captain Edward Thomas. Just two years before Lieutenant-Commander Jeff Walker, who had last served with Henry in *Albatross*, had arrived as DNO to find only two Chief Petty Officers and three stokers serving under him. Walker had urgently commenced developing the port city's defence. The vital oil installations were upgraded as buildings and establishments were planned and begun. A War Signals Section and Wireless Station was established and, on the declaration of war 3 September 1939, a Naval Headquarters was formed.

When Henry arrived there were 30 officers on strength spread through that Headquarters which included Operations and Intelligence sections, a Naval Control of Shipping office and an examination service for the Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships. Seaward defences included the boom defence depot and an indicator loop installation. The demands on scarce resources, and a lack of manpower, made for stressful staff work in the enervating humidity.

With the entry of Japan into the war in December 1941, and the fall of Singapore 15 February 1942, Darwin suddenly and unexpectedly became a linchpin in the perimeter defence of Australia and

The Bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 brought the war to Australia's very doorstep. The city's port defence was woefully inadequate, although Henry, in his capacity as Staff Officer Operations (Darwin), had worked to improve it. He was finally posted south in September 1942 and during his tenure there were a total of 37 Japanese bombing raids on the city, including one on his final morning. →



was literally on the front lines. After the Kido Butai, or Main Carrier Battle Group, under Vice-Admiral Chuichi Nagumo had finished with Pearl Harbour they turned and fought west and south until focusing their attention on northern Australia.

In Darwin harbour on 19 February 1942 were some 65 vessels. The RAN vessels were a myriad mix of patrol boats, luggers, tugs, minesweepers, the depot ship *Platypus*, sloops *Swan* and *Warrego* and Hospital ship HMAHS *Manuda*. The Japanese 1st Carrier Air Fleet from four carriers, plus some shore based bombers, attacked the ships, airfields and town of Darwin with 242 aircraft. There were 236 killed, with 88 lost in the destroyer USS *Peary* alone, and 11 vessels sunk.

By July 1942, with the DNO now Henry's old Captain from *Albatross* Commodore Cuthbert Pope (newly returned from commanding the Armed Merchant Cruiser *California* in Arctic waters), there were 75 officers on strength. From that first air raid until Henry was posted south on 26 September 1942 there were a further 36 attacks on Darwin including one on his final morning.

Henry left Darwin for Brisbane to be a Senior Staff Officer on the Operational Staff of the Naval Commander South-West Pacific, and as liaison officer between the USN command and the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board. In February 1942 Vice-Admiral Herbert Leary had assumed command of Allied Naval Forces in Australian and New Zealand waters. By April 1942 the South West Pacific Area had been delineated with General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander holding strategic and operational responsibility for Australia's defence. Under MacArthur the Commander Allied Naval Forces South-West Pacific Area had control of all operational RAN units, while the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board retained responsibility for the protection of coastal shipping and convoys.

Henry had been at the forefront of this defence-of-trade task in Darwin since it devolved primarily through the various area DNO's and Naval-Officers-in-Charge. When Henry joined the Command Headquarters in the AMP Building in Brisbane 27 September 1942 the building was both General Headquarters for MacArthur as well as the HQ for Allied Naval Forces and Allied Air Forces. The naval forces were popularly referred to by the Army PR team as 'MacArthur's Navy'.

Vice-Admiral Arthur Carpender had just taken over the command from Leary two weeks before Henry joined his staff, and had informed the First Naval Member Vice-Admiral Sir Guy Royle that he would control (through the NOIC system) all shipping in support of military operations north of Brisbane. The size of the convoys to the advanced New Guinea bases and Darwin can be seen in the figures: in 1942 there were 211 convoys of 1505 ships between Australian ports and 67 ships in 41 convoys between the mainland and New Guinea. The 1943 build-up saw 748 convoys with 4155 ships in addition to the approximately 60 ships proceeding independently each month requiring escort.

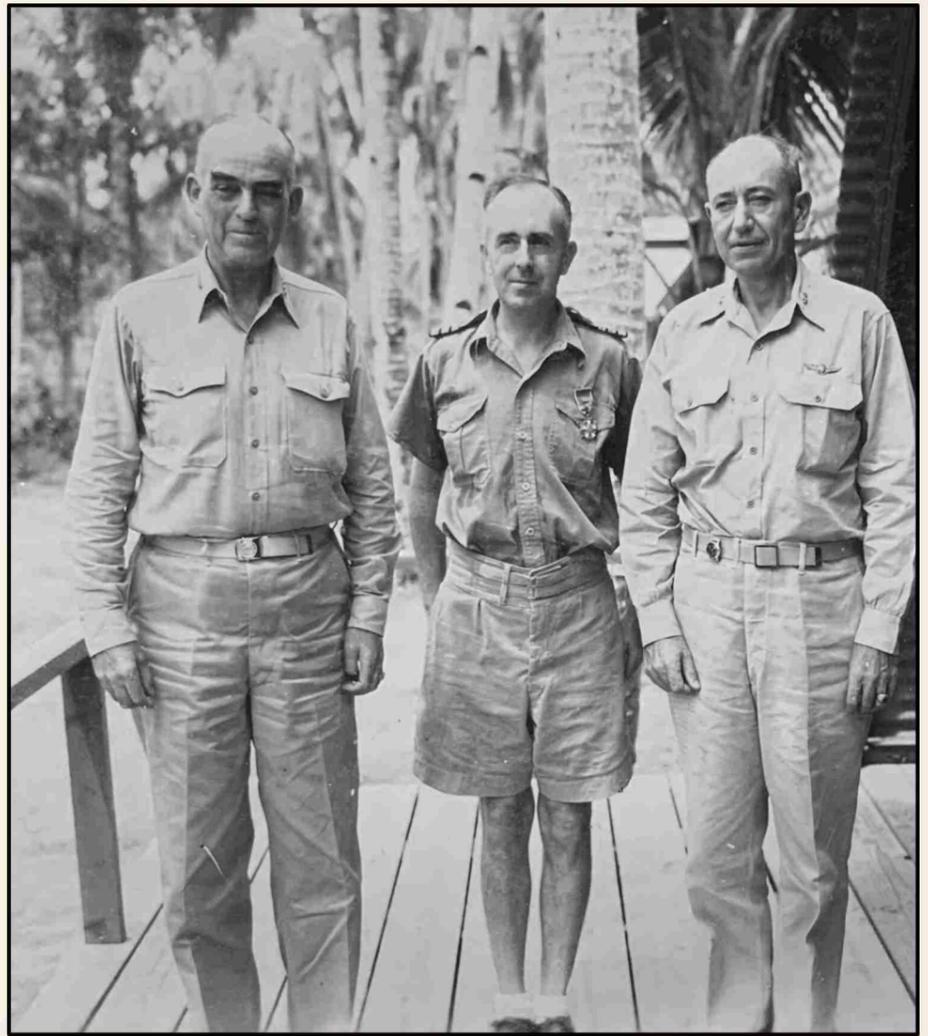
Overseeing this expansion and ensuring support for the associated amphibious operations were the senior Operations Staff in Room 514 of Captains R. Cruzen and R. Teacher with Commander Chesterman. Allied naval forces of the SWPA were re-designated Seventh Fleet on 15 March 1943. Carpender, wary of risking major naval units in the restricted waters along the New Guinea coast without adequate air cover had sparked MacArthur's easily aroused ire.

Vice-Admiral Thomas Kinkaid USN assumed Command of Seventh Fleet from 26 November 1943.

The RAN cruisers and destroyers were integral parts of Seventh Fleet in Task Force 74 and the Amphibious Forces of TF76 spent 1943 expanding and working up for operations on the northern coast of New Guinea and the proposed axis of advance north to the Philippines through the 'Bismarck Barrier'. Initially the naval forces were only a small cruiser force, submarines, four destroyer squadrons and ten MTB squadrons with amphibious assault forces and two air wings.

Keeping clear of the 100,000 Japanese troops entrenched in Rabaul, landings at Arawe and Cape Gloucester in December 1943 saw Kinkaid establish a small advanced base Headquarters in Port Moresby. Stating that "I would rather be farther forward pushing this war towards its end" Kinkaid's forces assaulted Hollandia on the north coast of New Guinea in April 1944. From Fifth Fleet he 'borrowed' TF58 with its fast carriers for a two day sweep then used two 'jeep carrier' groups of eight CVE's for a further week. Hollandia became the major base for the following six month drive towards the Philippines. With five major amphibious assaults scheduled between Hollandia in April and Mindanao in Nov 1944 plans for the next campaign were being drafted while the current operation was still being prosecuted.

In September 1944 Kinkaid moved all his staff to Hollandia to plan for the Liberation of the Philippines. With four main Task Groups Kinkaid would oversee the amphibious assaults from his command ship *Wasatch* in TG77.1. *Australia* and *Shropshire* were in the Close Covering Group of four cruisers and 7 DDs in TG77.3 while TG77.2 was the Bombardment Group. In TG77.4 alone were 16 CVEs, 9 DDs and 12 DEs. Counting what was borrowed from Third and Fifth Fleets, the Attack Force numbered more than 700 vessels.



Upper. Commander Henry Chesterman (centre) wears his just-awarded Legion of Merit medal awarded by Admiral Kinkaid (left), Commander of the Seventh Fleet, on 6th July 1945. RADM Coombs is on the right. All three men are showing the stress of the war years. **Lower.** Henry (left) during the Queen's visit to Australia in 1954, at which time he was Resident Naval Officer (Queensland). ➔

While Kinkaid was watching the Leyte assault on 21 October 1944 he saw the bridge of *Australia* erupt in a ball of flame from a crashing Japanese bomber. Collecting his flagship's surgeon, Kinkaid came the mile to *Australia* by small boat to personally render assistance where they located the badly wounded Commodore John Collins (RANC 1913 Pioneer Class) on the deck of the wardroom. Collins on promotion to Rear-Admiral became the first Australian to head the RAN in 1948. Also among the wounded was a dying Captain Emile Dechaineaux (RANC 1916 Class).

Because the atomic bomb foreshortened the war and cancelled an invasion of Japan the battles of Leyte, Mindoro and Luzon from October 1944 to January 1945 remain the largest naval operations in history. Henry was a vital albeit small cog in those operations.

In January 1945 Kinkaid came ashore from *Wasatch* to Tolosa, on the northern reaches of Leyte Gulf, and moved his HQ staff up from Hollandia. In July 1945 HQ moved again to the newly liberated Manila. It was on 6 July 1945, at the Advanced Headquarters of Seventh Fleet in the Philippines that Kinkaid, newly promoted to Admiral, personally awarded the United States Legion of Merit, Rank of Legionnaire, to Henry Chesterman. Only the third RAN officer to have received this decoration to date, the Citation makes clear Henry's significant contributions to the war despite his relatively junior rank.

Remaining on the staff past the Japanese surrender of 14 August 1945 Henry would have been busy co-ordinating Commonwealth naval forces occupying Japan, the surrender of Japanese throughout the region, and the urgent need for hospital ships and the repatriation of POWs. Returned to Brisbane in October 1945 for a months much needed rest, Henry then became Chief Staff Officer to NOIC Brisbane, and was transferred to the Emergency List as a Commander in April 1946.

Henry's experience and tactful liaison was called upon again in September 1947 when the United Nations requested Military Observers to report on the conflict in the Netherlands East Indies. On 10 September 1947 his official file notes his posting as a 'Naval' Observer on the Staff of the Australian Consul General Batavia. Four Australian officers arrived in Batavia (Jakarta) on 13 September 1947. Commencing the mission several days before the British and others nations Observers arrived Australia thus had the honour of fielding the first UN Peacekeepers.

Brigadier Lewis Dyke and Wing Commander Louis Spence toured the Nationalist side while Commander Henry Chesterman and Major David Campbell covered the Dutch side. Henry did not return to Brisbane until 17 February 1948, having volunteered to extend his tour when Spence was evacuated with fever in November, and army members of the mission had to return early to Australia. This service made Henry not only the first RAN Observer, but also an original UN Peacekeeper, and the first in a line of Australian defence peacekeepers that continues unbroken to the present day.

Henry became NOIC Brisbane in April 1948 and then RNO in June. His wife Charlotte died suddenly only three months after Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1954 but Henry continued as RNO, was awarded an OBE in the New Years Honours List of 1956, and remarried in September 1956 to Eleanor Hooper.

Discharged to 'Shore' in October 1957 'Chesters' continued to be active in retirement until his death on 18 February 1985.

The best summary of Henry's life of service to the Fleet Air Arm, the RAN and Australia can be had by simply reading his two citations, shown below:

Legion of Merit - Degree of Legionnaire (Awarded July 1945)

For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Naval Liaison Officer with the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, and as a Member of the Staff of the Commander, Allied Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, from September 1942, to November 1944. A brilliant counsellor of keen foresight and broad vision, Commander Chesterman applied a comprehensive understanding and sound, unbiased judgement to the maze of problems confronting Allied Naval Forces in the planning and execution of combined large-scale operations. His tactful and wise handling of the varied and complex details incident to his assignment furthered the harmonious relations between the United States and Australian Navies and his particular knowledge and advice in matters concerning the control and protection of shipping were important factors in the continued safe movement of Allied ships over long supply lines. By his outstanding professional ability, untiring energy and splendid co-operation throughout a prolonged period of intense combat operations, he made a real contribution to the prosecution of the war at sea. →



Observer's Wings



Henry spent two decades as the RAN's first Observer without any insignia to indicate his specialty.

During World War One wings were awarded to Observers of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps. Post war no further Observer wings were awarded, although RAF and RN pilots continued to be given distinguishing insignia on their graduation.

The Admiralty accorded Observers the same specialist status as Gunnery, Torpedo, Navigation and Signal officers by annotating them with an O in the Navy List from 1924. Into the 1930s the prevailing attitude was that Observers wished to preserve their identity as Executive Branch officers. They feared that specialist insignia could be perceived as a shift in allegiance to the very junior Air Branch which might damage their career prospects.

By the early years of World War Two naval observers were the only unbadged aviators across the entire British air services. With 80% now purely Air Branch RNVR hostilities only officers the old Executive Branch attitudes were no longer valid. Rear-Admiral Clement Moody RN (RADM Naval Air Stations) in 1941 recognised the pent up demand for Observer wings and urged a suitable badge be introduced.

On 17 September 1942 badges were approved for commissioned naval observers and rating observers/TAGs. Henry was finally able to wear the wings he had first qualified for in 1924. →

Order of the British Empire - Officer of the Military Division (Awarded 1956)

Commander Chesterman joined the Royal Australian Navy as a Cadet Midshipman on the 31st December, 1914.

Before World War 11 he was an officer of the Executive Branch in HM And HMA Ships. He qualified as an observer and in that capacity served in the earlier aircraft carriers of the Royal Navy and in HMAS Albatross.

From the outbreak of World War 11 until August, 1940, Commander Chesterman served as Staff Officer (Operations) on the staff of the Commodore-in-Charge, Sydney.

From September, 1940, until September, 1942, he was senior staff officer in Darwin and in September he began duty as Assistant Operations Officer on the staff of the Commander, South West Pacific Force. Commander Chesterman's next appointment was as Chief Staff Officer to the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Brisbane, until September, 1947, which was followed by five months as Naval Observer on the staff of the Australian Consul-General in Batavia.

Since April, 1948, he has served as Commanding Officer, HMAS Moreton and Resident Naval Officer, Queensland.

In recognition of Commander Chesterman's long and distinguished service in the Navy. →



Commander Henry Swinfield Chesterman OBE RAN 1901-1985



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About the Author

Graeme Lunn is a Melbourne boy who was a Seaman Diver in the RANR's Diving Team Six before joining the Royal Australian Naval College as a Senior Entry in 1976. He was in the first group to be sent to the University of New South Wales for Bachelor of Arts degrees and found a love for history there. He later added a Masters degree in military history from the University of New England.

His seaman training included gaining his Bridge Watchkeeping Certificate in *Melbourne*, followed by selection for No. 114 Pilots Course. FAA postings included HC723 and HU816 with the venerable Wessex in its CT role, and a tour with the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai. He did an exchange posting with the RNZN flying a Wasp whose short endurance helped him accrue 1749 deck landings.

On return from New Zealand in 1988 the prospect of a desk in Canberra whilst sitting out the delayed Seahawk programme was not as enticing as joining British Airways, where he had a 33 year career. Qualified on almost the entire Boeing range - B737, B757, B767, B777, B747 and B787 - Graeme was in the Flight Standards Unit for three years where he flew with all the BA fleets, including Concorde, and with all BA's subsidiary and franchise airlines around the world.

After 23,000 flying hours he retired (compulsorily) in August 2021 when he turned 65, and moved permanently back to New Zealand where his wife Rowan hails from. Their daughter's old bedroom has been converted into his library/study and his mission is to make the history of Australia's naval aviators from 1911 more widely known. →

