



Edition 71 - June 2023

# FlyBy

## **Flying the Tracker - Part 2**

What it was Like to Operate Off HMAS Melbourne

## **Aussies In Glory**

Four young Australians aboard HMS Glory in Korea

## **A.I. In Aviation**

When can we expect pilotless passenger aircraft?





# EDITORIAL

BY M.C. PEAKE - EDITOR, 'FLYBY' MAGAZINE



June is gone, together with the first month of winter, the shortest day of 2023, and the rain! Well certainly for the east coast where its been as dry and the Dingo's proverbial. Doesn't bode well for the rest of the year.

But I'd prefer to look forward rather than back, and this month's edition brings you much to look forward to: Part 2 of Owen Nicholls' piece on flying the Tracker gets into the nitty-gritties of operating from Melbourne. And Graeme Lunn, in his usual inimitable style, brings a beautifully researched article on the four young Australians who served aboard HMS *Glory* in the Korean Theatre. Graeme sourced much of his material from veteran Andrew Powell, including many details we did not know until now.

In between providing material for this magazine, Graeme is hard at work writing a book about VAT Smith. Biographies are hard to get right, but I've had the privilege of reading a few of his early chapters and it really is a compelling read. He hopes to have the work done by the end of the year and Avonmore Books has expressed great interest in publishing it, so we can look forward to that in the new year.

Speaking of books, the long-awaited work of David Prest and Peter Greenfield is about to hit the streets. Essentially, they collected as many stories as they could from people who flew and maintained the RAN's A4G Skyhawk. The initial draft ran to

over 400 pages, but this has been distilled down to about half that size. The publication, in high quality print with many photographs, will not be available in bookshops until later so if you want to secure a copy this year best look at page 5 of this magazine to find out how. They are selling fast so get your bid in early.


People sometimes ask me why this magazine, which is for Fleet Air Arm people, features so much 'non aviation' stuff - my previous articles on the *Titanic* are a good example.

As Editor, I have the task of producing a magazine that I think will capture the interest of our 1000+ readers. Yes, we all like reading about the FAA but frankly, there just isn't enough material on that (although I'm sure there are a million stories out there that I'd love to have). But bright-minded readers with a technical background are invariably interested in other things: ships, science, salvage and our heritage being up there with them. I don't get much feedback but I do hope that I'm hitting the mark on this score. Perhaps you can let me know, plus any ideas about things you'd like to see in future editions.

And on that note I'm out of here. Enjoy this edition, stay warm and dry (especially in SA), and please let me know what you think.

Marcus Peake  
[Editor](#).


### THIS MONTH'S COVER PHOTO



*Two RAN S2 Trackers do a low pass by Point Perpendicular, Jervis Bay, en route to the Naval Air Station at Nowra.*

*You can read a little about Flying the Tracker in this edition of FlyBy. (Defence image).* ➔

### REST IN PEACE

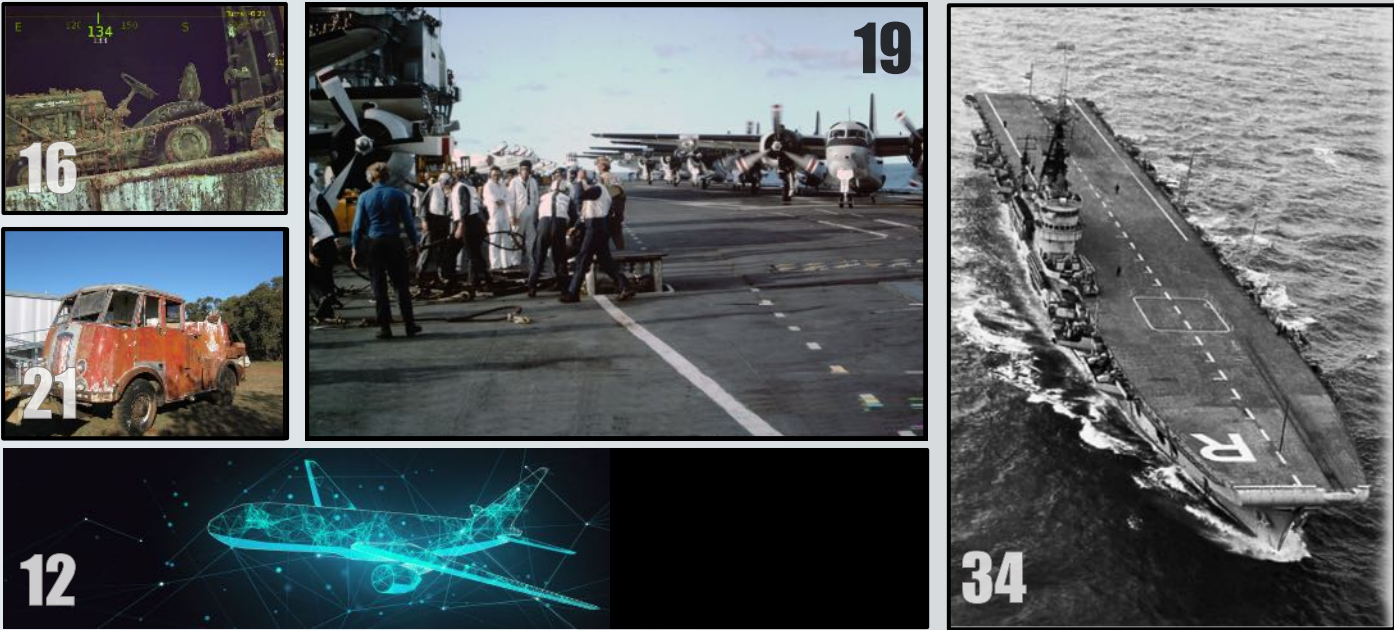


Since the last edition of FlyBy we have been advised that the following people have Crossed the Bar:

**Frank Markham, Bill Crowley, Jim Davidson, Mike Bayliss**

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

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**Dear Editor,**  
**Just Along For The Ride**

July 1970, my time in the Navy and FAA was about to come to an end, resignation accepted, the culmination of 13 years of adventure, good mates, and a wonderful period of my life that I would never forget. Started as a Recruit Naval Airman (E), finished as Stooft driver.

One last flight in the S2 E.

With **Wally Gascoigne** as my copilot, we were free to have fun just one more time.

I took the first leg north along the beautiful coastline between Nowra and Wollongong, rarely getting above 50', after all it was my last flight, what could go wrong?

Reluctantly handing over to Wal, we turned around to head back.

I was now "just along for the ride".

I immediately noticed that there was a bit of a difference between my idea of "on the deck" and Wal's.

I swear the props were leaving spray behind them.

As we passed Gerringong I noticed an old fisherman up to his knees in water in front of us, Wal, unperturbed jinked left a bit and continued on. I wish I'd had a rear vision mirror.

We landed, walked back to the crew room with me feeling perhaps I wasn't the top gun after all, but what a way to finish!

Next minute I get a message from the CO, Dave Findlay to drop by his office.

Wow, did I get a strip torn off me.

Turns out the fisherman who we flew over was none other than **LCDR Harold Kent** R'td, an old ex AEO, who claimed he had to dive underwater to avoid being decapitated. I remembered him well as boss of the School of Aircraft Maintenance in 1957 when I was that recruit Naval Airman (E). He was also the only officer on the base who addressed

we Midshipmen "Snots" whilst we were on No. 5 Observer Course!

Dave (a good mate) said what had to be said, along with "just as well it was your last flight Arthur" then wrote me a nice discharge letter.

Those were the days, what a ride it was!

**Arthur Johnson.** →

**Dear Editor,**

I enjoyed the Seahawk articles on our website, particularly Mike Curry's comments on the trials and tribulations as the project Test Pilot (TP).

My time in the same position as the SeaKing project TP in 1974/75 was much easier, but then the changes from the Brit Mk1 to our Mk50 were relatively minor.

We had a few problems, notably adapting the auto hover system to work with the AQS13 sonar cable, but nothing that caused major contractual issues.

Going back in history a bit, during my first tour as OIC and TP at AMAFTU in 1977, I was involved in the first evaluation of possible contenders for the helicopter for the new FFGs.

Project was run by DNAP (then CAPT Seamus O'Farrell) with DNAE (then CAPT Frank McMillan) as the heavies. Workers were (then LCDRs) Jack Lutze (AEO) Jack Ryan (ALO), Ivan Misfeld (O) and myself.

Several manufacturers responded to the request for tender, and the first task was to sort out those that offered a product that might meet the specifications.

We worked on a part time basis out of temporary offices in Queanbeyan, and quickly managed to eliminate a couple of obvious non-starters. There were a couple of others that we thought would not be viable, but were included in the short list for 'political' reasons.

As I recall the final contenders were naval derivatives of the Sikorsky YUH60, Boeing YUH70 (might have been YUH61?), Westland Lynx, Aerospatiale SA330, Kaman SH2F, and Bell 212.

In September we departed on a quick 8 week trip to evaluate the likely contenders. Apart from we 4 workers, there were a couple of civilians from Programmes and Budgets and Industry Involvement, to ask relevant questions, and of course the Captains to keep us under control. Either just before, or during the early stages of our evaluation tour, the US Army announced that the YUH60 had been chosen as the UH1 replacement and Boeing withdrew their tender. We carried out ground and flight

*Continued on page 6*

**Get your  
copy now!**

# THE SKYHAWK YEARS

**The long-anticipated book by Peter Greenfield and David Prest is almost here, and it is time to pre-order a copy if you wish to secure one.**

The book is hardback with a dust cover, and measures 250x176mm. It will be 216 pages in good quality print.

With first-hand stories from pilots and maintainers, the challenges of operations from one of the world's smallest aircraft carriers are well explained. Also told are thrilling stories of air combat manoeuvres against fighters from other countries, with the A-4 often surprising more well-credentialed adversaries.

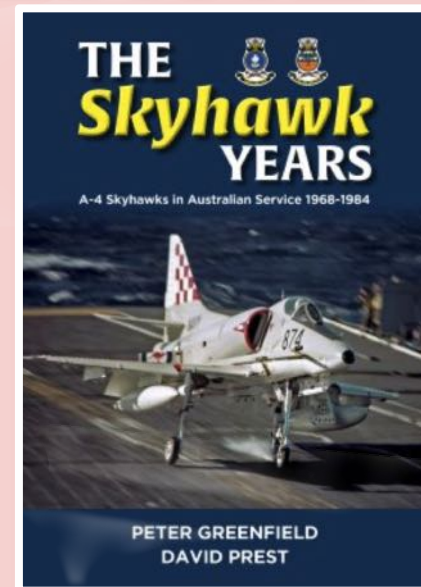
A string of mishaps ended the embarkation of Skyhawks on the *Melbourne* in 1980, followed by a period of turmoil which eventually saw the scrapping of RAN fixed wing aviation four years later. However, among the former pilots and maintainers many fond memories of A-4 operations remain alive, and are captured in the pages of this book.

Avonmore Books, the publisher, anticipates they will be ready for shipping later in August. The cost will be **\$49.95** + \$9.95 postage for Australian orders, or \$45.41 (GST free) for overseas orders plus \$15.00 postage for UK, Canada and the USA and \$9.05 for NZ. (Postage for other countries available on request).

Guaranteed to sell fast and become a collector's item, we strongly recommend you pre-order a copy so as not to be disappointed.

Simply click on the button to the right and fill in the simple form.

All Royalties go to the FAA Museum.



**Reserve Your Copy**



assessments of the remaining contenders, and had meetings with relevant Naval operators of the types. We also had meetings with makers of supporting systems.

In summary, as I recall, our findings (recommendations?) were:

- Lynx was the superior aircraft for small deck operations, but was way too small to satisfy operational requirements;
- AS330 was too big to fit in the hangar and there were questions about its ability to handle rough seas;
- The SH2F was old technology, and no longer in production. We concluded any possible configuration changes to upgrade systems were unlikely to overcome legacy features and provide a viable vehicle to meet our needs;
- The Naval B212, in service with the Italian Navy, would not fit in the hangar (no blade fold) and the skid undercarriage made the ability to handle rough seas and deck handling questionable; and

This left only a Naval variant of the YUH60 as the only possible contender.

The YUH60, as its designation shows, was one of only 4 existing prototypes, and special approval from a MAJGEN was needed for me to get my hands on the controls. Even at this early stage of development, it was apparent that size, shape, payload capacity, and general handling qualities indicated this vehicle had the potential to meet our requirements. Discussions with the USN, whose workings on what would become the SH60 were well advanced, confirmed our impression.

Never saw the final report, but fast forward to 1980+

Regards, **Keith Engelsman.** ➔

**Dear Editor,**

What an outstanding newsletter for this month. Thank you.

Having left the RAN umbrella in early 1982 for exchange with the USN instructing on the S3A Viking and after a transfer to the RAAF on P3C's, I lost touch with what the FAA got up to.

The article on the Seahawk was MOST interesting. Managed to have fly in the Seahawk with Leigh Costain, I believe in 92/93, and actually enjoyed it. Lots of familiar names old and young.

Cheers, **Kevin Rasmus.** ➔

## Farewell to a Legend: Desmond Woods OAM

*Some readers may know, or know of, Lieutenant Commander Desmond Woods OAM RAN, who is retiring after many years of Service across three Commonwealth Navies and one Army. Aside from a stellar and interesting career, he also took on the job as compiler and Editor of 'Flying Stations II', a monumental task which, had he not done it, would undoubtedly have never come to fruition. I am told that he is to embark on writing another book about the Fleet Air Arm later this year.*



*His last posting has been as Navy's Bereavement Officer which he performed not only with notable efficiency, but also a sense of great empathy for the families of those who had lost a loved one - including, sadly, some of the FAA veterans we have seen in our Obituary columns in recent years.*

*Des gave his "Paying Off" address at the Commonwealth Club on 7<sup>th</sup> June, and I asked him if I could reprint an abridged version of it here as it's not only the story of an extraordinary career, but many of the places, names and experiences he mentions will undoubtedly resonate with our readers.*

*He was a good friend to the FAA and we wish him fair seas in his forthcoming retirement. Ed.*

"Vice Admiral Jones, senior serving and retired officers, ladies and gentlemen.

Sir thank you for those very kind words which I greatly appreciate. You flew back into Sydney from South America this morning so I am most grateful for your being here when you probably need sleep.

I am the most fortunate officer I know. I have had a career which I could not have imagined when I joined my first Navy, the RNZN in May 1974. This paying off party is my way of thanking my family, my colleagues and my friends for my great good fortune and having had the privilege to serve.

First and foremost I want to thank my dear Elizabeth who sends her regrets. She is at home with the start of a cold. Asking her to marry me in 1972 was the best decision I ever made - followed by my decision two years later to ask to join the Navy. She has been with me on every posting in every country and every house and married quarter. She cared for our three sons when I was at sea and when I was on Army exercises and when I went to war. She taught British Army kids in service children's schools West Germany and worked as a teacher in

Vincentia and in Nowra and as a Defence Transition Mentor and a Conflict Resolution Service Mediator in Canberra. We went together to the Australian International School in Singapore and taught there in the steamy heat for two years. Elizabeth has provided loving support and wise guidance to our sons all their lives and love and support, and much needed adult supervision to me for 51 years.

I made the decision early in life to join the Navy. I was aged six in 1957 when my Medical Officer father took me on a 'sons at sea' day on his WWII era RNZN Loch Class frigate *Kaniere*. I loved feeling like a member of a ship's company for the day. That has never changed.

In 1974, with a shiny new history degree and a Teaching Diploma, but no enthusiasm for life in a high school classroom, I presented myself to an ex Royal Navy World War II generation Commodore Humby DSC RNZN, for his decision on my application for entry as a graduate Seaman Officer. He was clearly not impressed when he saw I wore glasses. Glaring at me over his half glasses he asked me:

'Well Woods' he said 'what would happen if you were on the bridge in action and an incoming shell blew your glasses off your face eh, eh?' Without due thought or reflection on the likely effect of my words I replied, "well Sir, I doubt if I would be looking for them!"

At this point the interview was about to be terminated prematurely when the Instructor Commander on the Interview Board said:

"I remember your father did an appendectomy on one of our sailors on *Kaniere's* wardroom table at sea in a typhoon. The sailor recovered well. Pause. I see you have a degree in history. Would you like to be an Instructor Officer and teach senior sailors and Midshipmen service writing?"

I was in! That was the second easiest job interview I ever passed. The easiest one I will come to later.

Two months of watch keeping as a very green Sub Lieutenant in the Southern Ocean on a WWII vintage, former RAN Bathurst Class minesweeper, HMNZS *Kiama*, cured me of any delusion that a seaman officer's life at sea is glamorous. Minesweepers could famously roll on wet grass. A passing battleship captain once signalled a minesweeper rolling in a heavy sea: "I can see down your funnel, your fire is burning beautifully." Let's just say that eight weeks in a small, ever pitching ship, was a very slimming experience for me.

Next I was posted to the frigate HMNZS *Taranaki*, due to sail south of New Zealand into the 'roaring forties' on urgent Government business. The RNZN was asked to round up six ewes and two

rams from Sarah's Bosom, a remote harbour in the sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands for taking back to Wellington. These eight unshorn and wild, sheep were part of a long abandoned flock. Now they were wanted for breeding purposes in NZ and I was informed by my CO that as his youngest officer on board catching, sexing and embarking the sheep over the ship's side in strops from RHIBS was clearly my job. There was clearly no point in disagreeing.

Even with *Taranaki's* rugby team's eight forwards and two speedy wingers to help, all armed with shepherd's crooks, that was a tough assignment. While chasing these wild sheep in sub-Antarctic gloom through bogs we all fell into hidden and very smelly sea elephant wallows and were then attacked by furious nesting Royal Albatross. Back on board, with the sheep bleating from their pen slung across the mortars, sleepless and covered in Sea Elephant manure I reported our success to the CO who was anxious to up anchor, and was appointed by him as Sheep's Divisional Officer for the passage back to Wellington.

In 1979 I was fortunate to be allowed to a transfer my commission to the Royal Navy. I joined a large Navy with a fleet deeply engaged in fighting a very long, very cold war in the Atlantic, the Barents Sea and the Mediterranean against Soviet Admiral Gorshkov's Fleet of ships and submarines. My part in this decades long contest was very modest indeed but it did involve serving with the Fleet Air Arm at sea in the carrier HMS *Hermes* and with the Royal Marines ashore in Plymouth. In 1983 I was the resettlement officer for 40 Commando and organised training for several marines who had their limbs amputated during the Falklands War and could not continue to serve.

They needed to make a new start as civilians and there were firms ready to help them. But they were a reminder to me of what can happen to troops who we send to war when the cheering stops and the victory parades are done. We are gradually getting better but too often what Kipling wrote still applies to our veterans:

*God and the Soldier all men adore,  
In time of trouble – not before,  
When the War is over and all things righted,  
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted.*

The past is another Country we did things differently then. Post Falklands War as HMS *Hermes* Public Relations officer in New York I received a request from the Playboy Club to allow 20 bunnies to come aboard in costume complete with fluffy tails for a photo shoot with our sailors and aircrew heroes who, I was told these young ladies very much wanted to meet. The captain approved the visit and when they learned of it our sailors definitely



wanted to meet the bunnies! Herding cats I learned is easier than herding bunnies off one of HM carriers full of messdecks and bars. All I can say is that I counted them all onboard and several hours later I counted them all off. What happened in between I will leave to your imagination.

In 1984, I came ashore as it became clear that, despite two years of the best paediatric chemotherapy treatment then available, our seven-year son Christopher could not defeat his Neuroblastoma. With weeks to live he was made an acting Leading Hand of the Naval Air Station, HMS *Daedalus* near Portsmouth, by my Commanding Officer. When he died *Daedalus* hosted his funeral service in the ship's chapel.

The White Ensign was half masted and the Still was piped as our son's hearse took him ashore for his burial - which my Commanding Officer and his wife attended.

Such kindness and consideration mattered to us then and I am convinced that such respect and engagement matters for all our Navy families. Elizabeth was expecting our new baby Alex, who is with us today.

We were a bereaved New Zealand couple, far from home and family, and it was the time-honoured Navy ceremonial and the friendship of colleagues which gave us a level of support and solace. That experience has remained with me and has often been in my mind in my work as NBLO in recent years.

In 1987, after eight years of having failed to win the Cold War, my short service commission as an Instructor Branch Officer was due to expire. I applied for and was accepted into the British Army. I shaved off my beard, was taught to stamp my foot when coming to attention by a fierce Colour Sergeant, scrambled over the mountains of Wales in a sleet storm, and was commissioned into the Royal Army Educational Corps as a Major. At my request we were posted to Dortmund in West Germany. Elizabeth taught British Army school kids German and English and I taught their Royal Artillery fathers Military Studies for promotion and exercised with them in bitter cold.

In August 1990 Iraq seized Kuwait precipitating the Gulf War and I deployed from Germany to the Middle East with the 7th Armoured Division - the Desert Rats. My main job for three months in Saudi Arabia was as a media minder keeping the embedded journalists and TV camera crews briefed and taking them to see our soldiers dug in waiting for the ground operation to start.

When it did start I became a driver and drove troops in a convoy of four ton trucks, day and night across endless sand. We were just behind our Challenger tanks which were firing and hitting Iraqi

tanks that could not fight at night.

We in the convoy watched the muzzle flashes light up the night as our modern British tanks destroyed the obsolete armour of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard. It was obvious as we drove through the devastation at dawn that it was no contest.

The whole war was a tragedy for an estimated 30,000 young Iraqi and Kurdish conscript soldiers who died - and for their families. We got our Iraqi prisoners to bury their dead. The British Army lost 47 soldiers in the 100 hours of the attack - tragically 34 of them were accidentally killed in a blue on blue by the US Air Force. I was one of those involved in sending their bodies home to their grieving families for burial.

Back in West Germany my career as an officer educator, like tens of thousands of others in the British Army of the Rhine, was cut short when, in 1992, Mr Gorbachev decided that the Cold War was indeed over.

He may not have realised the effect his decision would have on my career in the Royal Army Educational Corps, which was promptly disbanded and most of its officers invited to think again about a civilian career. We were told we were to have a 'smaller but better British Army' overlooking Napoleon's maxim asserting that 'other things being equal battles are won by the side with bigger battalions.'

Unsought mid-career military redundancy as a Major was not easy, particularly when, after we arrived in Canberra in 1993 ADF recruiting told me my application to join the RAN could not proceed as I had just turned 40 and was, therefore too old to be considered for even lateral transfer and, the clincher, that the RAN's Instructor Branch had just been disbanded.

That appeared to be that! Until I learned by chance in 2001 that, now aged 49, my statutory senility had been revoked when the age limit for entry been raised to 50. With weeks to go till my birthday I had become just young enough to enter the RAN for five years only as a Training Systems Branch officer.

I joined as a Lieutenant with one year of seniority through the Naval College as a Lateral Entrant Program Officer - known to all as the Lepers!

I then stayed on the staff at *Creswell* for six years teaching leadership, naval history, and strategic studies as well as being ship's Public Relations and Museum Officer. I took over all these varied duties from my friend and military history author, here present, retired Lieutenant Commander Tom Lewis. Thanks for the handover Tom.

*Continued on page 10*



# Reunions

## FAA REUNION



**Old Bar 16-18 August 2023**

You are invited to join us for a FAA reunion which will include a Vietnam Veterans' Day commemorative service hosted by the Old Bar Public School to mark 50 years since Australia withdrawal from Vietnam.

Our base will be Club Old Bar where we have been invited to play barefoot bowls and/or mini-golf for \$10 per person. Come along and enjoy the company of old mates as well as meeting some new ones.

A flyer containing all necessary information including registration form can be downloaded [here](#). ➔

## PHOT BRANCH REUNION

There will be a grand gathering of the PHOT/IMAGERY Specialist Branch in October of this year, as follows:



**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October.**

1430-1700 "Meet & Greet" at the FAA Museum, Nowra, followed by dinner at the "Postman's Tavern", Nowra @ 1800.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October.** Trip to view HARS aircraft. Lunch at Shell Cove. Dinner Worrigee Sports Club.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October.** Recovery lunch at home of Brian Warnest, in Berry.

Click [here](#) for more details and to register your interest in attending. ➔



Order No. 52 is now closed for applications and has been sent to the Foundry for manufacture. Keep an eye on *FlyBy* for updates. The names contained in that order are:

**M. Cowley O112461 LEUT Jul 72 - Oct 93.**  
**J. O'Regan R107494 POATWL Apr 70 - Apr 82**  
**A. R. Milsom O120392 CMDR GLEX (AvWI) Jul 76-**  
**B.J. White R94352 CPO ATWO Jan 64 - Jan 91**  
**D. M. Prest 325198 FLTLT Jan 66- Jan 99**  
**K. J. Skomba W139951 ABATC May 86 - Mar 97**  
**K. Yates O144799 LEUT WEA Apr 89 - Dec 08**  
**P. B. Cosgrove R108903 CPO ATWL Jul 70 - Sep 91**

Order No. 53 is now open for new applications.

For those who don't know, the Wall of Service is a way to preserve your 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 to Australia 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. ➔



It was my privilege at the RANC from March 2003 – December 2008 to assist junior officers to understand that Divisional Leadership, knowledge of our Navy's history, Australian Maritime Doctrine and International Politics in our Region are all important in a successful RAN officer's career.

I was aided on each course at Creswell by the Directors of the Sea Power Centre. One regular lecturer was my friend John McFarlane from the ANU, here present. He taught officers from personal knowledge about the AFP's national and global operations countering the dark world of trans-national crime and terrorism.

Also on the RANC staff was my friend, here present, Commander Richard Adams. He taught ethical leadership by drawing on examples of heroes from the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome. Achilles and Hector and the Trojan Wars, and Hannibal and the Punic Wars featured in his lectures. One Chief Petty Officer who had been listening to Richard with great attention confided to me after the lesson that he had never heard of the Punic Wars before! Thank you Richard for your unique contribution to military education.

My next posting in 2009 was on the staff of the Australian Command and Staff College. The Director of Studies – Navy, Captain Richard McMillan kindly asked me to teach Naval History.

My next posting was as a Military Support Officer to the Defence Community Organisation in Canberra where I led Bereavement Support Teams for the families of those who died while in ADF service. Tragically that included Hugh and Janny Poate from Canberra who lost their beloved son Private Robert Poate to enemy action in Afghanistan. Janny and Hugh were always warm and welcoming to me.

My friend Rear Admiral Alan du Toit posted me to Sydney in January 2013 to join the International Fleet Review Ceremonial Team with nine months to get the city ready for this centenary commemoration of the entry of our First Fleet Unit in October 1913.

It was Great Navy Week. Naval and national history was made, as, warships from around the world in line astern entered the harbour. An eligible royal bachelor, young Prince Harry, took the salute. That night the Opera House sails carried our White Ensign beautifully emblazoned on it. Next morning we had a multi-navy ceremonial march past Sydney Town Hall, led by the Fleet Commander Rear Admiral Tim Barrett, and that night a million Sydneysiders enjoyed the spectacle of fireworks rising from the harbour bridge and from our ships decks into a clear sky. What a Night to Remember that was!

In 2014 I continued the Centenary of ANZAC

theme as one of the Navy Events team, implementing events commemorating the Navy's part in the events of 1914. I ran the commemorative events for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Cocos Island, our Navy's First Victory. On the island to remember the loss of life on both sides were the Governor General, Peter Cosgrove and CN Admiral Barrett and the German Ambassador and the then Warrant officer of the Navy now Commander Martin Holzberger. We were with the German and Australian descendants of those who fought against each other in the cruisers *Sydney* and *Emden*. A new commemorative monument was opened in the form of a mast which has replicas of the two ships bells on the same yardarm.

In 2015 Admiral Barrett appointed me as his research and speech writer. I worked with and took over from my friend here present then Commander Alastair Cooper. I worked for CN's Chief of Staff then Captain Tim Brown, here present, as we shaped the sentences and that CN needed every week as he spoke in Australia at commemorative events and around the world of the need for a re-capitalised future RAN fleet which Australia needs.

When I turned 65, on 12 June 2016, statutory senility returned, and my time in the Permanent Navy came to an end. But the previous day I was transferred to the active reserve and Admiral Barrett kindly moved me to the Seapower Centre - Australia and where I worked with the Navy's Principal Historian John Perryman, Greg Swinden, Petar Djokovic and Rob Garrett - all here today. Together we succeeded in finding seven RAN Battle of the Coral Sea veterans and sending these Ancient Mariners to New York for the 75th anniversary of their battle where they were cheered wherever they went. They are all gone now.

In 2017 I had a most welcome last opportunity to be a Divisional Officer for sailors and officers again when I became OIC of the Personnel Support Unit for *Albatross*. The task was to assist Fleet Air Arm members who needed to either return to their Squadrons, if physically or psychologically able to do so, or, if that was not possible, transition out of the Navy to a different future. Careful research, liaison with Medical Officers, patience and counselling skills were needed in that role. My own experience of premature loss of my UK military career I hope gave me some empathy for those who knew they were to be discharged.

While at *Albatross* the then Commander of the Fleet Air Arm, Commodore Chris Smallhorn, asked me produce a new book which became: *Flying Stations (II) - The History of the Fleet Air Arm from 1998 – 2022*. It was to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding in 1947. Elizabeth called the book my personal 'Albatross' round my neck. Admiral Barrett kindly launched it last October in the FAA

Museum where it is selling well to FAA tragics!

While I was at Nowra, in December 2017, I learned from DCO's Lieutenant Commander Wendy Ross, here present, that then Commodore Boulton was looking for someone to be the Navy's first Bereavement Liaison Officer. I called him to make enquiries and asked if he could send me the position's selection criteria so I could address them in a letter of application. He said, 'Do you want the job, Des? I said 'Yes Sir'. He said 'Its yours'. That was without doubt the easiest job interview I ever did. Thank you, Sir for so much that has followed.

Being NBLO has been the most personally rewarding posting I have ever had. For five years I have had the responsibility and the privilege to engage with our veterans and their families and friends at a time when a death is close or has just occurred. Engaging with our bereaved Navy veterans and their families, offering our Australian White Ensign as a coffin pall, having uniformed representation, the Last Post and CN bereavement pins, is a measure and a demonstration of our compassionate, people centred Navy values. How we honour our dead defines our living Navy culture.

The respect that we extend to relatives of our former workforce is repaid in lifelong gratitude and goodwill from the deceased members family and friends.

So it is time for me to conclude my Navy career and hand the baton on. But the end of my Reserve days I sincerely hope, will not be the end of days! There are new adventures and fresh opportunities to be of use in this world and I will seek them out.

After a lifetime of words, which I have written and spoken for three Navies over nearly half a century, I choose to provide a final message written not by me, but by my much admired and missed former Commanding Officer, the late Rear Admiral James Goldrick AO CSC. Earlier this year, knowing that his life was drawing swiftly to a close, with typical courage and thoughtfulness, he wrote a short passage of final words of advice and guidance for those of us still serving and our professional descendants. James wrote:

*'The Navy expects a lot from us and it is important that we ensure that all concerned are looked after. It is not only your problems that you need to have an eye out for, but those of your shipmates, particularly the young, the inexperienced and the newly joined.*

*At its best, the Navy has always espoused consideration and respect for each other, good manners and abiding courtesy. There will obviously be times when events are moving quickly and personnel are under intense pressure with little time for the niceties of life. It is then that the development of real*

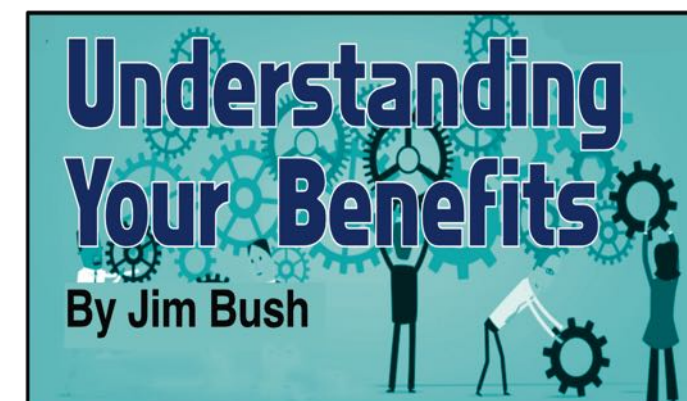
*teamwork and mutual respect bears fruit in allowing all of us to help each other to do the jobs required of us quickly and well.'*

With those wise and generous words in mind, written by James Goldrick, a model of naval courtesy and professionalism, I ask you to raise your glasses and drink a toast to our Australian Navy.

Tonight in an act of double dipping we shall have the combined naval toasts for Tuesday and Wednesday nights:

Ladies and Gentlemen I give you a toast to: Our sailors and our ships at sea.

Thank You ."



## Podiatry Services

DVA may cover the cost of podiatry services for eligible beneficiaries that covers assessment, diagnosis and treatment of injuries and conditions that affect lower limbs. Gold Card holders are eligible for treatment for all podiatry services based on an assessed clinical need, and White Card holders are eligible for podiatry treatment services for accepted service related conditions.

The type of podiatry services that may be provided are routine foot care treatment and provision of medical grade footwear, orthotic appliances and footwear modifications provided under the podiatry treatment care plan arrangements.

It is important to contact your podiatrist and ask if they will accept your Gold Card or White Card for the cost of treatment to be paid for at DVA expense. DVA cannot pay for podiatry services if the provider does not accept DVA arrangements, and under these circumstances out of pocket expenses will be incurred. Also, if you are treated as a private patient or through Medicare, DVA may not be able to pay for your treatment.

The guidelines and eligibility criteria for podiatry services are set out in the DVA web information page [here](#).



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN AVIATION



The news is full of the work being done to produce aircraft which need no human flight crew. But how far off is this event? And what else is happening with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in aviation?

Firstly, let's get one thing clear. We're not talking about drones here, which are already flying but are invariably guided by a person on the ground during critical flight manoeuvres. We're talking about a self-contained aviation platform that can start up, taxi, take off, fly to a destination and land - all without a pilot on board.

Airline companies salivate at the thought. Imagine, a six seater commuter jet just became a seven seater: that's an immediate sixteen percent increase in revenue! Not to mention doing away with pilots who must be continuously trained, can't work too long, have militant unions and earn a motza.

Do passengers feel the same? Well, not so much. It's human nature not to trust machines - after all, we all know about gremlins in the system. Imagine boarding your aircraft at a busy airport and finding no cockpit. Instead there's a black box which is going to take your life in its silicon hands for the next hour or three. It

## What's the difference between a normal computer and an A.I.?

A normal computer program is a very obedient slave. If you ask it to fetch you a glass of water, it will ask you where from. If you tell it - fetch me a glass of water from that table, it will go to the table to get you a glass of water. If on reaching the table it finds there is no glass, it will come back and inform you, and wait for further instructions.

AI on the other hand is like educating a child. When a child grows up, you teach it what is water, what is a glass, where is water stored, etc. So when it grows up and you ask it to fetch you a glass of water, it will go to the table, find a glass and pour a glass of water and bring it to you. If it doesn't find a glass or a bottle of water, it will not come back and ask you what to do next. Rather, it will look for water elsewhere: in the cupboard, in the kitchen, in the fridge, etc.

The ability to make decisions on its own is what separates an AI from a normal computer program. It can also understand intent rather than just a command.

So, in the example above, you would simply tell the AI that you were thirsty.

The machine would then set off and use logic and reasoning to look for a solution to your problem. It might figure that water comes out of a tap, for example, and suitable containers can be found in the kitchen, and pour you a glass. Or it might just bring you a flower vase full of water (but it would then learn from this mistake).

Sometimes, AI can come up with unexpected results. In one example, a game-playing algorithm worked out it could jump off a cliff with its opponent. That gave the AI enough additional game points to get an extra life, so it could keep repeating this suicidal tactic. It achieved the goal of the game (to kill all of its opponents) in a novel way, unrestrained by the normal rules a human might follow.

hasn't got any skin in the game, though. No wife and kids at home so no sense of self preservation, no survival intuition. Of course, the AI could be taught this in time, but the average passenger will take a whole lot of convincing.

Six years ago, a report from the Swiss bank UBS estimated that autonomous planes could save the air transportation industry more than \$35 billion per year. The same report flagged a huge public perception problem. A 2017 global survey found that a majority of people would be unwilling to fly in a plane without a pilot, even if the airfare were cheaper. The following year, a public survey from Ipsos found that 81% of Americans would not be comfortable traveling on a self-flying plane. It is of note, however, that the survey was sponsored by the Air Lines Pilots Association (ALPA), whose 65,000 members make up the largest pilot union in the country.

But aside from passenger fears, what's actually stopping fully autonomous flight?

AI is already widely implemented both in the cockpit, and outside of it (see sidebars on the following pages).

On board AI computers are increasingly monitoring an aircraft's flight profile and measuring it against required parameters. If it deviates outside of the envelope, or the system thinks it

is likely to do so, it can reason out why that is occurring and present the pilot with the required actions to correct the situation. This happens far quicker than the process of human deduction and is particularly useful if the pilot is the cause of the divergence: for example, in cases of disorientation, confusion or incorrect diagnosis.

Similarly, AI is increasingly being used to determine the optimum flight path of aircraft, taking into account other traffic, operational hazards such as airspace closure or navigation system malfunctions; weather and turbulence. In practice, you could leave the system to drive the aircraft through the sky, secure in the knowledge that the AI system would deliver the most efficient and effective flight path to the destination.

### The Drawback

But in both these capacities, AI currently lacks one essential capability: emotional intelligence. This is the ability to choose an option based not on cold, hard scientific fact, but on years of experience and an intuitive capacity to weigh risk on human terms.

For example, would a pilotless aircraft have chosen to ditch US Airways Flight 1549 into the Hudson? Captain "Sully" Sullenberger used his 29 years of flight experience, knowledge of gliding, and aviation safety to assess



## Predictive Maintenance



There's few things that airlines hate more than unscheduled breakdowns. At best, it takes one of their fleet out of the game for a period of time, tying up maintenance assets and robbing the airline of an earning platform. Sometimes it means passengers stuck on the ground, with potential compensation costs and reputation damage. In short, unplanned maintenance cost airlines big dollars.

Machine learning algorithms are helping to reduce unplanned maintenance by monitoring aircraft to detect anomalies. This is done by tracking the real-time condition of every sensor in an aircraft, and 'thinking' it against a massive case history to accurately predict what each system is doing, and its predicted path to failure.

The engineering department then undertakes pre-emptive work such as overhauling the system during the next scheduled maintenance period, or replacing suspect components before they fail.

Current Predictive Maintenance companies claim up to an 85% improvement in downtime forecasting, and a 50% reduction in unplanned downtime. ➔

that was the path of 'best risk' for his aircraft, the 155 souls on board, and people on the ground who could have perished had an alternative turned sour.

Repeated simulations after the event showed that, in theory, the aircraft could have made it back to LaGuardia if the human reactive time had been negated. Would an AI system have taken this option, unable to overlay that human intuition to chose the river instead? And what would have been the outcome?

### Weighing Risk and Gain

The promise of enormous savings in the long run is a powerful incentive, however, and airlines and manufacturers are exploring the boundaries. Boeing, for example, is conducting flight tests related to autonomous or reduced-crew civil aircraft in a two-year project

at Moses Lake, Washington. The tests include using a modified vehicle for an autonomous taxi, autonomous flight algorithms in a simulator, flight tests of an artificial intelligence (AI)-based system in a Cessna Caravan, plus engine start, pushback, taxi, manoeuvre and take-off roll using a Boeing 787 Dreamliner technology testbed. The objective is to determine if such aircraft could be operated for freight or passenger-carrying missions with the same levels of safety as current manned aircraft.

In consideration of fully autonomous systems, the word 'risk' is right at the top of the list, however. Airlines and regulatory bodies alike are highly risk adverse, simply because the consequences of failure are so high in human and material loss. Exhaustive engineering, legal and regulatory examination is required before any significant change can be implemented.

No airline or regulatory body is therefore prepared, at this stage, to remove the capacity for human intervention from the equation. A fully autonomous long-haul airliner may happen one day, but right now it is years away.

And what of the cost of implementing an autonomous airliner, even if it was cleared for operations? Pilots are expensive, but buying and maintaining an AI controlled fleet would require enormous investment that most companies couldn't afford.

### Cargo and Commuters

What is more likely in the shorter timeframe is autonomous cargo flights, led by companies such as Xwing, which has already tested pilot-less delivery flights.

As confidence in the system increases and regulatory certification expands, autonomous commuter flights in smaller aircraft with a few passengers will follow: perhaps by the end of the decade.

This would eventually lead to long haul airliner flights without any pilots, but the current forecast for this event is not earlier than 2040.

### The One-Pilot Option

What is very much on the books for airliners is the removal of one pilot from the cockpit. The AI system that replaces him or her would have the job of monitoring the entire aircraft and its environment and presenting the single pilot with precise, easily understood information on its status and impending problems. It would leave the human to then determine the best course of

## Aircraft Design



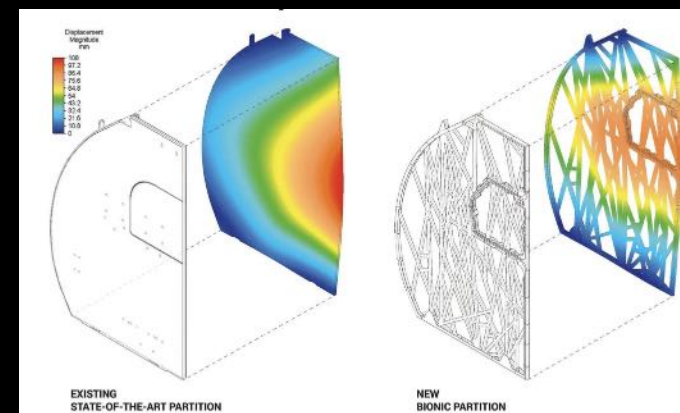
Generative design is a process that uses massive computing power to dream up new designs, in a way that is not constrained by usual human thinking.

Humans tend to think in a linear way. The fundamental design of an aircraft fuselage today isn't that different from the first aeroplanes ever built. The materials and techniques might have evolved, but the tubular structure in which we sit really hasn't.

Enter A.I. Give it a set of broad design parameters, such as 'make it lightweight, strong and cheap,' and computers go looking. They are unfettered by previous ideas and will come up with truly radical outcomes such as the drone airframe shown in the image above. It may look like a chicken carcass but it is stronger and lighter than the human designed bodies currently being used.

The software and cloud-based dataset that allow such broad assessment have only just come into being. For example, a group of engineers wired up a custom build off-road buggy and raced it around a desert. This captured a vast database of the stresses experienced by each part of the car. They then fed this into a generative design system and told it to produce something that could handle it. The result was alien-looking, but it used less material and gave greater strength.

Another example is the partitions that separate various parts of an aircraft cabin. A.I. Was let loose to see what it could come up with, and produced a design that was cheaper, lighter and stronger (see image below) Airbus, who did the work, estimate that this design alone could save nearly half a million metric tons of emissions each year (Photo: Airbus). ➔



action using experience and emotional intuition - although an AI system could analyse the decision and inform the pilot of the probability of success.

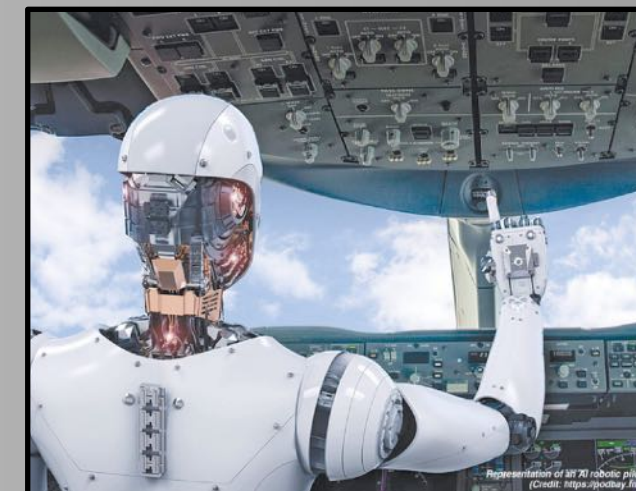
But even this is a long road. Airbus and Cathay Pacific, for example, announced in 2021 that they would be working towards long-haul flights with a single pilot in the cockpit - but in a phased approach. As a first step, Airbus is working to certify its A350 platform for single pilot operations during the cruise, perhaps as early as 2025 (on Cathay Pacific flights). A second pilot would be carried, allowing alternate rest breaks, and with both of them seated for landing and take-off. This would avoid the current requirement to have three or four pilots aboard to provide for two in the cockpit at all times.

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that, one day, passengers will climb aboard airliners with no pilots and possibly, robots serving their meals. But not yet. First will come autonomous cargo flights: robotic aircraft sharing the airways with manned flight, but out of sight and (hopefully) out of mind of other passengers. That's coming soon.

Small commuter aircraft will follow with just a few passengers - perhaps starting with electrically powered air-taxis delivering people around a city. That could be as early as 2025.

And if all that works, and there are not too many accidents, autonomous airliners will follow, and the single pilot previously aboard them will be out of a job. ➔





# ANSWER TO LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO



Last Month's Mystery Photo (inset, above) was a bit of a cheat as it only showed a portion of something that was probably fairly universal at that time. No apologies...its our readers' fault for getting previous Mystery Photos right so consistently.

When revealed in a larger picture all becomes clear - the Mystery Photo is of an engine block of a tractor which, considering it has been immersed in salt water for some 70 years, is in remarkable condition.

But where is it? Well, the answer is aboard the USS *Hornet*, found off the Solomon Islands in 2019 by billionaire Paul Allen.

The *Hornet* was a Yorktown class aircraft carrier made famous because she launched the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo in April 1942. She also fought in the battle of Midway two months later, although her air group did not cover itself in glory that day as they flew an incorrect heading and the majority had to ditch though lack of fuel. The ship remained unscathed throughout the battle.

That luck ran out on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1942 when she was struck by Japanese bombs, torpedos and suicide air-



craft during the battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, not far from the Solomons. A valiant attempt to save her was on the brink of success when another attack delivered the fatal blow, and she foundered in over 17,000 feet of water. She was the last American Fleet Carrier to be lost in action.

In late 2019 the late Paul Allen's research vessel located the *Hornet* and took the extraordinary photographs you see on this page.

Allen, who was one of the founders of the Microsoft organisation, was also responsible for finding other wartime wrecks including the USS *Lexington*, USS *Juneau* and USS *Helena*.

In the case of *Hornet*, Allen's team pieced together data from national and naval archives that included official deck logs and action reports from other ships engaged in the battle. They did their work well, as the wreck was discovered on the very first dive of the remotely operated vessel, which was operating close to its maximum dive depth. ➔

## The DOOLITTLE RAID

Four months after the Japanese strike on Pearl Harbor, the US executed a daring plan to retaliate by bombing mainland Japan.

Comprising only 16 light bombers the raid did little damage, but it was highly symbolic as it demonstrated to the Japanese people that America had the capacity to strike right to the heart of their nation.

The operation was fraught with risk as it required heavily modified Hudson bombers to take off from the *Hornet*, strike Tokyo and then make for China, where they hoped to refuel before continuing to Chongqing. In the event 15 aircraft ran out of fuel and crash landed in China or ditched off the coast. One managed to reach Russia where the crew was interned.

Remarkably, 69 of the 80 airmen who flew the raid escaped to return home. Three were killed in action and eight were captured. ➔





**Left.** The attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 demanded a response as soon as possible, even if it was largely symbolic. **Below.** LtCol Jimmy Doolittle's Hudson takes off from the Carrier Hornet on his way to Japan on 18 April 1942. His 16 aircraft, never designed for carrier operations, were very heavily modified to carry more fuel but reduce their weight to enable the take off.

It was a one-way mission, with the hope that the strike force could reach friendly airfields in China to refuel. In the event, 15 of the 16 aircraft either ditched or crash landed, and one made it to Russia to be interred with its crew. ➔



### TAX TIME - CLAIMING THE COST OF YOUR FAAAA SUBSCRIPTION

If you are a serving member of the FAA or, if you are earning your living as a result of the knowledge you gained from your service in the FAA, you may be able to claim the cost of your FAAAA subscription against your income tax.

Speak to your tax agent about it and, if you wish to have a receipt for your 2023 subscription, contact the Editor of this magazine [here](#). ➔



## THIS MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO

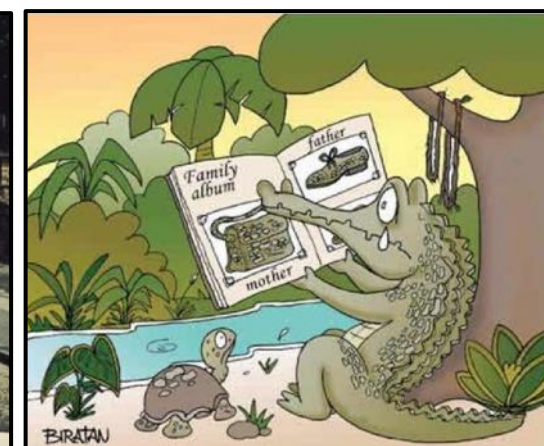
This month's Mystery Photo is a bit of a novelty....a flying canteen! We're not sure of the quality of the food, but there's nothing wrong with the delivery service and your cuppa is guaranteed to arrive hot and fresh. We'd like to know a little about the photo though...what the aircraft was, who built it and where it was photographed. Any takers? Click [here](#) to answer. ➔



### Fifth Beatle Discovered!!

The 'fab four' crossing the street on their "Abbey Road" album back in '69 reveals a little known secret. There really was a fifth Beatle!

And suddenly, Bob found himself the topic of all the office gossip.





# Around The Traps

RED AIR PROVIDER, AIR USA has adopted a new name, RAVN Aerospace. The company provides adversary air, close air support and Joint Terminal Air Controller (JTAC) as well as intel, surveillance and reconnaissance training.

Four former RAAF Pilatus PC-9/A trainers used for JTAC training and 38 F/A-18A Hornet aircraft will be delivered to RAVN Aerospace during 2023/2024.

Of the original 75 Hornets operated by the RAAF, four were destroyed in accidents and eight will be preserved at RAAF bases and aviation museums. The Royal Canadian Air Force now operates 25 former RAAF Hornets and up to 46, all of the remaining F/A-18s, were earmarked for RAVN Aerospace.

Recent Press Reports, however, suggest at least some of the surplus jets may be given to Ukraine, in support of their war against Russia. This suggests that the sale to RAVN is not yet a done deal for the entire 46.

(Image: An Aussie FA-18 Hornet in its paying off configuration, carrying the AN/AAQ LITENING advanced targeting pod and Elta EL-L/8222 electronic warfare pod, as well as JDAMs and AMRAAM. (Defence). →

## My Country...Oh my Country? (Author unknown)

*When the shearing sheds are silent and the stock camps fallen quiet,  
When the gidgee coals no longer glow across the outback night,  
And the bush is forced to hang a sign, 'gone broke and won't be back'  
And spirits fear to find a way beyond the beaten track.*

*When harvesters stand derelict upon the wind swept plains,  
And brave hearts pin their hopes no more on chance of loving rains,  
When a hundred outback settlements are ghost towns overnight,  
When we've lost the drive and heart we had to once more see us right.*

*When 'Pioneer' means a stereo and 'Digger' some backhoe,  
And the 'Outback' is behind the house, there's nowhere else to go,  
And 'Anzac' is a biscuit brand and probably foreign owned,  
And education really means brainwashed and neatly cloned.*

*When you have to bake a loaf of bread to make a decent crust,  
And our heritage once enshrined in gold is crumbling to dust,  
And old folk pay their camping fees on land for which they fought,  
And fishing is a great escape; this is until you're caught.*

*When you see our kids with Yankee caps and resentment in their eyes,  
And the soaring crime and hopeless hearts is no longer a surprise,  
When the name of RM Williams is a yuppie clothing brand,  
Not a product of our heritage that grew off the land.*

*When offering a hand makes people think you'll amputate,  
And two dogs meeting in the street is what you call a 'Mate',  
When 'Political Correctness' has replaced all common sense,  
When you're forced to see it their way, there's no sitting on the fence.*

*Yes – one day you might find yourself an outcast in this land,  
Perhaps your heart will tell you then, 'I should have made a stand',  
Just go and ask the farmers that should remove all doubt,  
Then join the swelling ranks who say, 'don't sell Australia out'. →*



How times have changed! Anyone remember driving the old fire tenders at Albatross?

Here's an interesting snippet. This Air Zimbabwe B707 was doing an air display at Charles Prince Airport near Harare in 1995. According to the pilot of the aircraft, Captain Darryl Tarr, the radar altimeter indicated 6 feet below the keel at the time. He was fully authorised for the flight.

There's an extraordinary video of the event which is worth watching as it really shows just how close to the ground the aircraft was, and its proximity to the crowd. You can see it [here](#). →







The second all-time highest-scoring fighter ace with 301 kills (after Erich Hartmann), Gerhard Barkhorn, crashed a prototype British Harrier jet fighter in 1965. **When being rescued from the wreckage, he commented - 'Drei hundert und zwei' (302)**

This is one of those pages on FaceBook which should normally be treated with some suspicion as they aren't necessarily fettered by the truth.

This one, however, is seeped in fact. Gerhard Barkhorn was indeed a German Ace and was credited with 301 kills during the war, mostly on the Eastern Front. He was shot down nine times, bailed out once and was wounded twice.

After the war he joined the *Bundeswehr* where he served until 1975, reaching the rank of Major-General. One of his postings during his Air Force time was to their Test Command, where, in 1964, he was given the job of evaluating the military capabilities of the Hawker Siddeley P.1127 Kestrel, the forerunner of the Harrier.

On 13 October 1963 he crash-landed one of the Kestrels (XS689) when he apparently cut thrust a metre above the ground, wiping out the undercarriage. Known for his dry humour, he is said to have made the witty quote on the left as he was assisted from the accident.

Barkhorn was involved in a car crash in January 1983. His wife Christi was killed immediately and he died five days later, and was buried with military honours. He was 64 years old. ➔

Does anyone remember Don "Duckie" Matherne? According to the caption on this FaceBook page, he served in VN around the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Contingent. ➔

## Credit Where Credit's Due

John Macartney reports: "The Australian Catholic University (ACU) is currently advertising that they will give status to ADF members. I think this is a great initiative because back in dark ages we had to start from scratch. Check it out if you are interested in further education by clicking on the link below."

[Australian Catholic University \(ACU\)](https://www.acu.edu.au/veteran-entry-program)

Current or former members of the Australian Defence Forces can receive university credit points of recognition towards their studies as part of our Veteran Entry Program. Have your experiences count and fast-track your university studies.

The Uni has also expanded their Veteran Entry Program to include family members and spouses of current and former members of the Australian Defence Forces. Apply now to set up your interview. ➔



# Commemorating Australian service in the Vietnam War

In 2023, the Australian Government will mark the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War with:

- a televised Commemorative Service (service) at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade, on Friday 18 August 2023; and
- production and distribution of a Commemorative Medallion (medallion) and Certificate of Commemoration (certificate).

## Commemorative Service

18 AUGUST 2023 FROM 10:00AM

- Attendees are encouraged to plan their journey and arrival times carefully. You are requested to arrive prior to 10:00am; the site will be open from 9:00am.
- You are encouraged to use public transport where possible to attend the service as car parking is extremely limited. Free shuttles to the service will be provided from the Canberra CBD going directly to Anzac Parade.
- Only 6,000 seats are available for this service. Accessible seating and support are provided to those who have indicated a need for accessible assistance when registering for an attendance pass.
- All attendees planning to attend the service are required to register for an attendance pass to access the commemorative site.
- To obtain an attendance pass, please visit [vietnam50.teg.com.au](https://vietnam50.teg.com.au)

## Commemorative Medallion and Certificate

While Australia can never repay the debt we owe to the 60,000 who served in Vietnam, the medallion and certificate are a small but meaningful way to honour their service and to recognise the sacrifice of those who never returned home.

- The medallion and certificate will be made available to every living veteran, widows of veterans and other family members of veterans of the Vietnam War.
- The medallion is free of charge for any veteran who served in the Vietnam War.
- Applications are made online at [dva.gov.au/vietnam50](https://dva.gov.au/vietnam50)
- Please note that you will need to know your service number, or the service number of the veteran you are applying on behalf of, in order to apply.
- If you require support to apply, please phone **1800 VETERAN** (1800 838 372) between 9am and 5pm AEST Monday to Friday, and say the word 'medallions' when prompted. You can also email [commemorations@dva.gov.au](mailto:commemorations@dva.gov.au)



More information:

**CLICK HERE**



Australian Government  
Department of Veterans' Affairs



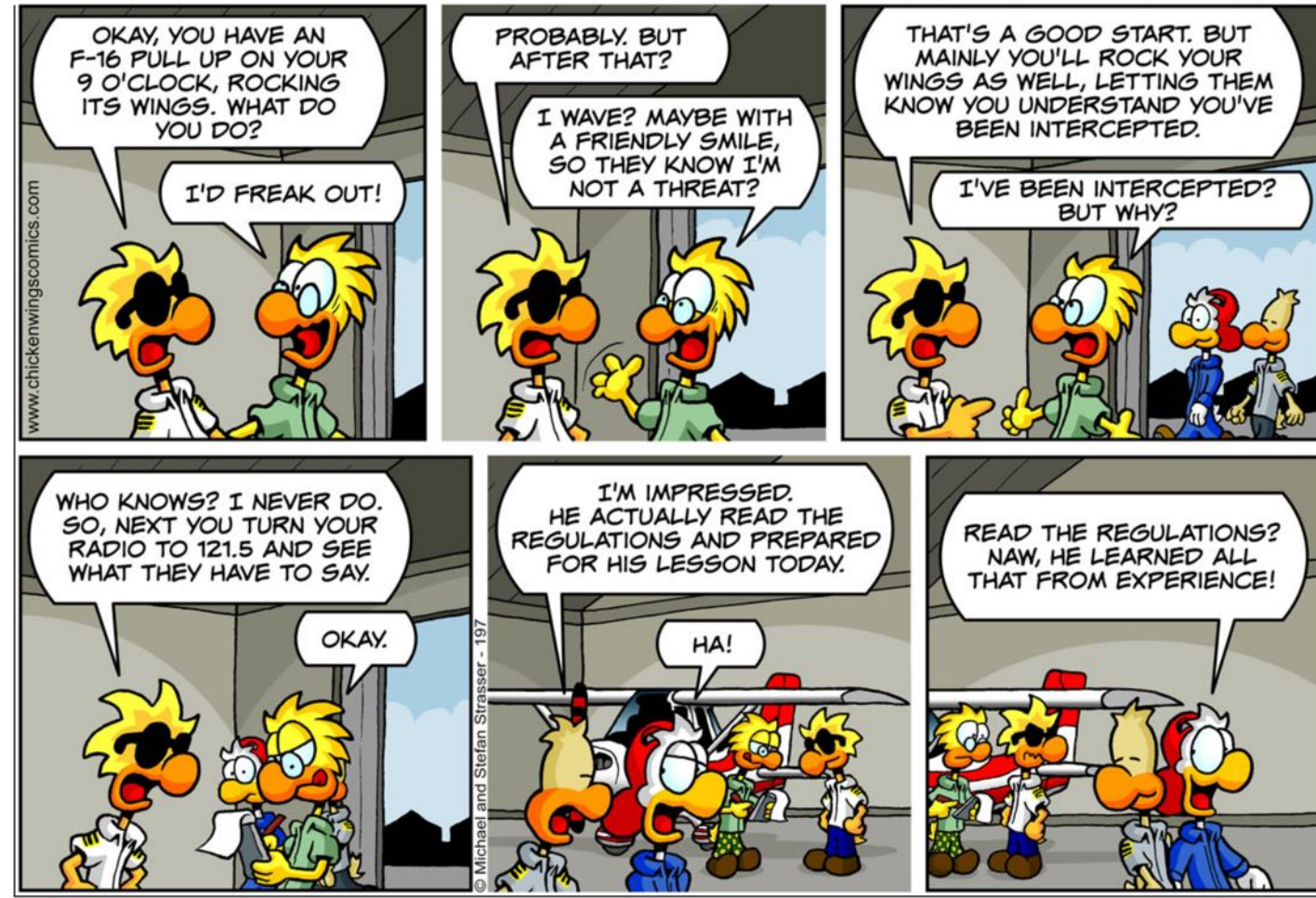
50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
END OF THE VIETNAM WAR  
AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS 2023



**Interceptions.** The brilliant little strip cartoon below was sent in by Phil Thompson, who recalls that most A4G/jet pilots would have done a few interceptions over their careers: such as the ATC-led event over Port Phillip Bay when an errant lightie strayed into airspace during ship/air trials. Light aircraft pottering over Nowra also happened quite a lot during flying operations, requiring a close look to get their registration. We would love to hear about any that you remember in particular. Email the Editor [here](#). ➔

## CHICKEN WINGS

BY MICHAEL AND STEFAN STRASSER



## Veterans' Health Checks

Several months ago, I was contacted by our Medical Centre to see if I was interested in signing up for annual health checks paid for by DVA under a program called Veterans' Coordinated Care (CVC).

The check consisted of the Practice Nurse conducting a battery of physical and mental checks and then after the results were reviewed by the GP had a chat with me about the outcomes. The whole process lasted a couple hours.

The Practice Nurse will then carry out a quick check every three months until another full one the following year.

More information about CVC can be found on Page 10 of April's Vet Affairs — Vol 39 No.1 April 2023, or by going to DVA's web page [here](#).

All Australian Defence Force (ADF) members who transition on or after 1 July 2019, and served at least one day's continuous full-time service, can now access a comprehensive fully-funded health assessment from their GP each year for the first five years following transition. Details can be found on DVA's web page [here](#). Stay Healthy! ➔



# Coming Soon...



Westland Scout  
Torpedo Training at Nowra  
The Last Days of Tirpitz  
Surrender of the German Fleet  
Carrier Art  
The S2 Tracker



# FLYING THE TRACKER

## Part 2 - The Aircraft



By Owen Nicholls

*In the previous article about Tracker carrier operations (see last month's FlyBy magazine), the author focussed on ship aspects. This article turns to the aircraft. ➔*

Frequently asked questions, or FAQs, now pervade our lives. A question I am often asked is "what was it like flying the Tracker from HMAS Melbourne". As answered in the part one article, the answer I give is: "very demanding, immensely satisfying and fun (by daytime), but a deadly serious business on a dark night".

### Training for the Carrier

Before a Tracker pilot got anywhere near landing on the carrier he undertook an intensive and demanding training program ashore at the Naval Air Station Nowra (NAS Nowra). This began with a series of comprehensive briefings on carrier flying, normally given by one of the Landing Signals Officers (LSOs). This was followed by a flying phase of seemingly endless Field Carrier Landing Practice or FCLP as it was abbreviated. This term displaced the previous generation British aircraft term of Mirror Assisted Dummy Deck Landings or MAD-DLS.

During FCLP the aircraft was flown in a quite tight low level circuit, 300 feet above ground by day or 500 feet at night. The runway had a painted rectangular outline approximating the size of HMAS Melbourne's angled flight deck on the left side of the runway. Just to the left of the runway edge was a mirror landing sight (see previous article) that was

very similar to the system on the ship. LSOs would position themselves on the grass abeam the touchdown area with a radio equipped vehicle and all the connections to the mirror's cut and wave off lights. As you can see, this gave a fair recreation of the shipboard operation, although of course there was no deck movement.

### Approach Assessments

On every carrier approach, both at the ship and FCLP at Nowra the pilot was assessed and critiqued. The LSOs graded each approach as follows:

- "OK Underline" – a perfect approach, generally under extreme circumstances. Naval Aviators often have hundreds of carrier landings without ever receiving this grade.
- "OK" – a pass with only very minor deviations from centreline, glideslope and speed.
- "Fair" – a pass with one or more safe deviations and appropriate corrections.
- "No Grade" – a pass with gross (but still safe) deviations or inappropriate corrections. Failure to respond to LSO calls will often result in this grade.

Each approach can attract LSO comments in any of six parts as follows:

- "The 90" – when the aircraft has approximately 90 degrees of turn until lined up with the centreline.
- "The Start" – generally from when the aircraft crosses the wake and/or the pilot "calls the ball"

at around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile.

- "The Middle" – from about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile.
- "In Close" – from about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to  $\frac{1}{10}$  mile
- "At the Ramp" – from when the aircraft crosses the round-down of the flight deck until touchdown
- "In the Wires" – from touchdown until stopped

As you can see, this can amount to a considerable amount of information which is captured in a curious form of LSO shorthand writing with letters, symbols and abbreviations. It is like another language. The LSO dictated this evaluation to an LSO writer who recorded it. The LSO by then was assessing the next approaching aircraft. It was a fast paced workload. At the end of the sortie each pilot was debriefed on every approach. Each pilot's approach records were kept and the LSOs analysed them for any trends to try to nip any bad habits in the bud. This was not trivial or nit picking – it was important and necessary for safe operations at sea.

### Flying the Tracker

To join the FCLP pattern the aircraft would either join the circuit from a normal take-off, or if returning from a training sortie to do FCLP after say, a navigation exercise it would join through "low initial" (from a position three miles from the end of the runway at circuit height to run down the non circuit side of the runway and turn "downwind". Either way, the pilot would configure the aircraft for landing – hook up, wheels down and full flap with the speed back to landing speed. Unlike normal field approaches, the aircraft was stabilised at its final configuration and touchdown speed while on downwind. At the chosen place (dependant upon wind) the pilot rolled into the base turn – an exactly level turn "on speed". A touch of additional power was required to maintain the exact speed in the level turn. In my early days on the Tracker this was exactly 90 knots but later, when the RAN introduced the LSO activated "cut lights" on the mirror, this increased to 95 knots.

At around the 90 degree position (half way round the base turn) or shortly after, the pilot would acquire the "meatball" (orange light) in the mirror. Ideally the ball would be in the centre of the mirror in line with the green datum lights. A radio call of aircraft side number, "ball" and pilot name was then made. If the ball was not acquired the pilot would call "Clara" on the radio and the LSO would advise whether the aircraft was high or low. A slight power reduction was then required to initiate descent, but

remember that at this stage the aircraft is not tracking directly to the runway so further reduction was necessary as the aircraft approached the centreline. If the ball was low in the mirror on acquisition, the power reduction was delayed a little until the ball was centred. From the time the ball was acquired, the pilot's life consisted of three things which became a continuous silent chant – "meatball, line-up, airspeed". This is where the pilot's training became a skill and then, probably, an art. Fine corrections, not over controlling and not creating new problems by fixating on a deviation were required.

If the LSO did not activate the cut lights the meatball was flown all the way to touchdown. If the cut lights illuminated the pilot would close the throttles which with the natural stability of the aircraft would cause the nose to drop. A slight check back with elevator would slightly lower the tail. At the ship this would lower the arrestor hook towards the deck and hopefully an awaiting arrestor wire. Landing on the centreline was critical as I will amplify when talking about landing on the ship at night.

Touch and go landings were flown with a typical session of FCLP having six to eight approaches a demanding period of concentration. Night FCLP was generally similar but with the circuit height 200 feet higher than the day circuit.

### Out to the Ship

When the budding carrier pilot was deemed ready to go out to the ship for day landing qualification he went out with a carrier qualified experienced Tracker pilot. This was an advantage for us over our Skyhawk compatriots – the two seat Skyhawk was unable to operate from Melbourne.

### Deck Landings

I do not particularly remember the first touch and go landings on the carrier I experienced as a co-pilot but I do recall the first arrested landing. When the arrestor wire had brought us to a stop on the flight deck, there was a totally alien sensation of being stopped but with a sensation of movement as the ship continued forward through the sea. It felt weird at first but of course I then became accustomed to it.

Finally, the day came for my first deck landings. This was the most challenging flying I had done so far in my career. An early problem I had was a tendency to fly up the wake of the ship, aligned with the axial deck instead of crossing the wake and the converging on it as I approached the ship aligned with the angled deck centreline of the landing area.

After a series of touch and go landings, the call "hook down" came from FLYCO (Flying Control – the carrier equivalent of a control tower) for my first





arrested landing. It was an event of much satisfaction.

### Catapult Launch

The aircraft was taxied out of the landing area under the control of the ship's Air Department marshallers, members of the RAN's Aircraft Handler branch, or "Bears" as the branch personnel were nicknamed. Taxi signalling was passed from one marshaller to another up the deck, the final marshaller standing astride the catapult track. The catapult marshallers were "the best of the best". Accurate alignment of the aircraft on the catapult was vital – a few inches left or right would require the aircraft to be pulled back by tow motor and reloaded. In a tactical environment this would not please the ship's captain as it would mean the ship having to maintain a longer into wind course, probably taking the ship away from the main body of units in a task group. As well as normal marshalling signals the catapult marshaller would indicate fine corrections with a sideways movement of his head. The taxiing was very precise.

The aircraft would come to a stop, correctly aligned, with the mainwheels against chocks which raised hydraulically out of the flight deck. The catapult marshaller then handed off control of signalling to the Flight Deck Officer (FDO). The catapult holdback was then fitted (see previous article in this series). The chocks were then lowered and the aircraft would move forward a few feet until stopped by the holdback. The FDO then signalled for the pilot to add a little power, sufficient for the nose wheels to rise up off the deck a few inches with the aircraft resting on its small solid rubber tailwheel. This allowed the catapult shuttle to be retracted from the forward end of the catapult track back to a position under the aircraft behind the nosewheels.

Members of the flight deck engineering party then attached the catapult bridle. This was a heavy wire cable about a metre and a half long with an eye at one end to hook onto the catapult launch hook on the underside of the fuselage, and the other end on the catapult shuttle. The engineer sailors (stokers) were working under the aircraft between two whirling propellers. Dangerous, disciplined work! They would signal the catapult operator who was standing below flight deck level with his head and shoulders above flight deck level inside a retractable box like structure called the "howdah". The howdah had a flat steel top and armoured glass side window. It was raised for catapult launches and lowered flush to the deck when not in use.

The catapult operator then tensioned the shuttle forward a little to maintain the aircraft's nose high attitude with no slack in the catapult bridle. With all preparations complete and all ground personnel clear of the aircraft and a green light signal from FLYCO (the equivalent of a control tower), the FDO would wave a small green flag in his right hand above his head to signal the pilot to increase power to take-off power. Inside the aircraft the crew would brace themselves in their seats for the launch. The pilot would hold the elevators and ailerons in a neutral position with his left elbow firmly braced into the front of his left hip. His right hand was up high on the aircraft throttles with his fingers wrapped around the throttles and the throttle catapult grip – a small inverted T handle that lowered from the overhead panel in front of the throttles. This prevented power reduction during the acceleration of the catapult stroke.

So the aircraft was sitting at full power on what amounted to a loaded gun. The noise level was in-



***Above Left.** This Tracker has been correctly marshalled onto Melbourne's single catapult and braced ready for take off.*

***Above Right.** Once pressure is released into the catapult piston the weak link in the holdback fitting breaks, and the aircraft is flung into the air (above right). **Right.** View from the Planeguard helicopter, which during daylight operation hovered off the port bow ready to rescue aircrew in the event of a ditching.*

tense, and the FDO was still waving the green flag above his head. When the pilot was satisfied that the aircraft was ready for launch he signalled the co-pilot with a nod of the head and the co-pilot then saluted the FDO to signify this. The FDO checked the launch path ahead of the aircraft was clear, that the FLYCO signal light was still green, that the Tracker crew or anyone else were not signalling for the launch to be cancelled, and finally, that the deck pitching motion was such that the aircraft would launch with the ship's bow pitching up. The FDO then dropped to a crouching or bending position with his green flag touching the deck. The catapult operator pressed the catapult launch button. Steam was then admitted into the catapult cylinders causing the weak link in the holdback fitting to break and the aircraft to accelerate down the catapult track becoming airborne at the end of its stroke. Inside the aircraft the launch was a brutal push back into the seat, although having said this, a heavily loaded Skyhawk had a bigger kick.

If at any stage before launch with the aircraft on the catapult and full power signalled there was a problem requiring the launch to be cancelled the pilot must maintain full power. The co-pilot would shake



his head, "cancel cancel cancel" would be transmitted on aircraft radio and also on the flight deck crew radio headsets. The FDO would continue to signal full power but bring the red flag in his left hand up above his head (previously it was held behind his back). On seeing the red flag come up the catapult operator would move the shuttle back which would cause the bridle to fall off the aircraft launch hook onto the deck. Only then would the FDO signal the pilot to reduce power. This is perhaps the ultimate self discipline in aviation – sit strapped to a loaded catapult, perhaps with an engine on fire and maintain full power!

### Night Operations

Night operations are very similar to what is described above – except it is dark (at times a gross understatement). It can be very dark out at sea if there is cloud cover to obscure stars and no moon. Illuminated yellow wands replaced hands for mar-





**Above Left.** A Tracker on short finals, with its hook extended for a full stop landing. In the next few seconds one of two things will happen - either it will catch one of the six arrestor wires and be brought to a rapid stop, or it will miss them and do a 'bolter', where full power is applied to claw the aircraft back into the air.

**Right.** An RAN Tracker makes a touch and go on the larger deck of a foreign Carrier - possibly HMS Eagle or Hermes which both visited Australian waters in '68/69. A good number of people are on the superstructure, enjoying both the spectacle and the Aussie sunshine. ➔

shalling signals and the FDO had red and green wands to replace his flags. Off the end of the catapult stroke it was pure instrument flying for the pilot, only 50 feet above the sea.

For approach and landing the aircraft had some special lighting to enable LSOs to do their job. Firstly, there were two small yellow lights on the port (left lower side of the fuselage, one just behind the nose wheel well and one forward of the tail wheel. The LSOs used these in conjunction with the aircraft's approach lights to determine the aircraft's attitude and alignment during the approach. The approach lights were a group of small coloured lights (red, amber and green) in the leading edge of the left wing. These lights give an indication of airspeed (slow, normal or fast) around a mean speed of 95 knots.

As stated before, night carrier landings were very demanding. Landing on the centreline at night

could be particularly challenging, especially if the ship was at an angle to the sea swell and had a corkscrewing motion. Had the aircraft drifted off the centreline? Or was it the ship corkscrewing, in which case the deck would move back. Very difficult to tell on a completely black night. I have heard many statements about the Tracker's starboard wing tip clearance from parked aircraft or equipment when landing. From accurate scale drawings I have determined this clearance to be very close to 10 feet, or a bit over three metres. Similarly, with the aircraft on the correct glideslope, the arrestor hook was a little under seven feet, or two metres, above the flight deck at the stern. The flight deck curved downwards at the ship's stern, this area being known as the round-down or ramp. If the hook hit the ramp it was known as a hook strike, and if the aircraft hit this area it was a ramp strike, which would almost certainly be catastrophic and fatal for a Tracker and its crew.



After the night landing, if the Tracker was the last to land, the pilot might have to park in "shit spot". This was a tight parking position immediately in front of the carrier's island superstructure. After clearing the arrestor wires and folding the wings the pilot would taxi past the island and then turn right 90 degrees to taxi to the edge of the deck, all under the signals of highly experienced marshallers with their yellow wands. When the nose-wheel was about half a metre from the deck edge the marshaller would point his left wand vertically downwards and continue to wave his right wand. The pilot would then lock the left wheel and pivot the aircraft 90 degrees to align it parallel to the centreline of the ship. The parking spot was aptly named, particularly if you add a wet deck and the ship starting to roll as it turned out of wind to resume its desired course.

We only lost one Tracker on flight operations, when attempting to land in the early hours of the morning of a very dark night the aircraft experienced a "bolter" (failure to engage an arrestor wire) and settled into the sea on the go round. Pages 82 and 83 of a Defence Science and Technology Organi-

sation article on accident investigation make interesting reading on this accident. They can be found [here](#).

Flying onto and off an aircraft carrier, particularly one as small as HMAS Melbourne, was professionally very satisfying but highly demanding. Naval aviators are a very proud bunch and are often not afraid to say so, as depicted in the following tongue in cheek post lifted from Facebook! ➔



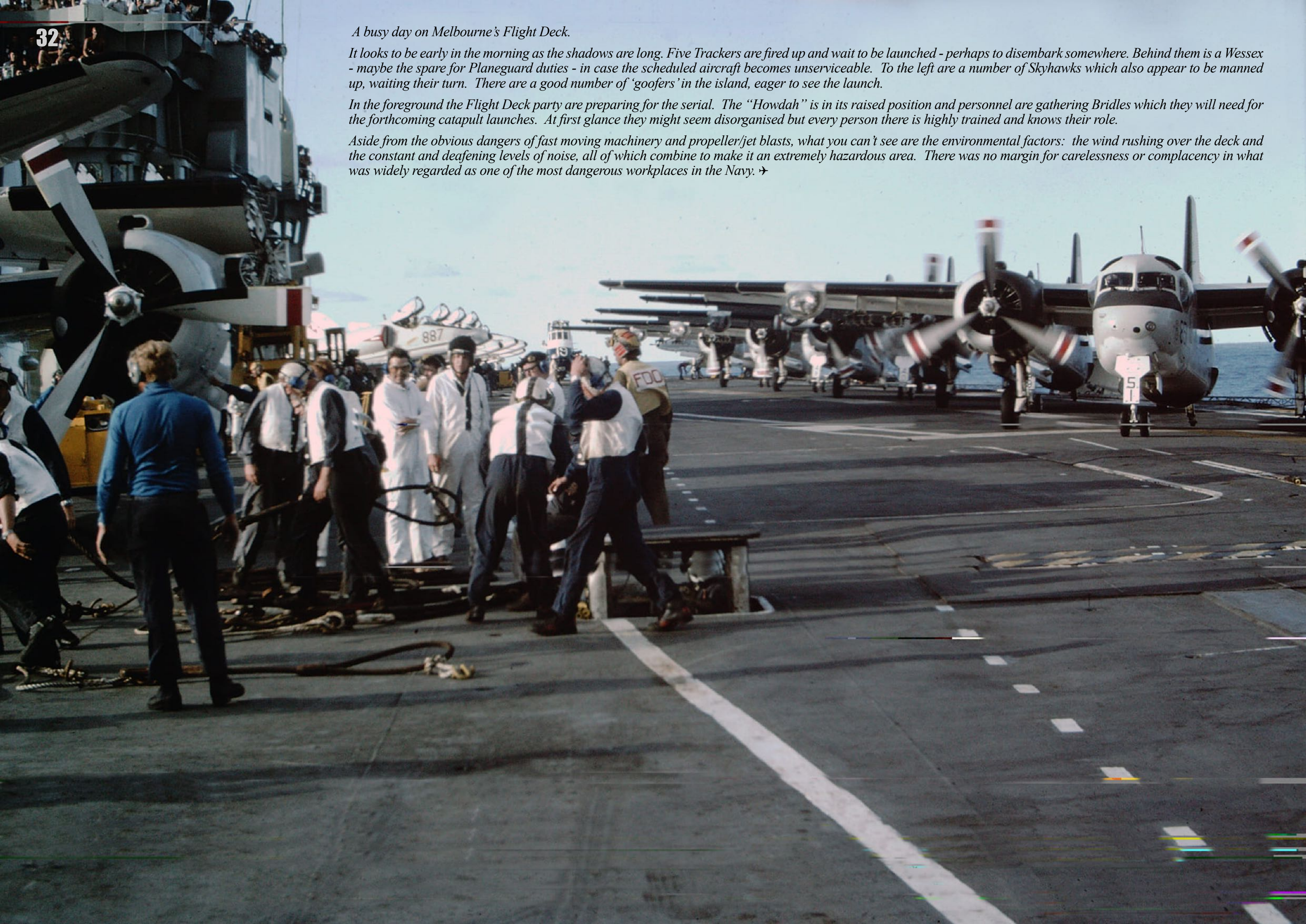


*A busy day on Melbourne's Flight Deck.*

*It looks to be early in the morning as the shadows are long. Five Trackers are fired up and wait to be launched - perhaps to disembark somewhere. Behind them is a Wessex - maybe the spare for Planeguard duties - in case the scheduled aircraft becomes unserviceable. To the left are a number of Skyhawks which also appear to be manned up, waiting their turn. There are a good number of 'goofers' in the island, eager to see the launch.*

*In the foreground the Flight Deck party are preparing for the serial. The "Howdah" is in its raised position and personnel are gathering Bridles which they will need for the forthcoming catapult launches. At first glance they might seem disorganised but every person there is highly trained and knows their role.*

*Aside from the obvious dangers of fast moving machinery and propeller/jet blasts, what you can't see are the environmental factors: the wind rushing over the deck and the constant and deafening levels of noise, all of which combine to make it an extremely hazardous area. There was no margin for carelessness or complacency in what was widely regarded as one of the most dangerous workplaces in the Navy. ➔*







# Aussies in Glory

by Graeme Lunn

When *Glory's* 14th Carrier Air Group disembarked for rest at *Albatross/* Naval Air Station Nowra in October of 1951, thirteen of the original twenty-nine pilots of 804 (Sea Fury) Squadron had been rotated back to the UK. Coupled with her losses over Korea, this left the Squadron needing more replacements than were readily available in the manpower pipeline. The RN posters were desperate, and their roving eyes alighted on young Australians who were just coming out of the training pipeline...

The Colossus-class light fleet aircraft carrier *Glory* had maintained close ties to Australia from her first commission in 1945, when senior officers of the Japanese Army and Navy surrendered to the 1st Australian Army's Lieutenant-General Vernon Sturdee CB DSO on her flight deck off Rabaul.

The end of 1951 found *Glory* alongside at Garden Island for refit after her arduous first deployment to Korea. In her nine war patrols before handing over to Sydney, she lost eight aircrew commencing with Lieutenant Edward Stephenson in his *Sea Fury* on her very first day of operations.

When *Glory's* 14th Carrier Air Group disembarked for rest to *Albatross/* Naval Air Station Nowra on October 22nd, 1951, thirteen of the original twenty-nine pilots of 804 (Sea Fury) Squadron had been rotated back to the UK. Coupled with their losses over Korea, this left 804 needing more replacements than were readily available in the manpower pipeline. The RN posters were desperate and their roving eyes alighted on 767 Squadron of the 50th Training Air Group at *Heron/* Naval Air Station Yeovilton.

767 was known as 'the Clockwork Mouse' squadron. They conducted training for Deck Landing Control Officers where the never-ending circuits and Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings gave rise to the nickname. On temporary postings to *Heron* in November 1951, flying those ADDLs responding to the trainee DLCO batting signals, were the three most recent RAN graduates of Operational Flying School II (fighters) at Seahawk/ Naval Air Station Culdrose - Lieutenant Alan Cordell along with Acting Sub-Lieutenants Andrew Powell and [Peter Wyatt](#).

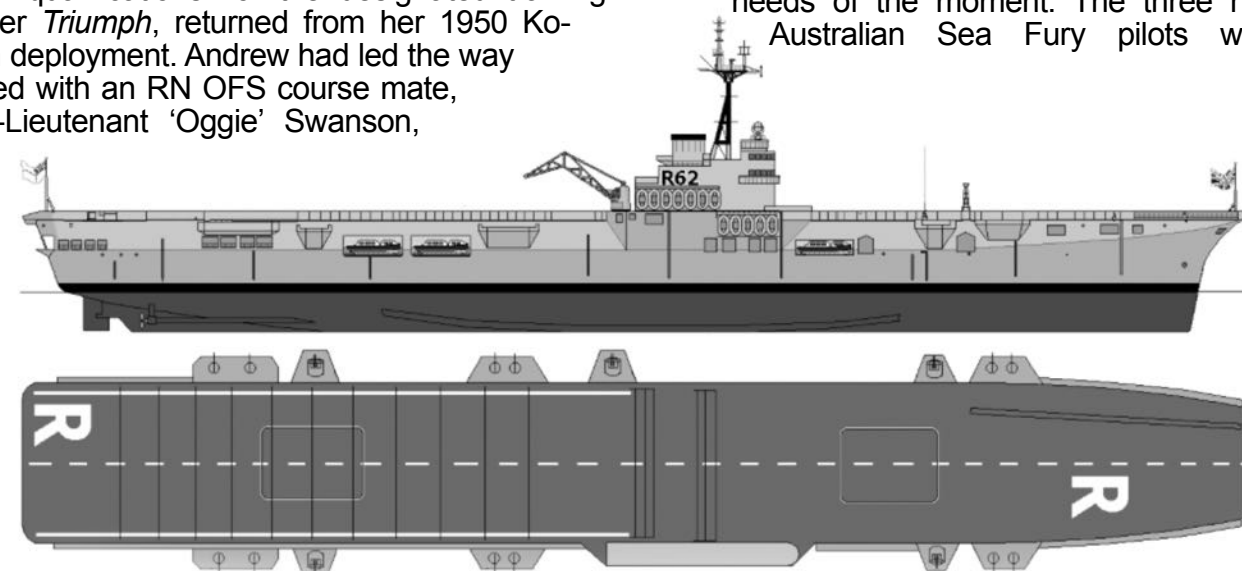
They had just completed the required deck landings qualifications on the designated training carrier *Triumph*, returned from her 1950 Korean deployment. Andrew had led the way paired with an RN OFS course mate, Sub-Lieutenant 'Oggie' Swanson,

completing his first four landings with a clear deck and barriers down in less than fifteen minutes. After that 'easy' introduction all following landings were in normal operating mode facing a barrier and a forward deck park. Landings were filmed and Andrew, now 92 and living in Perth with his wife Margaret, still has a copy of those first landings. He also remembers the Commander (Air) at *Heron*, a flare-layer at Taranto who walked with a limp from a flight deck accident aboard *Implacable*, skilfully playing the piano in the wardroom after dinner. This was Commander Charles Lamb DSO DSC, author of the classic memoir 'War in a Stringbag'.

Andrew and Peter had been Probationary Naval Aviators (Pilot) of No.4 Course, which had commenced in August 1949 at RAAF Base Point Cook. They were joined in February 1950 by three junior seaman officers who had first been appointed to the Royal Australian Naval College in 1942 aged thirteen.

Having had some basic flying instruction during their Sub-Lieutenants Air Course with the RN, Alan Cordell, along with his classmates Peter Cabban and John Matthews, had successfully applied to sub-specialise in the new Air Branch. Posted to the UK for advanced training Alan graduated from fighter OFS in *Sea Furies* along with Andrew and Peter, while his two College classmates completed their Anti-Submarine OFS on *Fireflies*.

At this time a newly qualified pilot was not considered fully operational until he had undergone twelve months of rigorous work-up in a front-line squadron. As always, facing the urgent priorities of active operations, normal training parameters were varied to suit the needs of the moment. The three new Australian *Sea Fury* pilots were





planned to take air passage to Australia with recent British OFS graduates to join 804 at *Albatross*. There they would have at least some weeks ashore to work up, as well as time during *Glory's* passage north to the war zone.

On December 13th, 1951, air passage to Australia for Alan and Andrew was abruptly cancelled. Peter still flew home on December 15th, along with Ogie among the RN replacements, to join 804 ashore at Nowra. The next day Andrew and Alan found themselves sitting in first class aboard a BOAC Argonaut, bound for Tokyo. Traveling on to Kure they reported to HMAS *Commonwealth* and awaited *Sydney's* return from her latest war patrol. 805 (Sea Fury) Squadron, one of three squadrons comprising the *Sydney* CAG, had sailed from Australia with twelve pilots. Sadly 805 now needed two replacements.

In her third war patrol 805's Senior Pilot, Lieutenant 'Nails' Clarkson DFM, had been killed in action on November 5th, 1951. Hit while making a strafing run, his aircraft was observed to roll on its back and dive into the ground. A month later on December 7th, the first days flying of *Sydney's* fifth war patrol, Sub-Lieutenant 'Dick' Sinclair was killed bailing out of his flak damaged Sea Fury at low level. His body was recovered and committed to the deep on completion of the day's flying.

## Journey and Arrival

Andrew and Alan's flight to Tokyo was an adventure in itself. Suffering several cabin depressurisations along the way a full day was spent in Cairo while the engineers worked on the Argonaut. The runway at Rangoon was still the metal PSP or pierced steel planking of World War Two which made a worryingly loud and distinctive sound as the aircraft rolled over it. Departure from Rangoon was delayed with civil unrest in the airport vicinity and a nose wheel blow-out in Hong Kong gave an unscheduled night stop.

As they disembarked in Tokyo the six Japanese passengers stood and bowed to Andrew and Alan insisting they disembark first. Issued with occupation money the British Officers Club appeared full of Americans spending lavishly on their Japanese girlfriends and it was only American beer on tap. Being an occupied country uniform was always dress of the day but Andrews brightest memory was the food. After the austerity of post-war Britain the food was a veritable feast. ➔

Before *Sydney* arrived back from that fifth war patrol 805 had also almost lost their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Commander 'Jimmie' Bowles, as December 13th proved simultaneously lucky and unlucky. Lieutenant 'Brassie' Cooper of 808 (Sea Fury) Squadron had bailed out over enemy territory from his Sea Fury that morning. He was rescued by helicopter Pedro Fox, precariously based at Bromide Baker on the offshore island of Paengyong-Do just below the 38th Parallel. That afternoon Jimmie was hit by the same guns that had shot down Brassie. Bailing out over water he was rescued by a friendly junk and later collected by the busy Pedro Fox which delivered both pilots to *Tobruk*.

Blizzards prevented Jimmie and Brassie being transferred back to *Sydney* until December 16th. Arriving alongside in Kure on December 19th the patrol had been an arduous one with 383 sorties flown. Twenty aircraft made it back to the carrier with flak damage but five did not.

Alan and Andrew were warmly welcomed onboard by Lieutenant-Commander Richard How RN, who had been their Senior Naval Officer at Point Cook, and George Jude, now 805's Senior Pilot. That Christmas week was celebrated with the concentrated intensity of young men under wartime stress. Sailing for her sixth war patrol on December 27th one squadron diarist wrote 'It can be said without exaggeration that more than half the Squadron was relieved to be once again at sea and enjoy a little sobriety'.

When flying operations commenced for the new arrivals and the rest of the CAG on December 29th *Sydney's* Air Group Commander, Lieutenant-Commander 'Mike' Fell DSO DSC MiD\* RN (later Vice-Admiral Sir Michael Fell KCB), personally took the inexperienced aviators under his very capable wing.

Mike held the rare distinction of having shot down an enemy aircraft while flying an obsolescent Gloster Sea Gladiator biplane in 1940. He increased his score when he converted to Blackburn Skuas and yet again flying Grumman Martlets (F4F Wildcats) and Hawker Hurricanes when CO of the original RN 805 Squadron in the Western Desert. Mentioned-in-Despatches flying off the fleet carrier *Illustrious* protecting the Sicily landings, Mike was awarded an immediate DSO leading the second strike against the *Tirpitz* off the escort carrier *Searcher*. On that strike he deliberately drew flak away from his fellow pilots while scoring a low-level hit on the battleship. As Commander (Air) of the escort carrier *Emperor* Mike was Mentioned again during the invasion of Southern France, and received a DSC for operations in the Aegean where



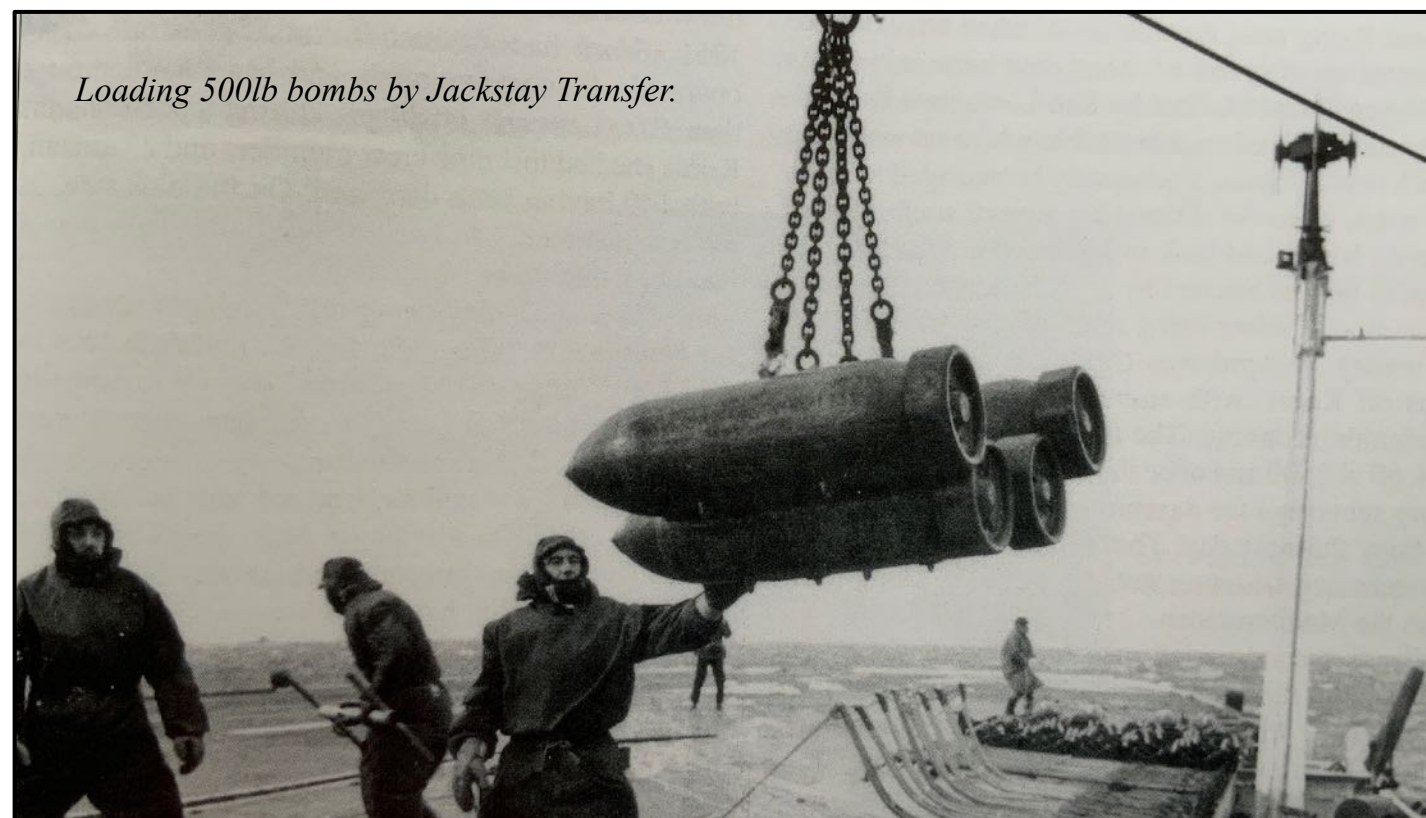
**Top.** This Sea Fury has lost its wings in the barrier and caught fire. The firesuitman is clearing the flames from around the cockpit to allow the pilot, who is waiting patiently to escape. **Middle.** The Korean winter was brutal, with ice on the Flight Deck a constant hazard unless cleared by hand. **Bottom.** Two handlers, no doubt reminiscing about warmer weather in Australian waters, left behind a few months earlier. ➔

he orchestrated 'the most destructively successful day that *Emperor's* aircraft had since the ship was commissioned'.

Andrew and Alan could not have had a more capable leader to learn from, which is just as well as they could not have been greener! The first time they launched in a front-line squadron was also the first time they flew a Sea Fury with drop tanks, used rockets with explosive heads and live 20mm cannon shells, and was their first time in action. On his return from this sortie Andrew entered his twenty-first deck landing in his logbook. Daunting though it must have been, Andrew would only later modestly admit that it had been 'a steep learning curve'. On January 2nd, 1952 805 lost their third pilot when Sub-Lieutenant 'Ron' Coleman was posted missing while flying a Combat Air Patrol in inclement weather.







Loading 500lb bombs by Jackstay Transfer.

As the youngest and most junior Sea Fury pilot on-board Andrew still clearly recalls the lessons quickly imparted as Mike's wingman. The main emphasis was on low-level flying to avoid the heavy flak guns while accepting the added risk from light arms. Flying in battle formation the Sea Furies would cross the coast between 5000' and 6000' before striking their pre-briefed targets, followed by reconnaissance or photographic runs as required at low level. Winter had well and truly arrived by January 24th, when a temperature of 16°F/-9°C was recorded on the flight deck. The wind chill factor would have taken those figures to south of -2°F/-19°C as sheets of ice over the barrier and wires were cleared away by shivering working parties. When exposed to these temperatures the Flight Deck Party could suffer from Frostbite in less than 30 minutes, if not careful.

With Andrew and Alan concentrating on their main tasks of armed reconnaissance, gunnery spotting, close air support and providing air cover over the fleet during Sydney's sixth and seventh war patrols Peter and Oggie were hurriedly working up in 804 back at Albatross. Despite a break for Christmas it would have been a hectic two weeks before embarking on Glory in Jervis Bay on January 2nd, 1952.

Heading north Glory continued working up the numerous replacements in her two squadrons under a new Air Group Commander. This task was easier

in 804 as both the CO and SP had remained, giving a continuity for the second deployment which 812 (Firefly) Squadron did not have. Stopping in Singapore, among the new aircraft, stores and ammunition loaded onboard was cold weather clothing. It would be much appreciated by the flight deck crew as the majority of the next five war patrols would be in the harsh Korean winter.

Before Glory entered Hong Kong Harbour on January 30th for handover from the waiting Sydney six RN Fireflies, borrowed by the Sydney CAG, were flown on. During the handover Alan and Andrew boarded Glory and joined Peter in 804 Squadron.

Resuming the duties of a Blockading Force light fleet carrier Glory sailed from Hong Kong, via a refuelling stop in Sasebo, to be in the operational area on February 6th. With half the aircrew already experienced with the routine of destroying bridges, tunnels, railway lines, villages and ox carts they quickly settled into this first war patrol despite the weather.

804 initially organised their twenty-two aircraft into five flights of four and one flight of two. The Australians were allocated individual Sea Furies with their names painted on them which aroused much interest and comment from the numerous visitors to the carrier observing flight operations. Alan flew in 12 Flight with the CO, Peter was in 14 Flight and Andrew was in 18 Flight as wingman to Commissioned Pilot 'Mick' Fieldhouse. The RN had not yet

## Oggie's First Crash

"In the last few days at Culdrose we were flying low level bomb runs with smoke bombs. The weather was pretty poor with the cloud base around 200 feet. Oggie arrived back for a low-level circuit flying upwind on the starboard side before breaking port and downwind to fit into the landing order. As he was about to break port the engine lost all power.

With a five bladed prop in fine pitch the Sea Fury's gliding traits were akin to a brick dunny. Added to the problem was the fields around Culdrose seemed to represent pocket handkerchiefs with stone hedges built over centuries of farming. The only plus for Oggie was that he was already heading into wind. With the flaps down he landed straight ahead into a small field scant seconds after the engine failed.

His Sea Fury bounced and left the flaps behind and headed into the trees on the boundary. Good luck coupled with good flying saw the wings wiped off and the wreck came to a halt. The CO, who was in the circuit and witnessed the crash, entered the crew room and announced 'Swanson is gone!'

When the ambulance arrived to collect the dead body Oggie was in the kitchen drenched in Avgas, with a minor cut on his forehead, waiting for the farmers wife to finish brewing him a cup of tea. Oggie's craggy looks had become a shade craggier. After some impatient time in hospital Oggie persuaded the medics that he was recovered enough to take passage for Nowra and 804 Squadron."

Oggie is still alive and proud to have been No.4 in the Boss' flight. A couple of years ago he had a stroke and lives in a full aged care facility in South-West England. For a lad who took up navy flying rather than becoming a potato farmer in Cornwall he had a colourful and extremely lucky early flying career. We still keep in touch.

Andrew Powell, Perth. March 2023. ➔

moved to officer ranks for all aviators and 804 had seven commissioned pilots. It was a happy squadron where Lieutenant-Commander John Bailey OBE, who had commanded 827 and 815 (Baracuda) Squadrons in World War Two, would smile indulgently when the commissioned pilots greeted him with a "Hi Boss, how are they hanging today."

Courage was common currency on both sides. Diving to attack a railway bridge on the Haeju to Wonsol rail line Andrew saw a solitary enemy soldier standing and returning fire with his rifle at the swooping flight of four Sea Furies with their sixteen cannon and multiple rockets firing at him. During Glory's second war patrol Peter had his wing holed by a machine gun bullet at 4000' - the highest then recorded for small arms fire. The same day as Andrew followed Mick in a strafing run three of the four aircraft were hit, Mick's own close call being a .303 bullet passing through his canopy missing his head. Seventy years later Andrew has still not forgotten the distinctive and unpleasant sound of flak hitting his aircraft.

After a run of 424 accident free landings for Glory's Air Group Andrew lost a tail wheel on the 425th which damaged the fuselage. Suffering his CO's displeasure it also cost him a lot of ribaldry and drinks in the Wardroom. This patrol saw Glory's 5,000th deck landing of the commission while eight pilots, including Mick Fieldhouse, had each now flown more than one hundred operational sorties. Mick's experience included flying Seafire FR.47s

*With the wheels of a departing Sea Fury barely off the deck, handlers of HMS Glory scurry to prepare the next aircraft for launching. The smooth operation of the Flight Deck required every single man to know exactly what he was doing, and to keep his wits about him. ➔*





## Ox Carts

Andrew would remember that if one found a good target on a TARCAP (Tactical Air Reconnaissance and Combat Air Patrol) it was often a flak trap. The pilots considered that the idea of Sea Furies taking out an oxcart seemed like an overly expensive exercise. In Andrew's words "Yes, they blew up, but the value of the attackers versus what was achieved could not be cost effective. Perhaps that is how wars go!"



Ox-carts, prime transport vehicles for the Communists, were opportunity targets only hunted after the sorties' briefed targets had been attacked. Being so numerous, large quantities of supplies and ammunition could be moved in any weather over roads impassable to motor transport. In 39 flying days 804, among all their other targets, would record ox-cart attacks on 31 of them. The squadron destroyed 143 carts to 812's score of 47, making an average of 5 per flying day.

Undoubtedly disruptive to the enemy, since it was always a secondary target it was not the misuse of expensive resources as would first appear. In fact the carts were usually strafed while returning to the ship, using up any 20mm ammunition remaining.

No aircraft were lost from *Glory* while attacking ox-carts. ➔



*Taken on the day that HMS Glory won back the record for the most sorties in a day (with 105), this image gives an idea of how busy the Flight Deck could be when strikes were programmed. (17 Mar 1952). ➔*

off *Triumph* in 1950, so when he and Andrew coasted in they did so below 150 feet and in high speed cruise. This kept the low level Sea Fury relatively quiet and gave the advantage of surprise.

It was during the third war patrol on March 17th that *Glory* took back the record from *Sydney* for sorties in a day from a light fleet carrier while deterring an attack on Sok-to Island. Of the 106 sorties flown 804 flew sixty-five and 812 forty-one. The previous three days had seen a full flying programme so when each pilot of 804 flew three sorties, of about 2:30 hours each, by the time the last event landed on at sunset they were exhausted. The next day's break for refuelling and replenishment provided some welcome aircrew rest.

With aircraft losses mounting, 804 reorganised into five flights of four. Alan moved to 17 Flight, Peter stayed in 14 Flight now led by the SP and Andrew moved to 15 Flight but still as wingman to Mick. Usual armament load was twelve 60lb rockets or two 500lb bombs. A normal bombing approach commenced with a high speed low-level (maximum 200 feet) track onto the target before pulling up to 4000 feet, rolling into a 45° dive and centreing the target on the 6 o'clock pip of the gyro-gunsight. Releasing at 1500 feet the Sea Fury would bottom out of the attack run at around 800 feet, which could still be uncomfortably close to the blast if the fuses were set for direct contact or on an airburst setting to take out a flak position.

On the fourth war patrol it was decided that the 60lb rockets were not giving enough bang to take out the gun positions built into the mainland cliffs opposite Cho-do island north of the 38th Parallel. Those guns covered an island which was important for pilot rescues so the Sea Furies were loaded with two 500 pounders fused for a 30 second delay, allowing a dive to a lower altitude with increased accuracy. The gun positions were destroyed over several days with Andrew finishing the task by taking out their observation tower. The squadron's dive bombing improved rapidly against other targets, and even the odd bridge span was dropped in emulation of their Firefly colleagues in 812.

On *Glory's* final war patrol in April 1952 a fourth RAN aviator joined 804. Lieutenant Martin Scott, who had been a RNVR Miles Martinet target tug pilot at the end of World War Two, had finished his fighter OFS that February and joined 802 (Sea Fury) Squadron aboard *Ocean*. After only five weeks in the Mediterranean he took air passage to Japan to temporarily fly from *Glory*. Martin quickly demonstrated his accuracy when, on April 24th, he and the SP obtained direct hits on camouflaged



*Above. HMS Glory on patrol in the Yellow Sea, preparing for another strike on a cold winter's day in February 1952. Below. A Sea Fury of 804 Squadron shows how not to do it. ➔*

shelters. Close Air Support for the front-line troops was always popular, and Andrew relished one ground controller's enthusiasm for his flights accuracy and punch as they bombed along a ridge line between smoke rocket markers.

As *Glory* withdrew there was pride in her achievements over two deployments and fourteen war patrols. Despite enemy fire, frequent snowstorms and many RATOG launches due to catapult unserviceability there had only been one further aircrew loss in the second deployment. Lieutenant Overton's Sea Fury was hit by fire from at least five guns during a low photographic and strafing run over the notoriously dangerous Amgak peninsula on March 15th.

One hundred and forty aircraft had returned damaged to *Glory* and twenty-seven were lost. There had been only fourteen landing accidents in 4,838 deck landings, with the last 939 deck landings accident free. Nine aircrew had lost their lives, one was wounded and twenty-four had been rescued.



*Glory* was still to conduct a third deployment which saw her lose another twelve aircrew in a further eleven war patrols. Her ships battle honour board commenced with 'Glorious 1st June 1794' and it now ended with the hard-earned 'Korea 1950-53'.

Jimmie Bowles and John Bailey received DSCs with Mike Fell gaining a bar to his DSC. Mick Fieldhouse was Mentioned-in-Despatches. When *Glory* handed over her duties to *Ocean* on May 3rd,



1952, Martin rejoined 802 Squadron aboard her. Accompanied by Oggie and three other 804 pilots they provided a base of operational experience.

Oggie, who had crash landed on an offshore island and later ditched after flak damage while with 804, was shot down on *Ocean's* second war patrol. Jumping from his burning, tailless Sea Fury his parachute opened just before he hit the water. Rescued under fire by a helicopter from Cho-do he was returned to *Ocean* after treatment for minor burns. Having previously crashed while flying out of Culdrose (see side bar earlier in this article) this made him four Sea Furies down and facing jocular accusations of aspiring to be that rarest of aviators - a reverse ace!

Flying CAP on *Ocean's* first war patrol, Martin suffered a cockpit fire forcing him to ditch. Rescued by the USN destroyer *Lowry* his burnt hands meant time in sick bay and a long period ashore in hospital. He talked his way into a discharge and return to A1 flying status, rejoining 802 in August and flying another four war patrols.

With *Glory* alongside in Singapore Andrew, Peter and Alan disembarked on May 21st, 1952. When the carrier headed for Malta they returned to Australia by liner for well earned leave before joining 808 (Sea Fury) Squadron.

While awaiting the modernisation of *Majestic/Melbourne* the Colossus-class *Vengeance* was loaned to the RAN for several years. She arrived at Sydney in March 1953 with a steaming party that included Martin, who had taken passage home to Australia with her. He was appointed Senior Pilot of 808 and the squadron embarked on *Vengeance* in September 1953.

Alan spent 1953 on the staff at the Royal Australian Naval College before being one of the first to convert to jets at RAAF Base Williamtown. Briefly with 723, he went on to a Night Fighter Course with the RN later in 1954. That was the year of the new Queen's Royal Visit to Australia where 817 (Firefly) and 808 Squadrons flew several 'E' formations in her honour. Coping with the swaying at the bottom of the long bar took an experienced light touch on the controls. Making up the bottom bar on those formations were Martin, Peter and Andrew.

Alan Cordell, Andrew Powell, Martin Scott and Peter Wyatt were our Aussies in *Glory* where, despite their initial inexperience, they took full measure of courage to add to the proud history of the RAN's Fleet Air Arm. ➔

## AUSSIES IN GLORY



**Top.** Andrew Powell with his Sea Fury.

**Middle L-R:** Alan Cordell and Peter Wyatt.

**Bottom:** Martin Scott. ➔

## 'MICK' FIELDHOUSE 1926-1963



**L-R:** Mike Darlington, Mick Fieldhouse, Carl Haines and Andrew "Andy" Powell. The bulky pockets near their ankles contained spare magazines for the Owen Gun carried in their dinghy pack. **Below.** Mick and Betty July 1948. (Photos in this sidebar courtesy of Jacquie Dean).

Andrew Powell's Flight Leader over Korea was Commissioned Pilot Derek 'Mick' Fieldhouse RN. A teenage Mick joined the Royal Navy and recorded his first flight during September 1944 in a Boeing Cadet. As World War Two drew to a close flying training slowed and Mick did not graduate from the Operational Flying School at Lossiemouth until March 1948. Falling in love with more than just flying, twenty-two year old Mick married twenty year old Betty Robinson on July 31st, 1948. Having lost her brother, Flight-Sergeant (N) Richard Robinson of 178 (Lancaster) Squadron, over Poland in 1944 Betty was only too aware of the inherent dangers of service flying.

In mid-1950 when *Triumph* and her 13th Carrier Air Group arrived on station at the start of the Korean War Mick was flying a Seafire FR.47 with 800 Squadron. On completion of this three month deployment Mick left the squadron and converted to Sea Furies. Joining 804 Squadron of the 14th CAG he embarked on *Glory* for her first Korean deployment, of nine war patrols, between April and September 1951.

After a restful Australian Christmas and New Year ashore for the squadron at Albatross/Naval Air Station Nowra *Glory* sailed for Korea in January 1952. When the relatively inexperienced Andrew Powell joined *Glory* from Sydney in Hong Kong for her second deployment of five war patrols Mick welcomed him as a wingman to his flight.







Commissioned Pilot D.F. Fieldhouse received a Mention-in-Despatches for his flying over Korea. Promoted Lieutenant in July 1952, his outstanding flying skills were recognised when he was selected for the No.14 Empire Test Pilots Course in 1955. On graduation he became a test pilot with the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment, Boscombe Down, eventually amassing an incredible seventy-seven types from a Fieseler Storch to a Victor bomber in his logbook. Conducting carrier trials in January 1959 with the de Havilland Sea Vixen, the first British fighter without guns, he sheared off a port oleo landing on *Centaur*. Test flying a Supermarine Scimitar in July 1960 the canopy came off after take-off but Mick was able to land safely. These two naval fighters had harrowing attrition rates, the Scimitar losing 51% of production aircraft during its service life and the Sea Vixen 38%.

Promoted Lieutenant-Commander in July 1960 Mick became Senior Pilot of 893 (Sea Vixen) Squadron at Heron/Naval Air Station Yeovilton. The squadron embarked on the 24,000 ton *Centaur* in 1961. The first RN angle-deck carrier, it was now recognised that she was marginal for operating the larger and heavier second generation of jet fighters. A partial upgrade completed in 1958 gave some improvement. When new arrestor wires with a 35,000 lb (16,000 kg) capacity were fitted in 1961 it was hoped by the Admiralty that these measures would safely bridge the gap until sufficient larger carriers were available.

On the evening of January 28th, 1963, *Centaur* was conducting night flying off The Lizard in Cornwall. Mick and his Observer were making a night Carrier-Controlled Approach when the aircraft went low and hit the round down. The shockwave from the crash was felt five decks below where the off-duty ships company were watching a film. Bursting into flames they skidded the full length of the flight deck, damaging three Sea Vixens parked at Fly 1, before toppling over the bow and crashing into the sea. Mick's body was recovered but that of Lieutenant (O) Stacey Swift was not. Mick was buried in the Naval Cemetery at St. Bartholomew's Church in Yeovilton village.

It had been a tragic few months for the carrier, having lost the entire watch of five men to an explosion in 'A' boiler room only nine weeks before, from which ship's morale was just starting to recover. The carrier's Commission Book wrote that "Our days of sadness were not yet passed, for early in the New Year we lost the Senior Pilot and Senior Observer of 893 Squadron in the course of a night recovery - a blow from which we are even now, hardly getting over". Disembarking at the end of the commission 893 Squadron recorded that "*Centaur struggled hard to keep us airborne being one of the smaller carriers and the Sea Vixen being a large heavy jet*". In August 1963 the squadron embarked on the 35,500 ton *Victorious*.

Mick and Betty had three daughters aged thirteen, three and one at the time of his death. His headstone was inscribed:

BELOVED HUSBAND OF BETTY  
FATHER OF JACQUELINE,  
SALLY-ANNE AND ZOE.  
OUR LOSS IS GREAT  
OUR MEMORIES GOLDEN

Betty never remarried, raising the girls with the unstinting help of her mother 'Nana Robinson', a World War One nursing veteran. Grandmother to six grandchildren, Betty died in 2021 at the age of 92. ➔

