



Edition 60 - August 2022 vs.6

Fly By

The Fleet Air Arm's Bell Kiowa

The Little Helo With The Big Heart

The Air Minded Class

The Class of '41 Was There At The Birth Of The FAA

Friendly Fire

The Day Our HWI Tried To Kill The Squadron

EDITORIAL

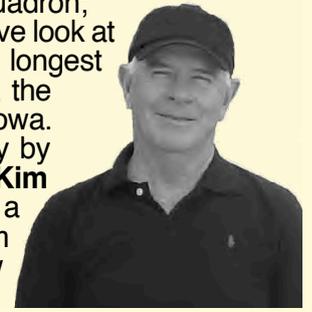
I write this column while overlooking a tropical lagoon in the Cook Islands. We all take global connectivity for granted, but it still surprises me that I can sit on a deck chair on a speck of an island a couple of thousand miles out in the Pacific and, with the press of a button, publish a 40+ page professionally produced magazine that can be read anywhere in the world. It makes the dodgy toasters in my hotel even more inexplicable!

In mid July I was privileged to attend the ceremony welcoming the Cook Islands' new Guardian Class Patrol Boat, which arrived after an epic journey from WA. It is one of an 21 vessels to be given to various countries under the Pacific Maritime Security Program, and I was struck by how this gift, which we tend to gloss over, meant so much to the people of that island. The ceremony to welcome the crew home and to acknowledge our gift was both elaborate and sincere.



This month's edition ventures well beyond 30 pages, with a unique article by **Graeme Lunn** on the Class of '41; a reminiscence by me of the day our Helicopter Warfare Instructor tried

to kill the entire Squadron; and a comprehensive look at one of the RAN's longest serving helicopters, the little Bell 206 Kiowa. With the main story by our historian **Kim Dunstan** and a swag of input from others who flew and maintained the aircraft, it makes a worthy addition to our Heritage Library.



"FlyBy" does not seek to replace our keynote magazine "Slipstream", which was first published back in the 50s. The two publications are very different, which is why it is so important to keep the latter going.

Unfortunately our Editor, Paul Shiels, has had to hang up his pen due to ill health, and we are earnestly looking for a new Editor to take up the mantle. For someone with an eye for detail, who likes putting pen to paper and who has a keen interest in the FAA and all other matters aviation, its a wonderful opportunity to pick up where Paul left off, and exercise your budding editorial talent! Page 3 of this edition gives some details but you only need to email me with an expression of interest and I'll be happy to ring you to give as much information and advice as you need. ➔



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The Russian spacecraft which splashed down off the WA coast in March of 1983. A number of Russian ships attended, watched closely by HMAS Moresby and her Kiowa. ➔

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.

Important Notice About Slipstream Magazine

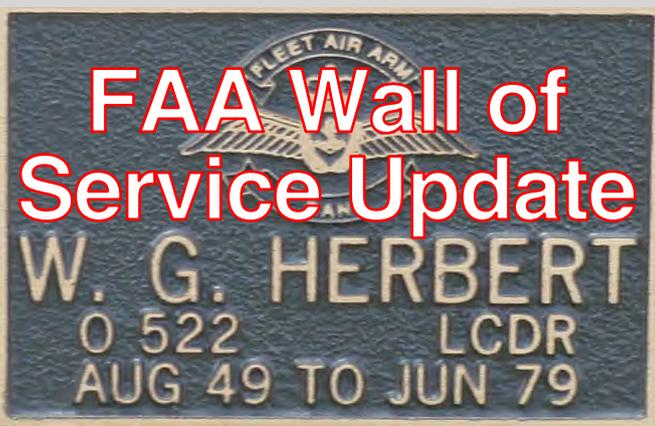
Slipstream is the premier publication of the Association and in its modern form has been produced every quarter for the past 32 years.

Our Slipstream Editor, **Paul Shiels**, has advised that he is stepping down from his duties for health reasons. He has done a fantastic job and we extend our grateful thanks for all his work.

We urgently need a volunteer to replace Paul. Any person interested might wish to consider the following:

- There is clear guidance for the Editor on the process, development and production of Slipstream;
- Paul has offered a 'handover' period to assist the new Editor with training, coaching and advice on software and the process;
- Once the quarterly draft is ready, it is printed and distributed separately. That bit of the process is not the Editor's job.
- The Association covers all reasonable additional costs incurred by the Editor in the production of the magazine. This might include, for example, specialised software necessary for typesetting; ink and paper expended on producing the drafts, and/or essential 'one off' training if required. Conditional assistance with hardware may also be available. Details are set out in a Standard Operating Procedure which can be seen on our [website](#), or email the FlyBy editor [here](#);
- The Association extends reasonable artistic licence in the production of the magazine, within normal publishing standards and protocols. You can be creative!
- The Editor can live anywhere in Australia. Slipstream is currently printed in Nowra and distributed by volunteers there, but that's not a restriction. For example, Paul operated remotely from South Australia so geographic location is not an issue.

If you are interested in finding out more about how you can help the Association and the many veterans who enjoy the magazine, please contact the webmaster [here](#).



The following plaques have now been affixed to the Wall:

- 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 POATW 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
- Toy, M. S121906 LSETS SM Jan77-Jan89
- Order No. 51 is now open and currently contains the following applications:
- Hart J.M.W. O 2473 LEUT (P) Mar65-Mar70
- Shipp N.E. R 59629 LACM Jan63-May69
- Huelin A.J. O 2271 ASLT (P) Jul66-Jan69
- Casadio A.A. O 2361 LEUT (P) Aug64-Aug68
- Phillips O'B.C.I. R 56859 POACM Mar60-Aug68
- Newbery I.R. O 106919 CMDR Jan 71-Aug98

For those that don't know, 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 (see background to photo above).

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 a really great way to have your service recorded.

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



Dear Editor,

The July edition of FlyBy (last page) places the subject institution in Yeovil. It is actually in Yeovilton, some 12 kilometres north of Yeovil town.

The aerodrome that used to exist at Yeovil has long gone, taken over by large format stores and the like. The Westland Helicopters factory remains, now owned by Leonardo.

Regards, **David Elliston.** ➔

Dear Editor,

I read the Concorde article in last month's edition of 'FlyBy' with interest, having in my possession a piece of G- BOAF.

I was working in Defence (Navy) in Canberra in late 80's early 90's . I had a workmate who had a friend working with CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) laboratory in Belconnen A.C.T.

It may be remembered that: G- BOAF "...On 12 APR 1989 Concorde 102 British Airways , G-BOAF while climbing through FL440 while on a world trip leg Christchurch - Sydney, portions of the upper rudder separated. Aircraft handling was not affected, and a normal approach and landing at Sydney were made" (Quote from CAA report).

The remaining portion of the rudder was sent to CAABelconnen Lab for examination / testing etc.



The general upshot of the cause of failure was moisture entering the surface skin and freezing / thawing / refreezing cycles eventually ending in component fatigue failure.

The composite material and core were of 'honeycomb' design.

Following testing the residual material was destined for the tip as CAA/BOAC/ QANTAS had no further need.

The piece I have in my possession was given to me at 'some stage' and I framed and mounted it on the hall wall. See attached photo. The core piece with exterior BOAC blue skin visible bottom LH of frame.

Hope this reads OK and makes sense.

Kind Regards, **Andy Warwick.** ➔

Dear Editor,

Graeme Lunn's article on flying aboard Concorde made for interesting reading, not only from an aviator's point of view, but also his personal thoughts on whether or not to pursue a posting to the fleet.

Seniority, as Graeme correctly points out, very much controls an airline pilot's career path, but I believe there was one captain who made it onto the fleet by virtue of his presidency of BALPA.

As an aside, there was also a third airline that operated the aircraft, albeit only for a few years – December 1977 until October 1980 – and that was Singapore Airlines, sharing the service London – Bahrain – Singapore.

The aircraft G-BOAD was uniquely painted in both company's colours, the right side in BA, the left SIA and whilst the flight-deck crew remained BA, for the cabin crew it was a different matter and 36 Singaporean senior cabin-crew were sent to London for training.

The two sets of flight attendants (SQ and BA) would not mix on any single flight, accordingly, a passenger doing a round trip could have a different uniformed flight attendant each sector.

Politics and economics eventually overtook the viability of the service and the arrangement was terminated at the end of 1980.

Cheers, **Anson E (Ted) Goater.** ➔



Dear Editor,

**VIETNAM VETERANS,
PEACEKEEPERS AND
PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
(NSW) INC.
SHOALHAVEN SUB-BRANCH**

I'm still new as Secretary of the VVPPAA Shoalhaven and up to my first big task helping organise this year's Vietnam Veterans Day Commemorative Service at **Walsh Park, Bomaderry, from 1700 to 1800 on Thursday, 18 August 2022.**

We'd very much like to see you and others from the Fleet Air Arm Association on this very special occasion.

You and your members would be most welcome also to bring along a wreath to lay during the Service.

Please let me know if you'll be able to attend and I look forward very much to catching up with you.

Best regards,

Carl Robinson

Secretary, VVPPAA, Shoalhaven. 0420 495 552. ➔

VICTORIAN DIVISION SOCIAL EVENTS

Annual Dinner

When: Saturday 27 August 2022
Where: Warramunga Restaurant, Waverley RSL
161 Coleman Pde, Glen Waverley
Time: 1800
Dress: Smart casual

Wreath Laying at HMAS Cerberus

When: Sunday 28 August 2022
Where: St Marks Chapel, HMAS Cerberus
Time: 1030
Dress: Jacket & Tie/ Uniform. Medals to be worn.
After: Lunch at Westernport Hotel, Hastings. ➔

**Post Flight Gripe Sheet:
Controls feel Mushy**



Understanding Your Benefits

By Jim Bush

Pensions for Orphans and War Widow(er)s

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) may pay pensions to compensate dependant orphans and widowed partners of veterans who died as a result of war or eligible defence service. The pension may be paid automatically where the veteran was an ex prisoner of war and in receipt of specific eligible compensation entitlements.

In all other cases, the pension may be paid where the veteran's death is determined to have been caused by war or eligible defence service.

An application will need to be completed and lodged with DVA on DVA Form 'Claim for Pension by Widow, Widower, or other Dependant of a Deceased Veteran'. It may be filled out electronically on a computer and saved, but will need to be printed, signed and submitted to DVA. Further information may be obtained from DVA by calling 1800 55 254.

The full description of the eligibility criteria and entitlements are set out on the DVA Web Page Information Sheet, 'Pensions for Orphans and War Widow(er)s' which can be read [here](#);

REST IN PEACE

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

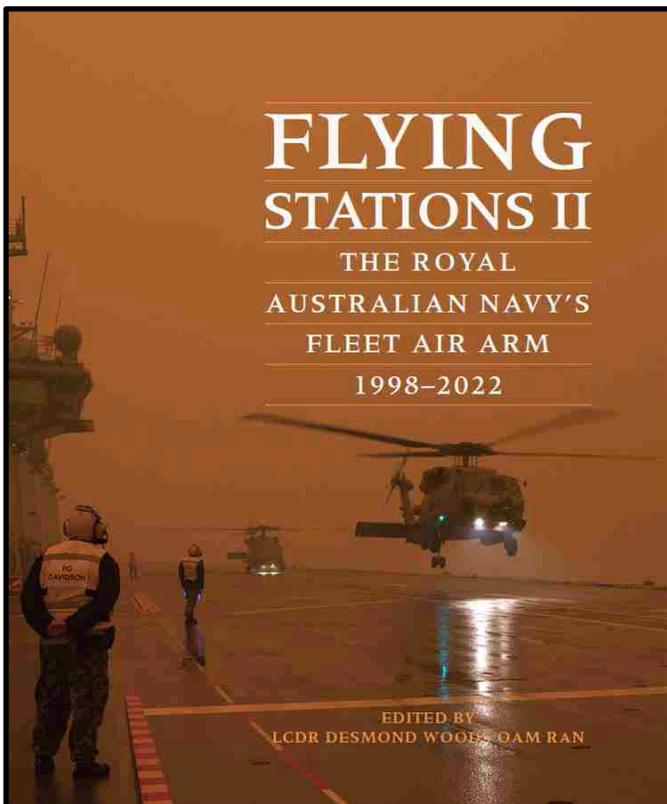
Peter Justice, Richard Marum, Bob Simmonds & Fred McCreanor.

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



Dear Editor,

I am writing to give you all a little more information about the forthcoming release of *Flying Stations II*, a record of the Fleet Air Arm.



The book, which is currently being printed overseas, is a successor volume to the first *Flying Stations* book which was published in 1998 for the Golden Jubilee of the FAA. It recorded the history of the first 50 years of our FAA. *Flying Stations (II)* picks up where the first book finished. It starts in October 1998 with a monthly chronology of operations, events, exercises, search and rescues and community engagement activities in which FAA people took part through until March of this year 2022. There are four additional chapters by senior FAA experts writing on specialised FAA subjects for which they have first-hand knowledge. An Appendix records all honours awarded to FAA people during the period.

Flying Stations (II) is 288 pages in length, it is a hardback 'coffee table' book and is fully illustrated with a wide range of photographs taken by Navy Imagery specialists, and eyewitness serving members of the FAA, over the last 25 years.

Book Launch– FAA Museum – 21 Oct 2022

The Foreword to *Flying Stations (II)* has been written by VADM Tim Barrett AO CSC RAN (Ret'd) and he will launch the book at 1130 on Friday 21 October.

This will occur on the main exhibition floor of the FAA Museum. Refreshments, in the form of a light lunch, will be provided from 1115 onwards.

Purchase of copies of *Flying Stations (II)*

Flying Stations (II) will not be in in Australia until early October. It will be first available for sale at the launch and then afterwards through the FAA Museum shop.

A list of those who are not able to attend the launch, but who wish to buy the book, will be made by the Manager of the FAA Museum [Mr Stuart Harwood](#).

Australian Naval Institute (ANI) Seminar - 0900 – 1115 21 October - FAA Museum

To register to receive notification of the ticketing process for the ANI FAA Seminar email the ANI Secretariat [here](#): Attendance at the Seminar will be limited to 100 due to seating space available.

Save the Date and Circulate

Please 'save the date' for these significant FAA75 events occurring AM on 21 October and circulate the attached invitation to those retired and serving FAA members, known to you, who may wish to attend.

Kindest regards

Desmond Woods OAM

Lieutenant Commander RAN.
Navy Bereavement Liaison Officer
Mobile: 0427663449
desmond.woods@defence.gov.au →



Dear Editor,

It is nearly 40 years ago now but one of the most significant things around at that time was the negativity of spirit. The Fleet Air Arm was perhaps the worst at the doom and gloom. And who could blame us? Many had their futures irrevocably changed or so it seemed. It was all over wasn't it? It all went west with "the Canoe". Not quite.

My part of it all was the reforming of HU 816 which was a bit of an organisational sleight of hand (some might not agree). And this involved the meagre rump of enduring 723 to be shifted northward some 100 metres up dispersal in an untidy and poorly organised heap into "new" WW2 premises with 3 and soon 4 different aircraft types. The "old" 723/new HU 816 flipped the name boards over with the new/old 816 label now uppermost and carried on with the then venerable Wessex and the National Task. It all just about worked somehow.

Thanks as ever to the people of the Squadrons, ships and those who supported us, the small ship's Fleet Air Arm got off the ground and flourished.

I thought you might like to read the attached piece of reporting which was fairly typical for the day when in fact Nowra and Navy had been through "the end is nigh" nightie-ripping at least twice previously. This was nothing new. Not really. Might give you a bit of a laugh on our 75th.

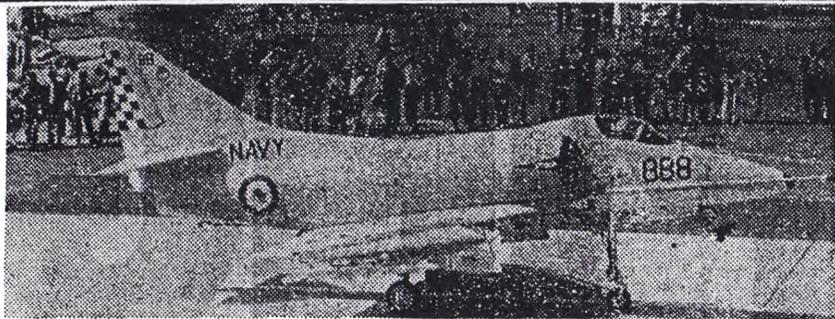
Regards, **Cris George**.

By Editor.

Thank you Cris, and for the newspaper cutting that you also forwarded. I've placed on the following page. It tells of the fortunes of Nowra township, which was, of course, inexorably linked to those of the Fleet Air Arm. →

27/3/1983

SUN HERALD

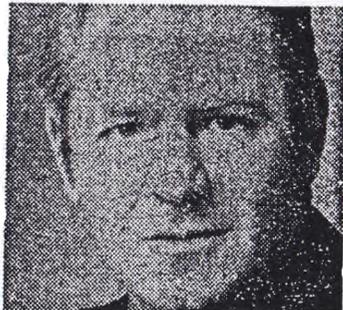


Entering Nowra from the south, the highway passes an old Sea Venom jet fighter mounted on a tall pedestal — commemorating the Royal Australian Navy's long association with the town.

ABOVE: Navy Skyhawk at HMAS Albatross ... but for how long?

The town that nearly made it

NEWS ANALYSIS by Peter Robinson



Mr Scholes ... reassuring.

The symbol had particular relevance last week as the district faced up to the fact that the Navy seems certain to abandon all fixed-wing flying.

A few metres away, almost within its shadow, is another, much sadder symbol — the RAN Cemetery, where 34 neatly lined-up graves mark the inevitable toll of naval aviation. The formal official headstones show that nearly all those buried there were under 25 when they died.

The destruction of youthful dreams, hopes and high ambition seems to be a tradition in the Shoalhaven district. It's almost as if the area was cursed with a jinx — an albatross shadowing its economic wake through the tide of time.

Nowra is the heart of an area which, if all its promises had been fulfilled, would today be one of Australia's major cities, ports and industrial centres.

The vast expanse of Jervis Bay, 20km to the south-east, is one of the few large harbours on a forbidding coastline. It has held out the tantalising but unfulfilled promise of being a major Australian port almost from the day it was first named in 1791 (after Royal Navy Admiral Sir John Jervis).

When the ACT was first gazetted in 1908, it was laid down that the new national capital should have its own seaport. Land was to be set aside at Jervis Bay.

In 1911, a railway linking Canberra with Jervis Bay was proposed and an enterprising investor, H.F. Halloran, bought up vast areas of the bay's foreshores to build a seaport named Pacific City. Since neither Canberra nor Jervis Bay had any significant population, both projects faded out.

In 1969, the district was electrified by the disclosure that a consortium of Armco Steel, Kaiser Steel and Thyssen Steel was conducting a feasibility study into locating a major steel plant between Nowra and Jervis Bay.

According to Armco's representative in Nowra, real estate man Terry Watson, the cost of the project was put at \$1.6 billion — equivalent to between \$8 and \$10 billion at today's prices.

Armco bought more than 4,000

acres of land for the plant and made arrangements to lease more for a port.

The news set off a frantic investment boom in the district. "It was like a chain reaction," Mr Watson recalled. "We had investors from here to Hong Kong seeking to put money into the area."

But the winds of the world steel recession were already beginning to blow.

In 1973, the three partners announced that their feasibility studies had shown that "the project is not economically viable".

Armco still owns the land. While local hopes were still at white heat over the steel proposal, another boost to district ambitions came from Canberra.

The Government of Prime Minister John Gorton announced in October 1969 that Australia would enter the nuclear age by building a 500 megawatt atomic power station at Murray's Beach, on the southern headland of Jervis Bay.

For a time, this project actually seemed as though it would go ahead. International tenders were called for the station and basic site clearance and levelling was completed in a beautiful hollow some 3km from the Jervis Bay naval college.

Power would begin flowing into the NSW grid by 1977, it was announced.

But, again, hopes were dashed.

In June 1971, the McMahon Government announced that the project had been deferred. Tenders had proved to be far higher than expected — exceeding \$200 million.

After the death of that dream, the mainstay of the district once again shifted to the Navy — the naval air station at HMAS Albatross, just outside Nowra, and the naval college at Jervis Bay, known as HMAS Cresswell.

Run down

At that time there were around 2,300 naval personnel stationed at Albatross, but since then the numbers have steadily declined to 1,300 plus 120 civilians.

As Deputy Mayor Paul Bland of Shoalhaven City said last week: "The base is already run down."

He added: "It has been the basis for all our planning for the future development of the Shoalhaven area."

The payroll amounts to around \$1 million a fortnight and if the civilian and contracted income is added, Albatross is said to bring in around \$45 million a year to the district.

Defence Minister Scholes' assertion that the base would be kept under naval control and would retain its present level of activity

was greeted with some relief by Nowra officials, but they doubt whether it will ease scepticism about the district's future.

The nature of the rundown is shown by aircraft numbers. The base currently supports 71 aircraft of which 32 are helicopters.

According to Mr Scholes, the Navy's helicopter force will rise slightly to 40 eventually, but indications are that its 39 fixed-wing aircraft, including Skyhawk attack aircraft and Tracker surveillance planes, will be disposed of, or at least moved elsewhere.

Scholes made it clear that he had no idea what units could be moved into Albatross to make up the level of activity.

The town has an unemployment rate of 18 per cent and any reduction in the base's activities would be "a chilling thought," according to Terry Watson.

Real estate prices in the town have already dropped by between \$5,000 and \$7,000 for an average property, he says.

Even the district's tourist activities contain hints of the strange Jonah complex which seems to be prevalent.

The official tourist pamphlet lists as one attraction in the district the ruined lighthouse at Jervis Bay.

"It was built in the wrong place and proved to be a navigational hazard luring boats to their doom on the rocky coastline. The Navy was requested to shell it."

Around The Traps



Meet The New Chief of Navy

Vice Admiral **Mark Hammond** AM RAN has been appointed the new Chief of the Navy.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Richard Marles, also announced two-year extensions to the terms of the Chief of the Defence Force, General **Angus Campbell** AO DSC; the Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Vice Admiral **David Johnston** AC RAN, and the Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant General **Greg Bilton** AO CSC.

Vice Admiral Hammond joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1986 as an electronics technician at HMAS *Cerberus*. He was commissioned as a naval officer in 1988.

After qualifying as a submariner in Oberon Class submarines in 1994, VADM Hammond served in various positions aboard HMAS *Collins*, *Waller*, *Sheen* and *Farncomb* including in command of the latter. Other postings of significance included Assistant Naval Attaché – Washington DC, USA; Director Future Submarines; Joint Exercise Director at Joint Operations Command; Director Submarine Sub-Program (Collins and Future Submarines); and Chief of Staff to the Chief of the Defence Force.

In 2017 the then Commodore Hammond was posted to the United States for duties in the Pentagon as the Chief of Defence Force Liaison Officer to the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. ➔

Rear Admiral Hammond returned to Australia in March 2018 to assume duties as the Deputy Chief of Navy. On 17 November 2020 he was appointed as the Commander Australian Fleet based in Sydney, a position from which he has now been promoted to CN.

Oops! Gannet Ditching 1957

5 July 1957 820 NAS Gannet AS1 XA390 322/B ditched in Bangor Bay, UK, after hold-back failed on launch from HMS *Bulwark*. The pilot, Lt G.L.P. Steer RN attempted a free take-off but with only 100ft of deck available was unable to gain flying speed and the aircraft ditched.

An eye-witness said, "We were at anchor and there was a very strong wind. They decided that because of the strong wind, it was like cruising into wind for normal take-off [catapult] launches.



The Gannet was on the Port catapult and applied normal full power for launch, but the stop broke prematurely during the runup and she went off the end at slow speed.

The Gannet just missed a civilian sailing dinghy that was racing around...they recovered the crew, and came back alongside.

The crew of the aircraft were unhurt, and the crew of the dinghy were given a gift of safety equipment".

The wreckage of was recovered one week later by HMS *Barrington*. ➔



What Went Wrong?

If you are an aviation enthusiast and are interested in crash investigation, then you need go no further than the excellent YouTube segments presented by "Mentour Pilot".

Beautifully put together by Petter Hornfeldgt, a Swedish training caption on Boeing 737-800s, each episode looks at the circumstances of an aircraft accident.

With dozens of videos to watch, you'll learn not only a great deal about the accidents themselves, but also about airline procedures and the technical aspects of many commercial airliners.

These segments are highly recommended and are available for free viewing on YouTube [here](#). ➔



Below. Photo from Skinhead aka Greg Kelson. 1991. Jindivik Hangar, Jervis Bay. L-R. Greg Kelson, Valerie & Peter Brien-Scott, Anne Kelson. Peter was leading Pilots Mate (RN) then came with the virgin RAN FAA to Nowra in 1948. ➔



Left. Ron Marsh sent in this image of a notable tee-shirt. Apparently it was on a Facebook page but neither he nor the Editor could find it again to determine if they are for sale or not. Does anybody know? If so, drop an email to the Editor [here](#). ➔

Right. A while ago we featured a story on the "Vertiia", a prototype electric/hydrogen aircraft being developed by AMSL Aero - one of whose founders is **Andrew Moore**, an ex-FAA Aeronautical Engineer. There's been little chatter online since then, but we hear that AMSL has recently joined Australia's Greenbird Consortium, which now comprises 8 companies committed to bring advanced air mobility to Australia. Work is continuing on the Vertiia, which will carry five passengers and 1100 lbs of cargo initially using battery power. We'll bring you an update when we hear more. ➔



Victorian FAAAA member **Greg Grist** sent in the photos below, asking for any information on the aircrew and maintainers named on the side of this Sea Venom. Can anyone help with advice on who they were and what happened to them? Email the Editor [here](#).

The Venom is parked at the Daly Waters pub, (NT), having been moved there last year ‘...from Tim’s Junk Yard down the road’, and, according to the blurb next to it, is WZ931. ➔



DE HAVILLAND DH-112 SEA VENOM WZ931
 (Single engine, low-wing, low-wing, low-wing)
 (Single engine, low-wing, low-wing, low-wing)
 (Single engine, low-wing, low-wing, low-wing)



Left: Mayor of the City of Shoalhaven **Amanda Findlay**, left, Maritime Logistics Personnel Leading Seaman **Stephanie Hart** and Commander Fleet Air Arm Commodore **David Frost**, cut a cake to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the FAA.

The gathering took place at the FAAM on 02 July 2022. Unfortunately, the events planned for the next day had to be cancelled due to inclement weather, but it didn't stop a large number of invited guests from celebrating the milestone date. ➔

Dear All,
 Most of you will have received some detailed history of HMAS PERTH and a detailed outline of what we, the HMAS PERTH (1) MEMORIAL FOUNDATION were proposing. Now we are happy to advise that what started as a pipe dream by **Jim O'Neil** is now a very active construction site with Stage 1 almost complete, the Memorial Wall is up, the compass rose has been manufactured and is in transit, and a half size propeller and granite Compass Rose will soon replace the traffic cones in the photo. Sufficient funds are now on hand and Stage 2, the Bow Section, is underway. Engineering and construction drawings are nearing completion from which the necessary sizing of steel and glass can be ordered and construction can commence.

I look forward to hearing from those who may be interested soonest, and to those who have joined up – thank you.

Yours aye, **Bob Mummery** OAM
 HMAS PERTH (1) FOUNDATION

By Editor. You can ask Bob for more information and a joining form if you are interested in helping out. Contact him [here](#).



Last Month's Mystery Photo



Last month's Mystery Photo showed a commuter jet in rather a sorry state. We asked who it had belonged to and what had happened to it, and we received five correct responses.

Its a 1962 Lockheed JetStar commuter jet, and at the time the above photo was taken, it had been sitting on an apron in New Mexico for more than 30 years. The image on the right gives an idea who the owner was - yep, none other than **Elvis "the Pelvis" Presley**.

It was his first aircraft - he later bought another JetStar and a larger Convair 880, both of which were owned by the Graceland Estate.

This original JetStar was acquired at auction by a private buyer in 2017 but it continued to rot in the same location and, according to recent reports, it again went to auction in 2021 where it sold for US\$430K - about \$2m under the auction estimate. The owners remain anonymous and it is not known what their intention is, but hopefully it will be restored to its former glory. ✈



THE AIR MINDED CLASS



Of the thirteen graduates of the Royal Australian Naval College Year of '41, no less than ten volunteered for the new RAN Fleet Air Arm.

What happened to those who were accepted for training in those early days is a story of achievement and tragedy.

The Royal Australian Naval College Class of 1941 has a place in any comprehensive history of the Fleet Air Arm. Then occupying separate grounds at Flinders Naval Depot the College was an institution that believed early disciplined moulding of the young cadet-midshipman would produce a dutiful and efficient naval officer. Sixteen cadets had joined in 1941 but thirteen graduated as Midshipmen in September 1944. Duty had plainly already been inculcated as, of the three who had their appointments terminated, one joined the army as a Private and one re-enlisted as an Ordinary Seaman.

Donning uniform at age thirteen, the 1941 Class

By Graeme Lunn

The Class of '41. Top Row L-R: Lt Lawson; L.G.Baly; E.V. Stevens; J.A. Mackie; A.C. Butt; P.B. Cooper; J.D. Stevens; Lt.Cdr Lancaster. Middle: W.E. Dunlop; J.C. Bennett; AF Sallmann; F.A. Sturgess; J.P. Brent. Bottom: H.W. Dillon; R.J. Rust; P. Goldrick. The six who were accepted for aircrew training are circled in red. Those who got through training have a blue circle. Two of the six lost their lives to aviation.➔

commenced active service aged sixteen. In November 1944 they took passage in the cruiser *Suffolk* to Trincomalee in Ceylon where they joined the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet. Baly, Bennett, Brent, Cooper, Dillon and Dunlop joined the large gunroom of the battleship *Howe*, Flagship of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser RN. In April 1945 *Howe*, now part of the British Pacific Fleet, undertook air defence and bombardment duties at the battle of Okinawa. Goldrick, Mackie, Rust and Sallmann went to the cruiser *Kenya* which supported 14th Army operations along the Burma Coast in the Bay of Bengal. The two Stevens joined the cruiser *London* where they participated



***Above:** Trafalgar Day 1943 in Melbourne, Victoria. Within the year these young officers were headed off to war. Amongst them we can see some of the Class of '41 including Goldrick, Rust, E. Stevens, Sturgess, Dunlop, Cooper and Mackie. **Below.** Midshipman of '41 Class in HMS HOWE with the Pacific Fleet. L-R: Peter Cooper, John Bennet, Hugh Dillon, Lindsay Baly, Bill Dunlop and Peter Brent. ➔*



WHAT COULD THEY FLY?

The young men of the Class of '41 were perfectly placed to volunteer for the brand new Fleet Air Arm, which was born in 1947. Tempered by a year of war and wise in the ways of the Service, they were exactly what the Navy was looking for.

There were only two front-line aircraft in those early years: the Fairey Firefly (above), and the Hawker Sea Fury (below). You can click on the images to see detailed stories of both types.

Both were high performance and very demanding of those who flew them - little wonder that of the ten officers who volunteered for the new Arm of the Service, only six were selected for training and only three graduated to fly in front line operations.



in the bombardment and surrender of Sabang. Sturgess was streamed for engineering so took passage to the UK for the RN Engineering College Keyham.

In late 1945 the seaman officers of the 1941 Class were posted to destroyers before commencing, in 1946, the various RN courses mandated as necessary for their promotion to Lieutenant. Traditionally five courses were undertaken by executive officers - Seamanship, Navigation, Gunnery, Torpedo and Engineering. Good exam results - the sought after 'five firsts' - would lead to enhanced seniority on promotion so academic study was brisk.

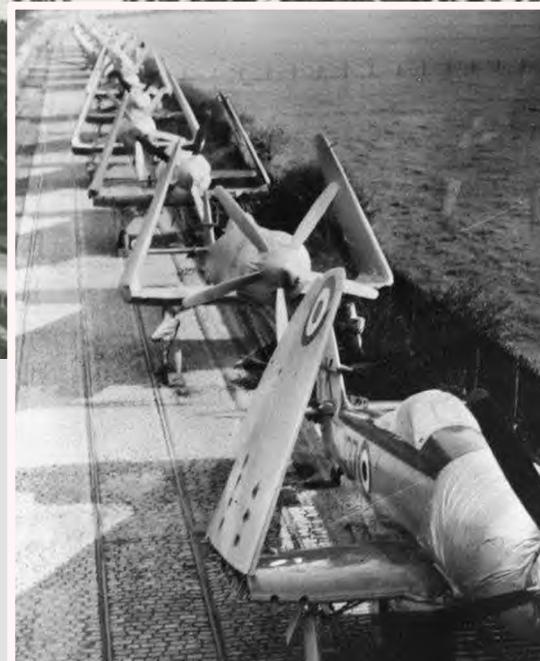
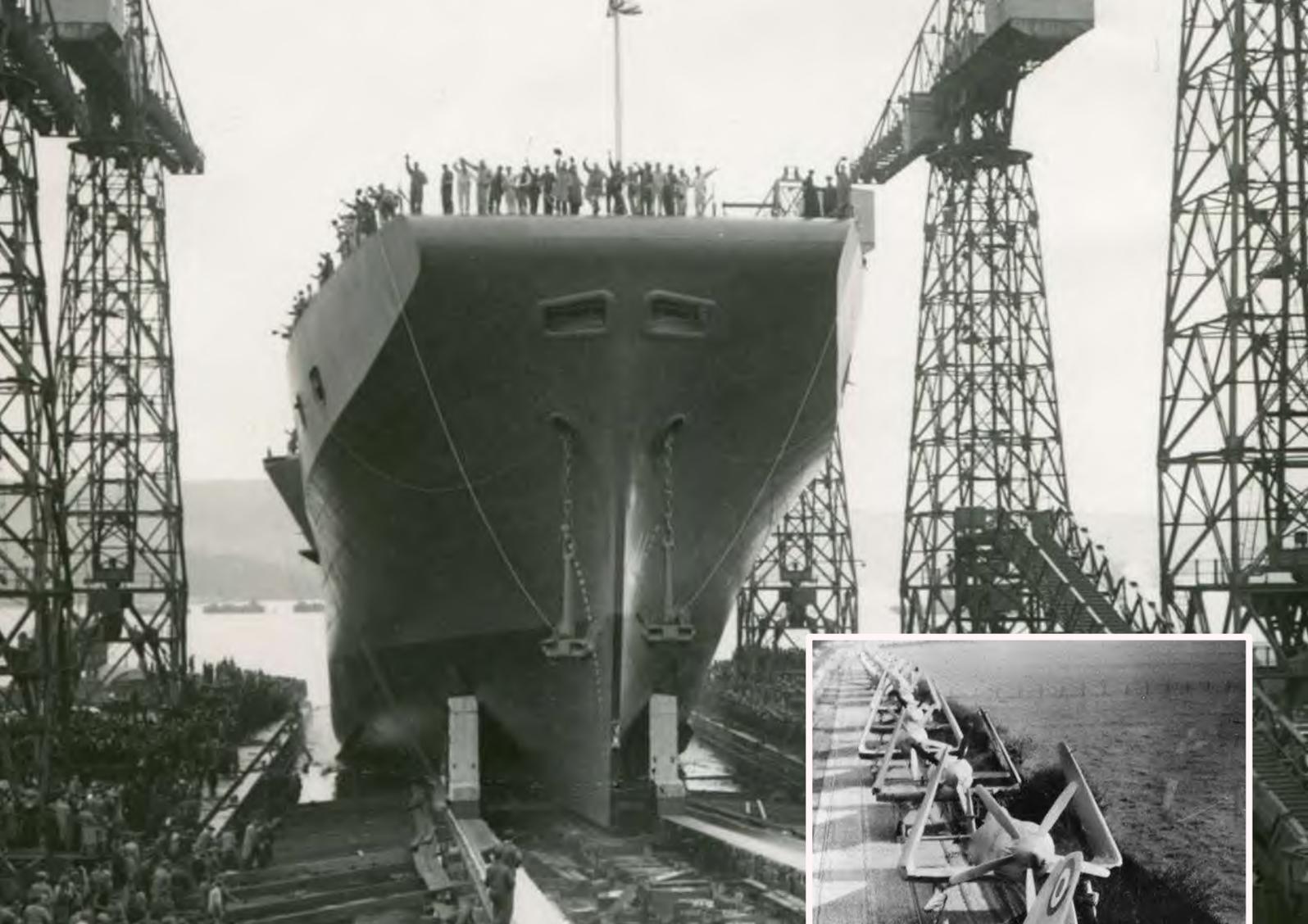
Vice-Admiral Munro Kerr RN had been loaned to the RAN in 1929 as head of the Naval Board and oversaw the initial operations of the recently commissioned seaplane carrier *Albatross*. Air-minded from his command of the carrier *Eagle* in the mid-1920's his voice, among others, had advocated that instruction in aviation be included in the general education of junior executive officers. Pre-war these calls led to several weeks of temporary duty for junior officers-under-training in an Atlantic/Home Fleet or Mediterranean Fleet carrier where possible.

In 1946, sandwiched among the five core courses, were new additions such as Combined Op-

erations and Damage Control. There was also a two week 'Air Course for Lieutenant'. Run by a designated squadron this was later renamed the 'Junior Officers Air Course'. As well as lectures it included instructional flying hours and a subsequent assessment of suitability to specialise in naval aviation. If the weather was fair, and the student apt, there were enough hours allocated to gain the basic civilian flying qualification. Awarded their Civil Pilots 'A' License on a DH.82 Tiger Moth were Richard Rust (June 1946), Errol

Below Left. Errol Stevens was withdrawn from training for health reasons. *Below.* Lt. Peter Goldrick, in front of a Seafire. He went on to have an illustrious career, retiring at the rank of Captain. ✈





Stevens and Peter Cooper (August 1946) and John Stevens (March 1947).

As Sub-Lieutenants the 1941 Class returned to Australia in 1947 (the engineer Sturgess in 1948) and their first RAN ships. Continuing their training at sea the majority served in vessels deploying to Japanese waters as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces. It was now time to look forward to the award of a Bridge Watchkeeping Certificate, promotion to Lieutenant, and to consider specialisation if they were not to remain a salt horse officer.

The Five Year Defence Plan confirming a carrier based Fleet Air Arm for the RAN, agreed at the Commonwealth Defence Council, was announced by the Minister for Defence, the Honourable John Dedman on 4 June 1947. This announcement coincided with the 1941 Class submitting their preferences for specialisation. An overwhelming ten of the thirteen decided to submit 'Pilot' as their first preference. We do not know most of the individual reasons for their choice but all had seen at first hand carrier air power in action. Matured beyond their years by wartime service, with its attendant casualties, they were unlikely to have been overly swayed by any 'glamour' attaching to carrier operations. In later years Peter Goldrick recalled that seeing Lieutenant-Commanders doing mundane Officer-of-the-Day duties in *Australia* was one driver for his choice to go aircrew. Errol Stevens had a much admired older brother, decorated with the DFC for his RAAF service, that perhaps influenced his own choice.

*In June of 1947 the Australian Government announced the intent to establish a carrier-based Fleet Air Arm for the RAN, which coincided with the 1941 Class submitting their preferences for specialisation. By early the following year the first training courses were in place, aircraft procured, and the two carriers (including HMS *Terrible* being launched (above) had been purchased. ➔*

CARRIERS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

The acquisition of our first two Carriers wasn't a straight forward matter - it was filled with political intrigue. But just how close did we get to not acquiring them at all? James Goldrick tells the story. ➔

To meet the manpower needs of the proposed Carrier Air Groups three main streams of aircrew were commenced. In March 1948 No. 1 Naval Air Pilots Course of new entries and selected ratings arrived at RAAF Point Cook. Graduating 29 July 1949 they proceeded to the UK for operational conversions. From the considerable pool of demobilised World War Two pilots the selected ex-RAAF, RNVR, RANVR and RNZVR pilots started their six month Naval Orientation at Cerberus 6 February 1948 before also proceeding to the UK. This group included a number transferred from the RAAF in 1945 as probationary Sub-Lieutenants (A) RANVR for service with the British Pacific Fleet, a plan curtailed by Victory Japan day. They had their appointments terminated in 1946 but were reappointed in 1948 to the RAN with original seniority.

The third, and smallest, aircrew stream were those RANC officers choosing to sub-specialise in the new branch of aviation. To them it promised a rewarding and expansive future career in the mooted multi-carrier navy. Of the ten aviation volunteers in the 1941 Class, most of whom had been assessed as suitable for aircrew, six were selected to undergo naval aviation courses in the UK: John 'Wiggy' Bennett, Peter 'Brassie' Cooper, William 'Bill' Dunlop, Peter Goldrick, Errol Stevens and Frank Sturgess.

Errol Stevens was awarded his flying badge from No 11 Course RAF Synerston with an assessment of 'Above Average'. Commencing Operational Flying School 1 Strike Course at *Fulmar* Naval Air Station Lossiemouth he went solo on 6 April 1949 in a Firefly. Shortly afterwards Errol lost his aircrew medical with hearing issues. Grounded, he was posted to *Sydney* as a Bridge Watchkeeper for her delivery voyage with the 20th Carrier Air Group embarked.

'Wiggy' Bennett was undertaking his OFS 2 Strike Course at *Gannet* Naval Air Station Eglinton when an Air Interview Board was convened to consider his case. Permanently grounded for 'executive reasons'



Above and Below. Flying high-performance aircraft onto a crowded straight deck carrier was not without risk, and most pilots, including Cooper and Dunlop, entered the Barrier at one time or another. If you missed the arrestor wires and the Barrier, the next stop was the parking lot forward or overboard (as Goldrick did) neither of which was a good option. ➔

he forfeited his flying badge in September 1949. The reasons are not given in his personal file, but it was most likely a failure to progress in the more demanding flying required of an advanced Strike Course. He was posted to the ocean-going tug *Reserve* on return to Australia.

Three of the class carrier qualified off *Illustrious* and returned to Australia when their respective squadrons of the 21st





KOREA - The Forgotten War

*“The Forgotten War” saw our young and untried Fleet Air Arm tested to the limits. This account by **Marcus Peake** uses Squadron Diaries and SYDNEY’s Report of Proceedings to tell the story. ➔*

CAG embarked in *Sydney* on 30 August 1950 - Peter Goldrick and ‘Brassie’ Cooper in 808 Squadron flying Sea Furies while ‘Bill’ Dunlop was with 817 Squadron in Fireflies. Serving in front-line squadrons at Albatross/Naval Air Station Nowra the three classmates considered themselves fortunate when the *Sydney* CAG of 805, 808 and 817 Squadrons was formed for Korean active service in May 1951.

In the four years from the announcement of the formation of an Australian FAA until *Sydney* departed for Korea there had been multiple crashes, ditchings, barrier arrests and deck ‘peckings’ with their attendant fatalities and injuries. Both Cooper and Dunlop had entered the barrier on several occasions, while Goldrick had missed the barrier completely as he slewed off the port side of the flight deck into the water. One of the handful of aviators to survive seeing a carrier pass overhead he surfaced on the starboard side of the wake.

Eight RAN warships in addition to *Sydney* served in Korea, with long deployments of up to twelve months duration. For eight of the ‘41 Class this was to be their second war, just six years after their first had finished. Five of the seaman officers saw active service between 27 June 1950 and 27 July 1953 - Baly (Condamine), Bennett (Tobruk), Brent (Anzac/Warramunga), Machie (Condamine) and Rust (Bataan/Tobruk). Their aircrew classmates - Cooper, Dunlop and Goldrick - embarked with the CAG when *Sydney*, escorted by *Tobruk*, sailed for Korea on the 31 August 1951.

Six months later the Squadrons disembarked back to Albatross on 3 March 1952. During the CAG’s deployment ‘Brassie’ Cooper bailed out of his flak damaged Sea Fury at 800’ over enemy territory on the morning of 13 December 1951.

The remainder of his flight immediately formed a RESCAP above him as he was seen to walk along a creek bed displaying his yellow identification panel. As the *Sea Furies* strafed the enemy troops approaching the crash site, he was rescued by a USN helicopter. Transferred to *Tobruk* his classmate Richard Rust would have been relieved to see him.

Peter Goldrick, although wounded by flak while attacking ground targets near Panmunjom on 5 January 1952, managed to land back onboard the *Sydney*. Of the 38 aircraft embarked thirteen were lost with nine shot down. Ninety-nine aircraft returned to the carrier with flak damage. In retrospect it seems incredible that only three aircrew, all *Sea Fury* pilots, were lost over Korea.

Because he was on a lengthy A/E conversion, subsequently curtailed to commence pilots course, Lieutenant (E)(P) **Frank Sturgess** was still undergoing training while his classmates were flying operationally over Korea. Interestingly it was intended that he do the Short Jet Course after his OFS. By 1 February 1952 Frank was well advanced in his OFS 2 Fighter Course at *Seahawk*/Naval Air Station Culdrose with just under 400 flying hours total, 65 of them in the *Sea Fury*. Although he was recognised as a skilful and intelligent pilot, Lieutenant-Commander William Orr-Cubbon RN had warned Sturgess of his fault of flying too slowly when in the landing circuit. Practicing deck landings in a *Sea Fury* at the nearby RAF Predannack, he once again allowed his airspeed to decrease while flying downwind at 300’, causing one wing to stall as he turned onto finals. Cut out of the inverted wreckage paralysed from a broken neck, in severe shock from multiple fractures and lacerations, he died of his injuries 48 hours later in Cornwall Royal Infirmary. Frank was 24.

The drama and dash of Korean flight operations can obscure this mortal grind of aircrew losses in training and as squadrons were working up to their operational tempo. During the six months of



*The resting place of Lt. Frank Sturgess, in the CGC Cemetery in Helston, Cornwall. His *Sea Fury* stalled in the circuit at nearby Predannack, and he died two days later from injuries sustained. The headstone reads: “Frank Albert Sturgess. Lieut (P) Royal Australian Navy. RN Air Station Culdrose. 3rd February 1952. Aged 24 years” ➔*

LATER TYPES

The Fleet Air Arm's second generation front line aircraft from 1956 onwards were the De Havilland Sea Venom and the Fairey Gannet. Both, like their predecessors, were from British stables and both brought increased capability and complexity to the Fleet.

Having cut their teeth on Fireflies and Sea Furies, Dunlop and Goldrick both qualified on Gannets. →

Click on either image to get more information



Sydney's Korean deployment eight Australian FAA aircrew, including Frank Sturgess, were killed while flying in the UK and Australia. On 25 September 1951 Pilot 4th Class [Donovan Slater](#) and Observer 4th Class [Edward Edmonds](#) crashed in a Firefly during their OFS 2 out of Gannet. In Victoria 18 October 1951 Probationary Pilot [Neil Sweeney](#) was killed in a Wirraway from RAAF Point Cook. Acting Sub-Lieutenant (P) [Ronald Williams](#) failed to pull out of a practice bombing run in his Seafire during OFS 1 flying from Fulmar 1 November 1951.

At *Albatross* 816 Squadron had a tragic February 1952 when they lost two Firefly crews in the space of three days. On the night of 19 February 1952 Acting Sub-Lieutenant (P) [Doug Saunders](#) and Lieutenant (O) [Brian Wall](#) went missing off Moruya. Three nights later on 22 February 1952 Acting Sub-Lieutenant (P) [Durrant Small](#) and Observer 1 [John Sharpe](#) were seen to crash into the sea while making a dummy run on flares.

Lieutenants (P) 'Brassie' Cooper and Peter Goldrick, fortunate to return from Korea, were posted to No. 8 Flying Instructors Course at the RAAF's Central Flying School to be the first RAN Qualified Flying Instructors. Cooper became Senior Naval Officer RAAF Point Cook in 1953. Although selected for a jet instructors course he submitted his resignation in 1954 to help run the family business after the death of his elder brother. Married in 1955 by the RAN's Senior Chaplain Peter's best man was Major Maxwell Simkin. The Major, as the Carrier Borne Army Liaison Officer in *Sydney*, had daily briefed Cooper on his targets and they had obviously become firm friends. Simkin was transferred to *Glory* when she relieved *Sydney* on station and in 1968 became the first Director of the Australian Army Aviation Corps.

Inevitably, with the extant force structure of the Australian Fleet in the 1950's and 1960's, the majority of the non-aircrew class members also had carrier postings. In the years after Sturgess's death nine out of the surviving twelve classmates

served in carriers. Peter 'Crow' Brent was in *Sydney* for her post-Armistice Korean deployment and 'Wiggy' Bennett served in her in 1954/55. The two salt horses, James Mackie and Lindsay 'Bert' Baly, got no closer than destroyer plane-guard and screening duties although Baly, as a Lieutenant-Commander in 1957 ran the Marine Section at *Albatross*. Hugh 'Dipper' Dillon remained busy with remote surveying duties and eventually commanded the surveying sloop *Warrego* and later the built for the purpose *Moresby*.

Richard 'Rufe' Rust, who had failed to be selected for aircrew, found a different but equally vital professional path into the FAA. After extensive Korean service in *Bataan* and *Tobruk* he was sent to the UK in 1953 to learn the specialist art of being an Aircraft Direction Officer. Consolidating his skills for two years in the carrier *Centaur* he was posted to the commissioning *Melbourne*.

Sailing for Australia via the Suez Canal 11 March 1956 *Melbourne* was packed with 64 Sea Venoms and Gannets for 808, 816 and 817 squadrons to replace the front line Sea Furies and Fireflies. Offloading the aircraft in Jervis Bay on 7 May she arrived in Sydney three days later. Rear-Admiral Henry Burrell, Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet and one of the driving forces behind an Australian FAA, shifted his flag from *Sydney* to make *Melbourne* his new Flagship on 13 May 1956.

One of four (D) specialists in *Melbourne's* crew 'Rufe' would have worked hard to ensure an efficient Operations Room and Action Information Organization. Having an angled flight deck, steam catapult and mirror landing system *Melbourne* was one of the most advanced light carriers of her time. With the introduction of the all-weather night capable Sea Venom fighter a good (D) officer was even more vital than previously. Promoted Lieutenant-Commander in 1956 Rust had postings to 808 Squadron, *Albatross* and instructed at *Watson* in between embarkations in

Pilot Killed In Vampire Crash Near Nowra

NOWRA, Monday.— The pilot of a Vampire jet plane was killed instantly when his plane crashed and burst into flames at Nowra to-day.

The dead man was Lieut. Commander William Edward Dunlop, 29, married, of Huskisson.

Witnesses told police the plane crashed a short distance after having taken off.

It crashed into swampy ground on the edge of the Naval Training Base runway, half burying itself into the ground, and burst into flames.

A fire squad put out the flames before the plane was destroyed, but Dunlop was dead when rescuers reached him.



Melbourne. In 1962 he commanded *Gascoyne*, a posting which delighted him and for which his name had been put forward by Peter Goldrick, then working in the Directorate of Officers Appointments. He retired as a Captain after commanding *Watson*.

Lieutenant Commander (P) [William Dunlop](#) enjoyed a successful series of FAA postings with 817 and 816 Squadrons, was SNO RAAF Archerfield and completed a Jet Conversion with 723 Squadron. Learning to fly Gannets in the UK in 1955, Bill also undertook a Mamba Handling Course with the Fairy Aviation Company. At *Albatross* he was promoted Lieutenant-Commander

(P) 1 August 1956 with 724 Squadron as a Gannet Conversion Instructor. Six days later the 29 year old took off in a Vampire, immediately radioing that his elevator was jammed. His last call was that he had found the fault. He crashed shortly afterwards and in the wreckage a knife, dislodged from the dingy pack, was found with crush marks matching the elevator crank. Bill was one of nine aircrew killed while flying in the FAA's black year of 1956.

Anthony 'Tony' Sallmann, the King's Medalist from the 1941 Class, never wavered from his desire to be a Gunnery Officer. Whilst undertaking his Long (G) course at *Excellent* he commanded the catafalque party for the coffin of King George VI in 1952 and was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order by the new Queen Elizabeth II. Posted to the carrier *Eagle* as Assistant (G) he became *Sydney's* (G) in 1955. As a Lieutenant-Commander in 1959 he was *Melbourne's* (G) and also Fleet Gunnery Officer. Despite a promising career, and very early promotion to Commander in 1959, Sallmann resigned in 1960 to join the family business. Mackie had already discharged to shore in 1959, Bennett commanded *Kookaburra* and *Kimbla* before ill health led to his early death in 1962, and Baly retired in 1963 to go on to a second career in the Australian Secret Intelligence Service.

Peter Goldrick, after instructing at RAAF Uranquinty became the first RAN pilot to fly a jet in Australia at RAAF Williamtown on 9 April 1954. Delivering the first Sea Vampire to *Albatross* he helped convert Sea Fury and Firefly pilots to jet aircraft in 723 Squadron and also embarked in *Vengeance*. One of the initial group sent to the UK to convert to Gannets he returned as Senior Pilot of 816 Squadron on *Melbourne's* delivery voyage. Peter went on to command 816 and 725 Squadrons, the frigate *Stuart* and the shore es-



The first Vampire trainer arriving at NAS Nowra in June of 1954, flown by Peter Goldrick. (Charles Goss). ✈



establishment *Penguin* before retiring as a Captain in 1977.

Specialising in Communications Errol Stevens was the Executive Officer of *Melbourne* when she collided with the USS *Frank E Evans* at 03:15 on 3 June 1969. Having checked the shoring work of the damage control party shipwrights and confirmed the integrity of *Melbourne's* bow he boarded the still floating, but unstable and settling, stern section of the destroyer. Searching compartments below decks by torchlight he ensured the wreckage was clear of all survivors. For these actions the US decorated him with their Navy Commendation Medal. When Captain of the Destroyer Tender *Stalwart* in 1978/79, with *Melbourne* in long refit, Errol would tongue-in-cheek tout his command as the RAN's aircraft carrier whenever she embarked a Wessex from HC723 Squadron. He retired to the north coast of NSW to grow macadamias.

John 'JD' Stevens, who had been assessed as 'most suitable' for aircrew after gaining his Civil Licence in early 1947, would have been very disappointed at not being selected. Becoming a Torpedo and Anti-Submarine (TAS) warfare officer he was posted to *Melbourne* in 1961 as that ships (TAS) and Fleet TAS Officer. He commanded four ships - *Derwent*, *Yarra*, *Brisbane*, *Supply* - before being promoted Rear-Admiral in 1979. As Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet Stevens hoisted his flag in *Melbourne* in June 1981.

On the formation of the carrier based Fleet Air Arm in 1947 the Royal Australian Naval College Class of 1941, twenty years of age and already honed by war

Above Left. Commander Errol Stevens welcomed any opportunity to fly in Squadron aircraft when Executive Officer of HMAS *Melbourne*. *Above.* The stern of the USS *Frank E. Evans* on 03Jun69. Stevens was awarded the US Navy's Commendation Medal for his actions that night. ➔

service were, serendipitously, of the seniority to be considering their future specialisations. With unprompted certitude they fully supported the great aviation effort about to be undertaken by a relatively small navy. Ten out of thirteen volunteered to commit their careers to the new branch, nine served in carriers and six were selected for aircrew training. Four of the class served with front-line squadrons, three as aircrew.

Two paid for their commitment to the new Fleet Air Arm with their lives. ➔

The Class of '41

Lindsay Gordon **Baly** "Bert"
 John Charles **Bennett** "Wiggy"
 John Peter **Brent** "Crow"
 Peter Brassey **Cooper** "Brassie"
 Hugh William **Dillon** "Dipper"
 William Edward **Dunlop** "Bill"
 Peter **Goldrick**
 James Alexander **Mackie**
 Richard John **Rust** "Rufe"
 Anthony Frederick **Sallmann** "Tony"
 Errol Victor **Stevens**
 John Dixon **Stevens** "Gus/JD"
 Frank Albert **Sturgess** ➔



Friendly Fire

or How Our HWI
Tried to Kill the Entire Squadron

By Marcus Peake

In the first months of 1975 I was serving as a line pilot in 826 Naval Air Squadron, equipped with Westland Sea King HAS Mk 1s. Our 'mum' was HMS *Tiger*, a WW2 era cruiser which had been heavily modified in '72 to carry four such helicopters in a large, square hangar, at the expense of its aft 6-inch guns. It didn't do much for the aesthetics of the ship, but it worked well enough for us Birdies perched on the rear third of the hull where the bar, beds and flight deck were all conveniently located in order of priority.

For that particular deployment, *Tiger* was mostly based in the Mediterranean. Gibraltar, surely one of the most overestimated runs ashore, was a frequent destination - but we also enjoyed occasional forays to Italy and Malta. The eastern Med wasn't on our itinerary, however, so it was with some surprise that we heard the Captain announce one morning that we were under orders to proceed 'with all dispatch' to the island of Cyprus, which was some 1000 nautical miles from our position.

'With all dispatch' was right. Within a few minutes the deck plates began to vibrate as the stokers went into overdrive. *Tiger* had four Parsons steam turbines good for 80,000 shaft horse-power and, when she set her mind to it, could exceed thirty knots. Every rivet and plate in her hull shook, but the long, feathery wake across the surface of the ocean was impressive and arrow straight as we headed east.

At the morning briefing the story came out. There was a dust-up in Cyprus. The majority Greek community had risen up (again) against the minority Turkish enclave of the north. Turkey had sent troops to support them and people were shooting each other.

Dust-ups on Cyprus were not uncommon. Over the centuries the island had been occupied by Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Templars, Crusaders, Vene-

tians, Ottomans and British colonialists. All had shed blood, to one extent or another; but in 1975 it was the Greeks and Turks' turn, and Her Majesty's Government was not prepared to stand by and let Cypriot based Anglo-Saxon lives, of which there were many, be placed at risk. Our task was to evacuate all British citizens, as well as any other folk of friendly nations, and to take them to a place of safety. It could, we were told, be hundreds.

Tiger, with her complement of nearly 900 men, was already crowded. How could you feed, shelter and sleep hundreds more? The Pussers got into a huddle and made a list of what they needed. Food, water, medicines, beds, toiletries, clothing - the list went on. It was comprehensive and very long. I remember the Medical Officer boasting they had even ordered euthanising suppositories for much loved pets who could not be airlifted out. The idea was that someone inserted the capsule firmly into where the sun didn't shine, thus affording Fido or Tiddles a painless death. He didn't say what the creature's reaction might be to having a foreign finger poked where it wasn't supposed to be.

Tiger's Sea Kings were to be heavily involved, both in the re-supply task and in the evacuation of civilians from more remote localities. To that end, we were instructed to paint large Union Jacks on either side of all aircraft. There were no templates and the Union Flag is not the easiest to reproduce, but we did our best with brushes and cans of pusser's paint, even though the results rivalled Jackson Pollock. We were also advised to mount a 7.62mm Light Machine Gun (LMG) in the main cargo door, just in case some disgruntled locals decided to have a shot at us. Remember - the Brits had also occupied Cyprus in times past, and conquered folk have long and bitter memories.

And this is where the first problem occurred. A trip to the armoury determined there were LMGs to be had, but none of the mounts suitable for fixing them in the aircraft. Frantic signals revealed the nearest ones were in the UK, some 2000 miles to the north west, and they could not be sourced in time.

Our Helicopter Warfare Instructor (HWI) was a resourceful fellow called Gordon W. He hailed from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and carried the thick accent of that city which marked him as a "Geordie" (nothing to do with his name). Despite this speech impediment - or perhaps because of it - he saw prob-

lems merely as challenges to be overcome, and so he retired to a dark corner and thought about it for a while. How could you mount a machine gun in a Sea King door with only the material available in the ship's ready use locker?

By the next day he had the answer, and we trooped up to the flight deck to see what he had done. A Sea King was ranged there with its main cargo door latched open - and, sure enough, a LMG was mounted in the space it had occupied.

Gordon's solution was incredibly elegant. He had hooked dozens of bungee cords to various points around the periphery of the door, and thence to the weapon. The result was an intricate web of elastic with the machine gun, suspended like a malevolent spider, at its centre.

We marvelled at how his years of training and experience had been captured in the simplicity of the design, and at the cunning way it had enabled not only the physical support of the weapon, but also afforded a much wider field of fire than the standard mount. And not only that, there was artistic flair there too, evident in the clever colour coordination of the bungees he'd selected. It was the work of genius.

For a while he basked in our effusive congratulations, although I did see worried glances from more imaginative bystanders as they observed the way the gun drooped in its makeshift shroud. The top bungees were extended, their girth much diminished by the weight of the weapon; whilst those below and either side were still thick, their coefficient of elasticity as yet untapped. What would that mean when the weapon was fired?

And what about safety arcs? Not far above its muzzle would be the rotor disk...a definite vulnerability; and the starboard sponson with its undercarriage and flotation bag was just forward, almost in arm's reach. It didn't take much to imagine what would happen if an enthusiastic gunner shot pieces off either of them.

But Gordon was in his element, and, for that day at least, his imagination quota had been expended. Once the initial accolades had quietened, he announced a test firing was to be held in five minutes. In his broad Geordie accent he invited us to the viewing platform - the hangar roof. "I'll be firing three short bursts," he said. "Just to check stability." Apparently, even he had a few misgivings.

It seemed the entire Squadron climbed up to the hangar roof, which fortunately was a large area with a good view of the Flight Deck. The Sea King was ranged below, its blades still folded, and from our vantage we could clearly see the barrel of the machine gun poking out of the side. The safety nets were lowered, I recall, but there were no personnel down there: only the blue of the Mediterranean Sea

rushing past the ship's hull, and the smudge of a horizon where it met an equally blue sky.

I suppose, in retrospect, it was a bit like a scene from a classic western gunfight. The hero, our HWI, strutting out to the aircraft, his eyes darting around the deck to assess threats and angles and trajectories. The crowd, silent now as they watched the drama unfolding below. Nobody had uttered a word of doubt, but the very fact we were there was testament to expectation of something more than just a gun being fired.

The seconds ticked down, and then Gordon's thin Geordie voice shouted "Cheah! Cheah!" in the stiff breeze. A moment longer of silence, of drawn-out suspense. The crowd held its breath, imagining him crouching in the rear cabin, finger curling over the trigger, squeezing down.

• Every sixth round was a tracer, and we could see where they were going... •

And then the gun went off - but not the expected short, controlled burst. Rather, it was a long, long one. The barrel was suddenly snatched from its roughly central position to what seemed to be every corner of the aircraft's doorway: a jerking, erratic, St Vitus

dance as its recoil set up an uncontrollable resonance in the elastic. Gordon said later that he had no influence over either the weapon's aim or his grip on the trigger; rather, it took charge of him, discharging a large number of very fast-moving projectiles over the starboard part of the flight deck and an expanse of the Mediterranean beyond.

Up on the hangar roof there was immediate consternation. Every sixth round was a tracer, and we could see where they were going. Some flew harmlessly up and outwards, through where the rotor disk would have been; others struck the water close by, sending satisfying spouts of water spraying upwards. And some, impossibly, ricocheted *back* from the choppy waves to fly not far over our heads in brief orange blips of light. Every now and again there was a loud *thwack* as a round struck the flight deck edge to leave a bright silver smear in its passing, and we could hear the whining of fragments as they hurried off to somewhere nearby.

After what seemed like a very long time the racket ceased. To this day I don't know if Gordon managed to prise his finger off the trigger or the gun simply ran out of ammo. In any event, there was a sudden silence followed a moment later by a collective sigh as the gathered crowd breathed out. All around me figures were crouching, straightening up, looking around to see if there were casualties. There was nervous laughter and the odd expletive, and one or two comments about the HWI's ancestry. Then we all trooped back down to the flight deck to see what was left of the Sea King.

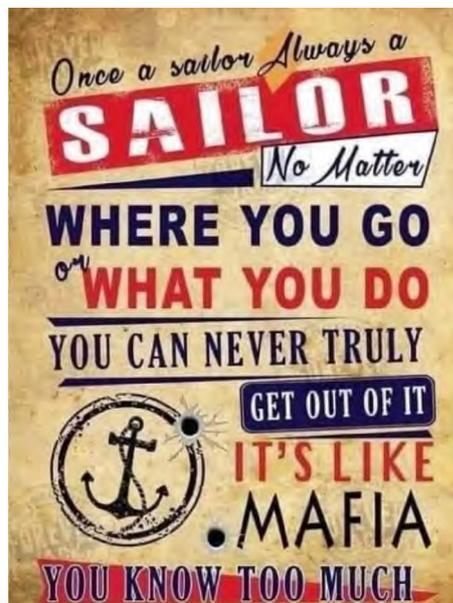
Astonishingly, not a single round had struck anything vital. The LMG still hung suspended in its

web, but it appeared flaccid, somehow, pointing down instead of up. Its proud, erect defiance had diminished, rather like the HWI's; and we saw the many bungees that had previously supported it were now much fewer as the violence of its movement had dislodged them. It wouldn't have been too much longer before there were none.

The Squadron never submitted a report on the incident, and I suspect many drinks changed hands to requisition such silence. In the bar that night we speculated about what would have happened had the remaining few bungees let go, leaving Gordon as a sort of Mediterranean Rambo to cradle the machine gun with nothing to hold it up but his muscles and testosterone.

And we all agreed that would never have worked, as it was well known that Geordies have very little of either.

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This Month's Mystery Photo

This month's Mystery Photo was sent in by Rob Hackett, and features a strange looking bird which appears to be half fabric and half substantial.

Do you know what it is? If so, drop the Editor a quick email [here](#) with your answer.

NEXT MONTH IN FLYBY

The Douglas Skyhawk was a truly iconic aircraft of its time, and no less so in its Service with the RAN. Purchased in response to the deteriorating strategic situation in our region, the little fighter-bomber served with distinction for 17 years before being phased out by the new Hawke Government.

In a fitting tribute to our people who maintained and flew the Skyhawk, FlyBy has produced a 30 (A3 size) page 'Heritage' piece, re-digitised and expanded from our original website article, including many pages of photographs that tell the story of its life and time in the Fleet Air Arm.

Look for it in your INBOX on 01 September 2022.

The Douglas Skyhawk



Fleet Air Arm Australian Heritage Feature
A43-022



Image: Jane Molyneux

The McDonnell Douglas Skyhawk was only in the Fleet Air Arm's inventory for 17 years, but it was a quantum leap forward from the Sea Venom that preceded it, and proved to be one of best-loved and most successful aircraft of our time.

Kim Dunstan looks at this part of our heritage.

In 1950, with an unstable security situation in South-East Asia and concerns about the spread of communist insurgencies in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the Australian Government agreed that the RAN Fleet Air Arm needed new fast-landing aircraft to replace the aging De Havilland Sea Venom FAW50s and A43-1 Fairy Gannets. But the problem was that a larger aircraft carrier would be needed for the new generation naval aircraft – at a huge cost.

The proposed a search for aircraft capable of operating from the light fleet carrier HMAS Melbourne. Of the aircraft available two US Navy types were short-listed – the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk fighter-bomber, and the S-2E Gannet Tracker. Following proving trials on Melbourne both were selected, both for their qualities and ready availability.

In 1965 an order was placed with McDonnell-Douglas for 10 new A43 Skyhawk attack fighter-bombers at a cost of \$18.5m. At the time the Skyhawks had the best all-round attack and fighter capabilities and were capable of operating from Melbourne. Earlier an order had been placed with Government for 14 new S-2E Trackers to replace the Navy's Fairy Gannet A43-1 aircraft.

The Sturdy Skyhawk

The A43 A-43 Skyhawk was a variant of the highly successful A-4 Skyhawk jet designed by Douglas chief engineer, Ed Heinemann, as a carrier-borne fighter-bomber for the US Navy. The USA endorsed the plan and a prototype MA43-1 first flew on 22 June 1954 – it was designed as a tough high-performance



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THE RAN'S

BELL 206B

KIOWAS

by Kim Dunstan



The feature article on the RAN's Bell 206 Kiowas has been removed from 'FlyBy' and is now available as a separate, stand alone PDF.

Click on the button below to access it.

[Read Kiowa Feature](#)