



# Slipstream

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*An A4G Skyhawk landing aboard HMAS Melbourne in the early 1970's*

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*By Phil Thompson - 'The Pilot'*

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*(I had gone public after a few years about the incident and received some interesting feedback from the public. One such e-mail was written in response to a question about which pilot was involved in this incident and the questioner's comment: '...it must have frightened the daylight out of you!').*

My response to this email (written for non-pilot readers) said: "It was night time already — the 'daylights were already out of me' after the first night Deck Landing (DL)." While this first one — as I found out later was not perfect, it didn't look so bad after my second NON night DL — the ramp strike. I was thereafter the pilot the sailors could approach to say "Geesus, Sir you scared the bejeezus out of me" and these guys were in the front (as the 'birdies' liked to call the bow).

The admiral (not the captain) was in his cabin directly under the ramp. It had just been refur-

bished. He invited me up there to congratulate me on surviving and to show me (with good humour) the absolute chaos it had caused in his cabin, as the deckhead (made of painted cork) had fallen in on him. Above the cork deckhead (for soundproofing) were many inches of specially strengthened steel by the way. HMAS *Melbourne's* deck (generally) was remade (before this to be able to operate A4s) and in this area was supported by extra footings to enable it to take the A4 bumps in the landing zone.

I guess I had better days and nights but it was scary just to go out there for the first time. Not really knowing the drill, having a CCA (carrier controlled approach) at low level to the 'slot' or 'groove' where we would start to look ahead see the ball and start the approach, monitored then by

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**A4 on short final (hook down) preparing to trap whilst DDG astern acts as 'plane guard' (SAR)**

the LSO (Landing Signal Officer). So I guess the unknown is worse if it is poorly anticipated. However I knew that to be the reverse — complacency — was not an option. Jet pilots probably get addicted to the adrenaline rush. I'm sure most of the young pilots were just "powered by adrenaline" most of the time.

At this point the aim was to have about 20 day catapults (and about twice as many Deck Landings — touch and go and arrests) and depending, to then move on to Night DLs, as getting the ship time was not always easy. An RAN pilot does not have his wings confirmed officially until his first Day DL; so it is a big deal, for lots of reasons.

My first DLs were onboard HMS *Eagle* on its farewell tour before being scrapped. But being a 'sprog newbie' I was only allowed to do four (hook up) Touch and Gos; but they still counted as day DLs. That was on 2 Aug 1971. At that point I had done the required 100 day/night FCLPs (Field Carrier Landing Practice) or the old term for these was MADDLS (Mirror Assisted Dummy Deck Landings).

Just before my first DLs on HMAS *Melbourne* I did a further nine night FCLPs on 12 and 20 August

eight more by day, before doing 2 'hook up' (touch and go's) DLs on *Melbourne* for the first time on the 23 August, then I trapped for the first time on the 24 August with six DLs and two catapults (so two out of the six were traps, just wanted to make the point that there is no distinction between a hook up or hook down DL — if it is a good one). My ramp strike did not count as a DL!

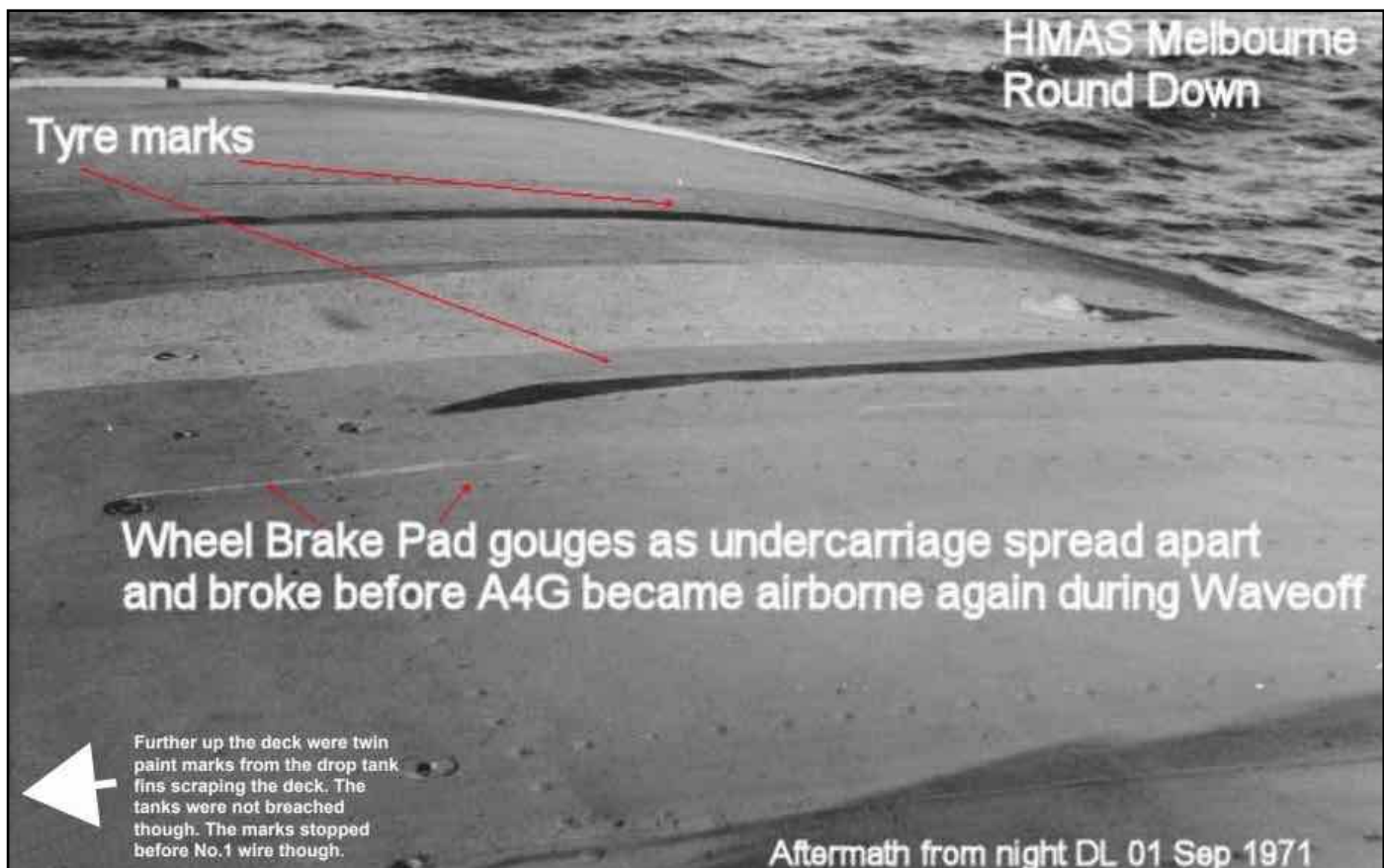
At this time of the year the westerlies (winds) are howling and it is freezing at Nowra. Not a good time for a swim. By 1 September I had 38 day DLs and 22 cats by day — the minimum experience (later changed to a larger requirement) to go out by night. As I say the first hook up Touch & Go was good enough; so I guess the second (also hook up) was fortunate in that had the hook been down — I may not have been here to tell you all this. The hook would have tried to rip off some deck plates and then it would have been goodnight. It is probably obvious that lots of good things occurred to help me survive that night — apart from being silly enough to hit the ramp in the first place. Believe me it was not my intention to do so. Rather than go into details which require lots of explanation I'll just tell the story as it comes.

My memory of this approach as it started to go bad is pretty much burnt into my brain. So if this is describing "having the daylight's frightened out of me" then you are correct.

As the ball (orange ball between line of green datum lights) started to drop rapidly as I was very close to Touch Down, I could see with my mind's eye that a series of bad events were unfolding. I had started high so had reduced power to get back to the glideslope. This is a pretty average start for a night DL from a Carrier Controlled Approach (GCA from the ship). But being inexperienced the juggling then required to get back to the glideslope etc. is the key.

Meanwhile the deck is moving — which is not always dampened at every point by the gyro mirror. The LSO (a fellow A4 pilot especially trained and experienced) watches the movement of the deck and how it is synchronising with the aircraft approach. The LSO's judgement overrides all others when the aircraft is in the groove. He grades and debriefs us after our DLs.

On this night another LSO from the S2 Tracker squadron was being trained on the A4 approach. He was very experienced on S2s and A4s in the States but had little night experience (with A4s) here. Not that this is an issue; but I make the point that any



one accident is a combination of factors. In this case I can only take full responsibility ‘fully’ for not making a better approach; or whatever it would take to keep me away from the ramp. So please don’t misconstrue this remark. I also make the point that most likely the weather/sea state was marginal for my experience (as a subsequent report stated); but one has to fly to the conditions and make one’s own judgements, this is the nature of military flying.

As the ball started to really accelerate down, I was already powering up to a lot of RPM, as I had decided that it was “a ball of wax” and I was ‘out-of-here’. Usually on a reasonable approach that, requires a bit of power, the LSO will smoothly say “Power”. Sometimes when it is urgent he will start shouting rapidly “Power, Power, POWER” followed rapidly by “Wave Off, Wave Off, WAVE OFF” (if necessary) which we have to obey — even if it just a drill (practice Wave off) on an otherwise good approach.

I didn’t get the “Power” but I got the “Wave Off” — this was how desperate my situation had become. Meanwhile I’m advancing the throttle to full power a microsecond earlier as I have decided for myself that the crap is in the fan. It takes an eternity for the A4 engine to develop full power (I’m joking) but it depends on the circumstances. Luckily the engine was accelerating already. Literally as the ball started to drop (from the deck moon lighting) I could see that I was going to go below the level of the deck (this surprised me tremendously). I was determined to make the best wave off I

could, to get the maximum out of the Optimum Angle of Attack (this is how we land, at the OAOA) to maximise my survival. This is SOP anyway.

[I was not “spotting the deck” and I was not seeing the deck or the mirror at this stage - after nose rotates up.] The A4 had gone slightly below the deck [just my impression] (mostly because the deck gave an out of synch pitch up — this happens) but it compounded my problem. If you ever saw or imagine the round down then it is possible to be climbing out of the hole — so to speak — and be going UP before striking the ramp. This is more or less what happened but the only real witnesses — the LSOs — were not enjoying the show.

Quite rightly they had both hit the safety net off the LSO’s station. This is a big loss of face for them and they never let me forget it. Can you imagine jumping off the deck into the black void hoping there was a net below? [They did know that their safety net was there but they cannot see it or the water at night.] I was safe and warm in my A4. [Subsequently the ship’s SE on deck that night has confirmed the ‘out of synch’ pitchup.] Of course there was an almighty bump as the wheels hit the deck and the U/C flexed so much that the inner brakes gouged the steel deck before the U/C broke — but I was going UP at the time — if I had still be going down it would have been all over. Thank goodness for relative motion etc.

The cockpit lit up with just about every warning light except the fire warning light, otherwise I would have ejected. Anyway I was concentrating on



**A4 885 after an arrested landing back at NAS Nowra on drop tanks.  
 Note: The collapsed main undercarriage after the ramp strike!**

doing my best OAO climbout and checking things out. The ship was frazzled enough to direct me “east” to NAS Nowra from “mother”, but I was heading west no matter what anyone said. The air controller had just been in the west off Perth so it was their habit to go east to land there.

I had minimum fuel but there was enough to fly at slow speed to NAS Nowra. Another A4 was airborne to take my slot for his own DLs. It was our senior pilot LEUT Barrie Daly, who had a look at the dangling U/C & suggested I keep it down. This is SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) along with carrying the empty drop tanks to use as emergency U/C in such damaged landings. I had thought about this, and read about similar landings in our flight safety literature, so catching the wire just past the threshold on Runway 26 back at NAS Nowra, was not a problem. There was no time for foaming the Runway, and as I arrested (with a much longer

to the edge of the R/W. —Phew— Spectators said they had never seen anyone run so fast. I agree.

Later I heard about what this event looked like from those on the ship. They said the shower of sparks was amazing, as the steel met steel. I was lucky also that the undercarriage leg stubs did not catch a wire, that would have been catastrophic. So I was airborne again before reaching the No. 1 wire. You can see on the photo how the black tyre marks start/stop and the gouges of the brake mechanism (inside the wheel) on the steel deck (before it broke), along with everything else related to the U/C. [Later I was told that paint marks from the drop tank fins were on the deck but painted over quickly - so I never saw them myself.]

*(Note: The full story of Phil’s Ramp Strike can be found on the FAAAA website [here](#) and Barry Diamond talks about landing an aircraft onboard [here](#)—for online subscribers only . . . . .Ed)*

## **Sponsors Needed for Minature Pilots and AvWO (Observers) Wings**

A couple of years ago CDRE Brett Dowsing organised the production of miniature Pilots & AvWO (Observers) Wings. This was not only for those who choose to wear them (for example, as a tie pin), but also for award to a Navy Pilot or an Aviation Warfare Officer on graduation from their respective courses.

Brett reports that the number of people who are prepared to sponsor a pin (or two) for a

young aviator graduate has dried up, and so we are appealing for people to step up and help.

You can see photos of the pins and read how to order them (or to be a Sponsor) on our website [here](#). Please help – it’s an inexpensive way of showing a young officer on the brink of his/her new and exciting career that we support them, and give them a sense of who the Fleet Air Arm Association is and the enduring link between the FAA past and present.

# Why was Brave Pilot Denied Higher Award? (The Story of Andy Perry)

Andy Perry at the controls of his Iroquois 'Huey' Helicopter in Vietnam in 1970



*Extract from Defence Honours and Awards  
Appeals Tribunal 6 March 2017*

Roger Harrison's letter in the December 2019 issue of *Slipstream*, in which he expressed concern as to why no RAN personnel were ever awarded VCs, prompted me to further examine the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal Report of 6 March 2017 located [here](#) (online subscribers only).  
.....Ed

On 21 February 2011, the Government requested that the Tribunal inquire into and report on unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour (the Valour Inquiry).

As part of the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, the Tribunal was directed to receive submissions from the public supporting recognition for those they felt worthy of higher recognition.

In June and July 2011 individual submissions were received from Commodore David Farthing, Captain Robert Ray and Commander Edward Bell. Their submissions sought higher recognition for SBLT Andrew Perry who served as a pilot with the RANHFV from December 1969 to October 1970.

He has been awarded a Mention in Despatches (MID) for his service in Vietnam on 17 December 1970 and received the United States Silver Star for his actions on 18 May 1970, and it is this latter action that is the subject of this review.

CDRE Farthing and CAPT Ray requested that SBLT Perry receive the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and CMDR Bell believed that he should receive the Victoria Cross for Australia (VC) for 'his night of outstanding bravery'.

On 14 March 2013 the Australian Government referred the submissions to the Chief of Navy (CN) through the Chief of the Defence Force for consideration. On 23 September 2014 CN, acting on advice contained in a review conducted by Doctor David Stevens of the Sea Power Centre – Australia (the Stevens' Review), referred the submissions to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence recommending that he 'consider directing the Tribunal to

review the nominations for SBLT Perry (RANHFV)'.

The Stevens Review indicated that 'an initial desk-top review of naval submissions had been completed and that the conclusion of the review team was that none [including SBLT Perry] contain new compelling evidence that would warrant a merited review'.

On 5 March 2015 the Parliamentary Secretary asked the Tribunal to conduct a 'further review of the submissions for SBLT Perry'. On 30 June 2015, the Tribunal wrote to the three officers regarding the Parliamentary Secretary's advice and asked whether they would like to proceed with a review of recognition and invited them to submit further information. All separately advised that they would like the review to proceed.

These three officers did their utmost to try to ensure Andy was properly recognised by Australia for his bravery. Unfortunately, they had blocks in their way especially from the Navy hierarchy.

CDRE Farthing's submission initially did not seek individual recognition for SBLT Perry. As the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the contingent, his submission was focused on group recognition.

In a subsequent letter to the Tribunal dated 13 July 2015 he stated his concerns with attempting to assess the merits of SBLT Perry against other members of his contingent of the RANHFV. He had placed SBLT Perry at position four below LEUT Clark who received a DFC, LEUT Marum who also received a DFC and SBLT Cooper who like Perry, received a MID.

CDRE Farthing went on to describe his 'dilemma' in having to explain the merits of these individuals.

On 8 September 2015 CDRE Farthing recanted his earlier position stating that his uncertainty regarding SBLT Perry 'has been motivated by my desire to do "justice for all"; which now appears to be impossible'. Having received the Stevens Review and associated papers, CDRE Farthing again wrote to the Tribunal on 30 November 2015 confirming his recommendation that SBLT Perry be awarded the DFC.

CDRE Farthing said that he went to see the Chief of Naval Staff – Vice Admiral Sir Victor Smith sometime after he returned from Vietnam 'because the jun-

ior officers in my Flight were not properly recognised'. He said that Admiral Smith told him:

*'they did what they were paid and trained to do'*

Bob Ray said that he 'discussed the issue of DFC/DSC with then Captain and later Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot' during a visit to Vietnam as 'the story Bob was getting was that the Naval hierarchy were not happy with the idea of Sub-Lieutenants wearing the DSC. He noted that 'at that time very few senior officers had medals at all and only limited combat experience.

He said that after his discussions with Captain Synnot, 'DFCs became the order of the day and in my opinion, every pilot in my Flight was entitled to a DFC but you can't overkill these things'! He said that the 'restricted understanding of the medals system was vague to him and those in command positions in the RANHFV' and that 'we simply didn't understand it'.

Ed Bell had a similar story which he recounted for the Appeals Tribunal and was able to corroborate David Farthing's evidence that the senior officers of the Navy at the time were negative towards junior officers being decorated. He described being 'summonsed to Canberra' sometime after Vietnam where he was rebuked by an Admiral for his 'attitude towards awards for gallantry'. He said that in his opinion the senior officers of the Navy were 'ignorant of what their people had done'.

He opined that many of these senior officers at the time 'had served with gallantry in the Second World War and he thinks in their hearts they didn't want to see junior officers get the sort of awards they had'. He said that he believed that 'favouritism came into the selection process'. He said the Admiral 'did not understand what was happening' and that the Admiral said to him:

*'We can't have all these junior officers running around with DFCs'*

One, therefore, can understand why there has been this attitude of the Navy hierarchy involvement as to why the Navy has never had an individual awarded the VC. This is even where the Brit-

ish Admiralty had final say in the VC nomination supposedly up until the introduction of the Australian Award system. Did recommendations stop before they reached the British Admiralty?

The Americans saw fit to award Andy Perry the 'Silver Star' (the highest bravery decoration awarded to a non-US citizen and ranked third in line to the Congressional Medal of Honour—the VC equivalent). All the Australian Government through the Defence Honours and Awards Directorate initially would grant was a 'Mention in Dispatches'. Later on Appeal the Defence Honours and Award Appeals Tribunal recommend to the Minister that:

*a. the decision by the Chief of Navy to refuse to recommend a higher gallantry award for SBLT Andrew Perry for his actions on 18 May 1970 with the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam be set aside; and*

*b. the Minister recommend to the Governor-General that SBLT Andrew Perry be awarded the Medal for Gallantry for acts of gallantry in action in hazardous circumstances as a Flight Leader at Binh Dai, South Vietnam on 18 May 1970.*

**The recommendations were accepted and the Official Secretary for the Governor-General advised Andy in a letter dated 21 August 2017. Andy Perry's reply to the Acting Secretary for the Governor-General is below.**

**The full story of Andy's bravery and the American Citation will appear in the June issue . . . Ed**

Andy Perry  
P.O Box 159  
Franklin 7113

15 June 2018

Mr P Singer MVO  
Acting Secretary to the Governor General

RE: Award of Medal for Gallantry

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter regarding the award of the Medal for Gallantry.

It took 25 years for the Australian Government to allow me to receive my American Silver Star Award, and 48 years for any recognition from the Australian Government.

I have nothing against the offered Medal for Gallantry however the words used to describe the Binh Dai battle deny the facts, and are not in parity to the Silver Star citation I received or reflect the words spoken by VADM Archie Clemens (CINCPACFLT) during the presentation on board the USS Blue Ridge 13 April 1995.

To accept this medal would be to disregard history which would not only be insulting to me but disrespectful to the legacy of the serviceman whose lives were lost on that bloody day in Binh Dai on the 18th of May 1970.

I am therefore unable to accept the Medal for Gallantry.

Yours sincerely



Andy Perry

# RAN Trains its First Landing Signals Officers (LSOs) to Handle the A4G Skyhawk and S2E Tracker

By *Graham Quick*

About November 1967 a group of CS2F pilots that had just spent approximately 12 months in Canada based at HMCS *Shearwater* Halifax Nova Scotia, moved to VS 41 Squadron at Navy North Island San Diego California USA for further flying training on the S2E Tracker manufactured by Grumman in the United States. This aircraft had been selected as the replacement for the Gannet.

In that group we had Lieutenant Paul Hamon (all ranks extant at 1967) along with Trevor Peck, Ross Dunhill and myself. After a couple of months flying training it was decided that we would operate the new aircraft (S2E and the A4G) onto HMAS



*Graham Quick on the LSO platform with the 'pickle switch' in the right hand and radio in the left, waving an aircraft down to a trap*

*Melbourne* using a Landing Signals Officer (LSO) just as the US Navy had been doing for some time.

The original LSO platform on HMAS *Melbourne* had been removed as the Gannets and Sea Venoms used a Mirror Control Officer (MCO) as this was the method used by the Royal Navy. The

subsequent training of LSOs required much more effort and input, as the responsibilities and powers of the LSO were far greater than the responsibilities and powers of the MCO.

The call was made to the current group of pilots to indicate if any of us were interested in doing this duty. Lieutenant Paul Hamon had already accepted the slot of Carrier Air Group LSO and I indicated that I should like to do LSO training also.

In San Diego the VS41 Squadron LSO was Lieutenant Ben Hallowell. Ben took us under his wing for the training. On 18th January 1968 I did my first ten Carrier Landings with



*A 'Batsman' (the old type LSO) waving his bats which produced specific signals to the landing pilot onboard HMAS Sydney during the Korean War*



Ben aboard the USS *Bennington* CVS-20 off Los Angeles. After that qualification many hours, days, weeks and months were spent observing gun LSOs in action with all kinds of aircraft before we got a go at being LSOs in fairly benign conditions. The controlling LSO is said to be 'Waving'. I guess this term originated in "the good old days" when Paddles or the Batsman (The LSO) used a couple of high vis bats to give signals to the landing pilot.

Sorry about the number of terms, but part of a LSOs job, is to first learn the unique language.

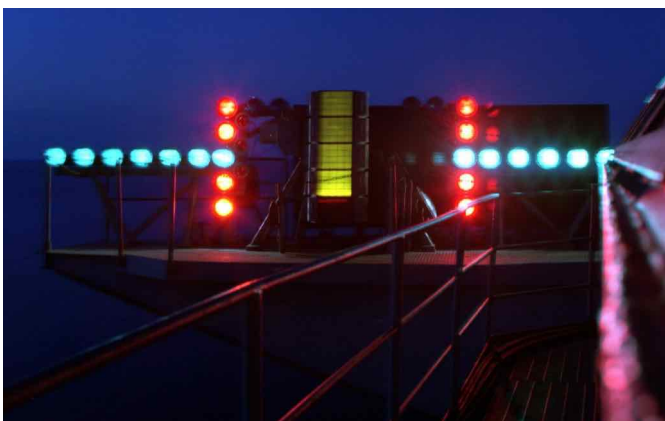
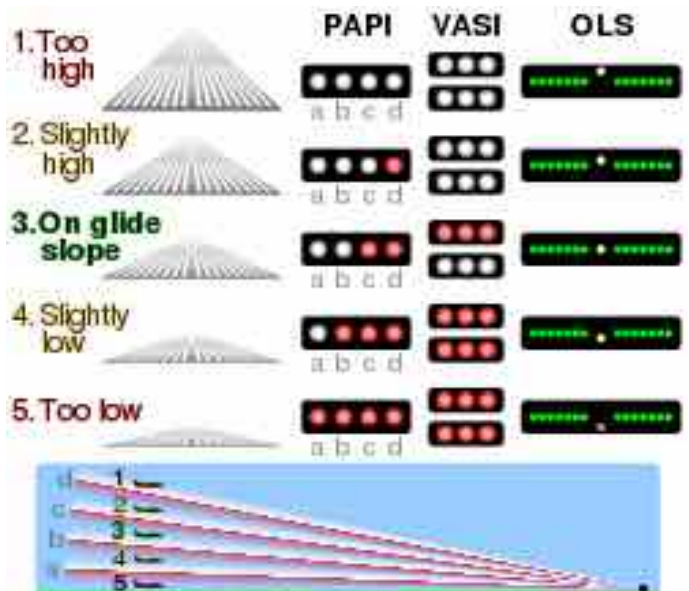
One should not use "the good old days" as Carrier Landing were significantly more dangerous in the past than they are now. Most modern jets can auto land on an aircraft carrier now but we had no such thing available to us. The pilot always manually flew the aircraft onto the deck. The hardware and software used has improved greatly also. The mirror has been replaced by the Improved Optical Landing System (IOLS) which incorporates a Fresnel lens and the LSO uses a Pickle Switch to send light signals to the landing pilot. The pilot and LSO are also connected via UHF radio. The straight deck has been replaced with the angled deck which allows aircraft to go around (Bolter) if they should miss catching an arresting wire and also allowed for touch and go landing with the arresting hook selected up.

The Fresnel lens was created by Augustin-Jean Fresnel it allows a flat beam of light to be projected from a light weight lens. It was originally used in light houses, however the properties of the lens make it ideal for aircraft carrier operations because it is light weight which means that it is easy to sta-



**Peter James waving an A4G Skyhawk for 'a touch and go' aboard HMAS Melbourne (note the hook up)**

bilize this allows compensation for ship movement (pitch, roll and heave). The flat beam allows the lens to be positioned over the side of the ship mostly out of the way of aircraft operations and it can be tilted to compensate for hook to ramp clearance as the aircraft comes over the round down. By way of comparison a mirror is heavy and reflects light, cannot be easily stabilised, must be raised or lowered to



**A Carriers Improved Optical Landing System on the left with the relevant signals to the pilot on the far right**



**Larry Mills at NAS Cabanas where LSO/FCLP training took place. Very hot and tropical. Pith helmet was purchased from the squadron for \$2. Very original, 1943 stamped inside. (Larry was an LSO 1976 -1981, the last 2 years as CAG LSO )**

get a hook to ramp clearance and cannot be operated from below deck level as the whole unit must be raised or lowered to adjust hook to ramp clearance.

During our operations on HMAS Melbourne we had a Mirror Landing System and a backup MOVLAS (Manually Operated Visual Landing System). The MOVLAS was designed by Lieutenant Paul Hamon in conjunction with Mr Bob Garing an electrical engineer officer. It would only be used if the mirror was damaged or became unserviceable, I do not recall ever having to use it in anger but we did do some trials with it to prove its usability and to give us some practice with a manually operated display.

Part of the LSO's gear was a pickle switch which would be used to give a cut signal to piston engine aircraft, these were green lights on the mirror, and a wave off button which caused red lights to flash on the mirror to indicate that the pilot should immediately wave off.

### **Trained Sailor Designated the 'Talker'**

There was a foul deck light on the LSO platform which let the LSO know that the deck was not ready for an aircraft landing, red for foul and green for clear deck. A trained sailor designated 'the talker' would assist the LSO constantly calling foul deck or clear deck as the case may be, and he would keep a record of the comments the LSO made about the approach just flown. The comments made by the LSO was a proactive safety measure used to debrief pilots and prevent bad habits from forming.

LSOs mostly operate with a trainee doing the waving and a more senior LSO looking out for aircraft line up and the deck status.

As mentioned on a modern Aircraft Carrier the ILOS incorporates the Fresnel Lens which shows the pilot a round orange ball of light, when the ball is lined up with two green bars of light either side of the ball the pilot is flying on the glide slope. The orange ball of light is only part of a flat beam of light projected in space. Because the ship is generally constantly moving the glide slope is stabilised in space so that the pilot sees what he/she needs to see to be on slope. As the ship also moves up and down vertically (pitch and heave) the hook to ramp clearance changes during the approach. Most modern jets operate with about 4.8 meters clear-

ance, if it drops to about 3.0 meters they stop flying.

From the USN LSO Manual : Recovery operations shall not be conducted under static mistrim conditions which would result in hook-to-ramp clearances of less than 10 feet for a normal pendant recovery or 8 feet for a barricade recovery.

### **Prediction Indicator**

As we had a mirror which was only point stabilised the pilot sees a constantly moving image and the hook to ramp distance for most operations was about 2.4 meters. How do the LSOs know when the predicted hook to ramp clearance as the aircraft crosses the ramp is too low? On a modern Carrier they have a small radar coupled with the ships gyros and a computing system that predicts the hook to ramp clearance as the aircraft reaches the ramp and this is displayed on a prediction indicator on the LSO platform. On HMAS Melbourne it was simply a guess, no radar, no stabilised in space glide slope, no prediction indicator and a prayer or two. A lot of my American friends thought that we were crazy to operate with such low tolerance, however, in comparison with other eras in the life of our carrier we had incredible success with the landings.

All of these innovations have resulted in a safer environment for carrier operations, indeed the primary purpose of having a LSO is to improve safety. One must remember that the LSO does not have the aircraft controls in their hands, they can only let the captain of the aircraft know what they think he/she should do to keep it safe. During my time in the

Navy no Grumman Tracker Aircraft was lost due to a landing accident/incident and one A4 aircraft hit the round down but was not lost and was back in service in a short time. In the work up for the Korean War without any of the modern equipment and shocking weather conditions it is reported that ten landing accidents occurred in ten days. We operated for years with thousands of landings with no fatalities and very few accidents or incidents. In 2019 the US Navy reported no landing accidents for the twelve months and given the many thousands of landings that they would do it is a remarkable achievement.

Subsequent to those first couple of LSOs being trained all of the pilots that did operational training with the US Navy did LSO training as well as flying training, so a constant supply of LSOs was available for operations from that time on. One of the downsides to being a LSO is that at least one of them has to be on the ship at all times while flying takes place. In the case of the Tracker two LSOs would share the one crew. Therefore LSOs would only get half of the flying that other crews did. Most pilots would rather be flying than being stuck on the deck.

#### **Peter James Reflects on his time as an LSO**

*I was asked in 1969 if I wanted to become an LSO and agreed as it meant returning to VS-41 for the training. Keith Johnson was selected from the A4 pilots and he proceeded to NAS Jacksonville in Florida while I went back to NAS North Island in San Diego in January of 1970. We had only been in the US for a couple of months before we received signals requesting our earliest return as HMAS Melbourne was intending to sail in March for the SEATO exercise.*

*We spent 3 weeks in Hong Kong having the ship painted then proceeded across the Sea of Japan to Osaka for Expo 70. Due to sea fog we were not able to fly during this transit and the entire Air Group ran out of deck landing recency. We then had to proceed via USNAS Cubi Point in the Philippines to complete FCLP (Field Carrier Landing Practice) prior to deck requalification.*

*After I completed my FCLP I switched places with Graham Quick at the end of the runway and was told that I would be relieved by either Paul Hamon or Keith Johnson. This did not happen for what ever reason and I remember getting very badly sunburnt!*

*While I was the controlling LSO the entire airwing of the USS Ranger disembarked (obviously having some respite from operations in the Gulf of Tonkin). All the aircraft "called the ball" on base and although I had never seen most of the aircraft types as an LSO I did prevent an F4 from landing short with an obviously needed power call. Another F4 blew a tyre and ran off the runway just prior to stopping. Overall some of the worst arrivals I had witnessed but then again I had not been operating in a war zone for many months!*

*Due to the difficulty of training LSOs within the FAA, all pilots on exchange with the USN were required to return LSO trained. Of course this became more difficult when the USN replaced the S2 with the S3 and the A4 with the A7, although adding an additional type was a much shorter training time than the initial qualification.*

*I thoroughly enjoyed my time as an LSO: there was a lot of job satisfaction particularly on dark nights in poor weather and a moving deck outside of a suitable diversion when that last aircraft traps aboard. Of course the downside, I lost a lot of personal flying due to the shortage of LSOs in those early days.*

(LSO training can be seen [here](#) for online subscribers in particular terms used and explanation of the Mirror Landing System that was in HMAS Melbourne. The thrust of the LSO explanation is by a Captain USN and starts about 1:50 minute in.) Landing on USS Nimitz in rough seas in the Pacific is [here](#) (for online subscribers only). LSOs become involved around the 2:36 minute mark.

### **First RAN S2E and A4G Landings on RN Ships**

**Just a reminder to let those who are unaware know that our first carrier landings with our new S2E's and A4G's were on HMS Eagle and HMS Hermes around 68/69.**

816 Sqn hosted the AEW Gannets from Hermes and 805 Sqn hosted the Vixens and Buccaneers. Following a night requalification exercise for their air group one of the Gannets suffered a hydraulic failure after landing back at NAS Nowra and ended up running into the side of H hangar. The aircraft was extensively damaged, all the blades on both props were reduced to only a few inches long, the double mamba engines were pushed off their blocks and despite pieces of shrapnel being found at the other end of the hangar none of the 12 816/851 Trackers were damaged!

In the early days we did not employ the "cut pass" technique for the Tracker. This was initially considered a "safer" method due to our low hook to ramp clearance. We soon found out that our boarding rate was fairly dismal due to our low wing loading and ground effect over the deck causing many "BOW's" (flat over the wires) and resulting bolters. Reverting to the tried and true USN "cut pass" method fixed this and I believe we achieved an enviable boarding rate on Melbourne with the Tracker.

*Peter (GT) James*

# 1951 Advertisement Seeking Aircrew for the Fleet Air Arm



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\*

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A limited number of permanent commissions may be awarded to officers who have completed 5 years of commissioned service.

Note : If under 21 consent of parent (father if alive), or legal guardian is required.

Selected applicants will undergo a period of recruit and pre-flight training followed by flying training. Those qualifying will be selected for either Pilot or Observer duties promoted to the rank of acting Sub-Lieutenant and commence a short-service Commission of 7 years. Subject to requirements these officers may elect to serve for a further term of 4 years.

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For full details of pay, allowances, gratuities and other aspects of Naval Service, call or write to the Naval Recruiting Officer; see address below or send the coupon.

**Recruiting Officer, Combined Recruiting Centre GPO Box 1234 Capital City.**

**Please send me information on the Naval Aviation Branch.**

**NAME**

**ADDRESS**

# How DVA use 'Report of Proceedings' and Personal Records in Processing Claims

By Paul Shiels



Some ex-servicemen have been known to exaggerate their service within the Australian Defence Forces and for one or more reasons expect the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to accept their claim.

Unbeknown to many of those ex-servicemen that make claims, DVA has access to the respective service Personal Records and also to Official Records of events. In the case of the RAN, some of these official records are documented in 'Report of Proceedings'.

The Australian War Memorial has created a series of 'Reports of Proceeding' (ROPs) initiated by the units of the RAN from the Second World War until the 1970s [here](#) (for online subscribers only). ROPs are the official record of activities of the RAN's commands, vessels, shore establishments, administrative authorities and installations.

ROPs are normally submitted by a Commanding Officer to their superior, and then on to Navy Office. Reporting is required in both wartime and peacetime. In some cases, especially in the early years of the Second World War, reports were in the form of 'war diaries', or in earlier decades they were sometimes referred to as 'Letters of Proceedings'.

There are ROPs from five general navy groups, Commands; Vessels and groups of vessels (e.g. squadrons, flotillas etc), Administrative authorities (e.g. NOICs, Flag Officer Commanding etc), Shore establishments and Miscellaneous. The types of information found in ROPs typically include events of 'historical significance'; dates of arrival at, and departure from places visited; details of ships in company; visits and official calls; outstanding incidents; details of operations, and the state of the ship and its company. Some ROPs may also include photographs.

ROPs post the 1970's can be accessed through the National Archives currently up to 1989. Personal Records can be obtained from the National Archives.

Two examples come to mind. In the first instance while serving as a Pensions Officer for an Ex-Service Organisation a former Petty Officer approached me with a disability he concluded was due to war service in Vietnam. He said he served in HMAS *Parramatta* during the Vietnam War where the ship's action resulted in the disability. My only recollection of this ship's service in the Vietnam War was as an escort to HMAS *Sydney*. While his personal records substanti-

ated he had served in HMAS *Parramatta* in 1968 at the time of escorting HMAS *Sydney*, the ROP reflected that no action had taken place and that the ship was only in Vung Tau harbour for a few hours.

Example 2: The Philippine Government announced in August 1994 its decision to award the Philippine Liberation Medal to Australian veterans who participated in the liberation of the Philippines during World War II between the period 17 October 1944 and 2 September 1945. HMAS *Hobart* rendezvoused with the British Pacific Fleet at Manus in February 1945 and the following month comprised part of the covering and support group for the Allied landing at Cebu, Philippines, on 26 March 1945.

Unfortunately, whilst the claim that the particular former rating (sailor) made that he'd served in HMAS *Hobart* was correct, his Personal Records reflected he was not aboard between the dates listed for the liberation of the Philippines.

Some ex-naval personnel even go as far to say that they were involved in 'Secret Operations' which were never to be disclosed. You can be assured that all 'Secret Operations' are disclosed in official documents, including ROPs. One example is that of HMAS *Hobart(II)* ROP for June 1968 [here](#) (safe to open) whilst the ship was in the Vietnam War. The ROP has since been de-classified.

## Navy Humour

*"They say that the Chief Petty Officer married her because her aunt left her a fortune.*

*He hotly denies it and says he would have married her whoever left her the fortune".*

\* \* \* \*

*As the naval couple wander over the Nowra golf course, she asks her husband that if she should die before him, would he still go to their golf club on week-ends?*

*"Oh, I suppose so, dear"*

*"I guess after a time, you would take up with another partner?"*

*"Oh, I suppose so dear."*

*"Tell me Charles, would you let her use my clubs?"*

*"No dear, she's left-handed."*

\* \* \* \* \*

*The young naval airman had just parked his old car on Junction Street when a policeman approached him and asked if he had reported the accident.*

# Outback Flying Delivering Mail

By Luke Shiels

Ceased around the early 2000's, what was believed to be the 'World's Longest Mail Run' saw the service replaced by several aircraft undertaking different parts of the original route. Previously one aircraft undertook the trip, landing at 28 small towns and outback stations over two days delivering Mail, Freight and Passengers over the vast distances of the 'Outback'. Some of the stations were as large as 62,000 square miles and the airstrip often many kilometres away from the homestead. Normally the airstrip was only visible when sighting the windsock as the airstrip was the same colour as the adjacent 'red dust and gibber stones' on the ground.

The aircraft used for these outback trips were either the Aero Commander (AC500) or the Chief-tain (PA-31) depending on mail and passenger loads; and serviceability of aircraft. The Bandeirante (EMB-110) was used on the flight from Adelaide to Port Augusta and return. All three pilots based in Port Augusta were qualified on all three types of aircraft. This included myself in command of the EMB-110, PA-31 and AC500 with the other two pilots in command of the PA-31 and AC500; and as First Officer of the EMB-110.

**World's Longest mail run**

"Mail Box" at Roseberth Station, Queensland

Join the "World's Longest Mail Run" for a unique outback experience.

**ASA**  
AIRLINES OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
PTY. LIMITED  
A.C.N. 007 937239

**Adelaide Airport**  
Adelaide Airport, South Australia 5050  
Telephone: (08) 8234 3000  
Facsimile: (08) 8234 4864

**Port Augusta Airport**  
Postal Address: P.O. Box 1756,  
Port Augusta S.A. 5700  
Telephone: (08) 8642 3100  
Facsimile: (08) 8641 0860

Passengers were mainly overseas tourists that primarily took the trip to see Australia's outback in the short period of two days. These overseas tourists were mainly from Europe and North America following the reading of articles in overseas newspapers. One such trip included tourists from the town of 'Condom' in France. Another that of a British Airways Concorde pilot who undertook the trip on behalf of the BA Concorde pilots who had heard about the 'World's Longest Mail Run' and wanted a first-hand brief on it from one of their own pilots who had experienced the trip.

On another flight, on landing at an outback station one of the passengers sat down on the aircraft's step and said that he didn't feel well. He subsequently had a massive heart attack and died. The pilot then contacted Brisbane Flight Service on HF and sought advice from the Queensland Police. The Police informed him to fly the body to the nearest town (Bedourie) where it could be held in refrigeration. The body was placed in the aisle in the aircraft and then



**An Airlines of SA Bandeirante (EMB-110) aircraft used to fly Passengers from Adelaide to Port Augusta and return to join the 'mail run'**



***Delivering Mail to Innamincka. 'Big Mick' is sitting on the aircraft step while some passengers look on.***

flown to Bedourie. The pilot of that flight along with myself are now B737NG Captains.

Christmas time became an event in itself, dressing up as 'Father Christmas' and being observed by outback children as 'Father Christmas' taxi-ing the aircraft in, stopping it and then alighting first from the aircraft. This was followed by delivering presents, some of which were large items such as bicycles to the waiting children before embarking on the aircraft for the children to see 'Father Christmas' taxi out and take-off.

The original mail run was operated by Augusta Airways, later renamed Airlines of South Australia (after a previously named airline that was operated and owned by Ansett Australia flying F27 aircraft). The outback mail run with paying passengers was classed by CASA as a Regular Public Transport (RPT) Flight that operated under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). However, on short hops between stations it was flown under Visual Flight Rules (VFR). On occasions the flight would encounter 'dust storms' but in the main, conditions were CAVOK with the odd low cloud and rain in winter and thunderstorms in the summer months. Navigation was primarily by Dead-Reckoning (DR) with only a few aids (NDBs/VORs) on route. GPS was in its infancy and didn't work most of the time. So we were inclined not to use it.

The packaged tour ex Adelaide departed every Friday at 9.00 am on Airlines of South Australia Flight RT005. On arrival in Port Augusta, the passengers would embark on a minibus tour of the Flying Doctor Base and Southern Flinders Ranges, returning for a light lunch in Port Augusta before visiting the acclaimed Wadlata Outback Centre [here](#) (for online subscribers only). Pas-

sengers would then overnight in Port Augusta before leaving the next day on the 'mail run'.

Saturday morning began with 8.30am departure, first stopping at Leigh Creek to pick up mail and food as well as fuel. (Birdsville and Boulia at that time were drum refuelling. Both later changed to fuel bowsers).

Then it was off via the Strezleki Track dropping off and collecting mail at Moolawatana Station in the Northern Flinders Ranges. Flying next to off load and pick up mail at Merty Merty Station then onto Innamincka Station flying over Coopers Creek.

One interesting feature was the characters one would meet on the 'mail run' at each of the stops. At Innamincka there was 'Big Mick' whose claim to fame was fishing for 'yabbies' in Coopers Creek which was more like a river than a creek. On one occasion he mentioned how he caught 1,000 'yabbies', some as nearly as big as crayfish, but were all confiscated by a Fisheries Inspector! "So, much for selling them to the locals", he said.

From Innamincka we would fly into Queensland and onto Durham Downs passing over the 'Dig Tree' (made famous by Burke and Wills) [here](#) (online subscribers only). Then the flight would proceed onto Arrabury Station. It was at Arrabury that I broke down one Boxing Day in 52C deg heat. The station at the time was abandoned with only a caretaker. With the airstrip nearly 15 kms away, I had to radio Brisbane Flight Service on HF to inform my Chief Pilot. So it was then that I had to sit under the wing in the soring heat until the caretaker arrived. Whilst staying at Arrabury, I managed to look through the buildings and found it resembled a



***An outback airstrip with windsock and a lone airport building—an outback 'dunny'***



**At Bedourie with from left: Luke (pilot), Jean (Mayor of Bedourie) and a passenger**

ghost town. Next day a company aircraft arrived with a LAME onboard, landed and before too long I was on my way to Birdsville.

Going back to the mail run, the next stop as mentioned above was Birdsville and a chance to refresh at the famous Birdsville Pub. We flew to Birdsville to drop mail off for the southbound run along the Birdsville track in SA and take on mail for Boulia and those places southbound in Qld. As we were only in Birdsville for a short time we picked up packed lunches for the passengers then flew directly to Boulia the last stop of the day where passengers remained overnight ready the next morning to commence the journey southward.

At the Boulia Hotel where the pilots were accommodated it was not uncommon to see 'Ringers' from nearby stations end up in a bar-room brawl similarly to what one would see in 'wild west' movies with bottles being broken and chairs being thrown. On one occasion, I was walking back to my room (separate) from the hotel complex where a brawl between different 'Ringers' was in full swing. Suddenly, a voice piped up: 'Part way for the Mail Man' (a common name we were called by all on this run instead of 'pilot') and unexpectedly the two sides parted as if 'Moses' was parting the sea to let me

through to my room to be greeted by a large cane toad in the toilet! Luckily, the passengers stayed at a motel in another part of Boulia.

I did have another interesting episode just before my descent into Boulia when I had a catastrophic engine failure. I called the Pub on the UHF and spoke to the barmaid who was serving drinks at the time for her to contact Police, Fire and Ambulance. She asked if I could keep the aircraft in the air for another 10-15 minutes until the Emergency vehicles arrived at Boulia airport? Anyone associated with aviation would know my reply without the 'expletives'! I landed just as the Emergency ve-

hicles came through the airport gates.

On Sunday morning an 8.30am departure was made for the return sector via the Birdsville Track. Stopping seventeen times firstly at Sandringham, and Kamaran Downs stations before arriving at Bedourie (famous for the camping Bedourie oven). It was at Bedourie that the Mayor (Jean) would often come out with the outgoing mail and collect incoming mail. Jean's interesting story was that she was a caucasian woman born in Maree SA who walked from Maree to Bedourie QLD to join the 'Women's Land Army' in WWII. She did the walk without any shoes and first wore shoes when she was 18.



**Passengers mingle around at Mungerannie as mail is collected. The van driven by the 10 year old girl sits behind the aircraft**



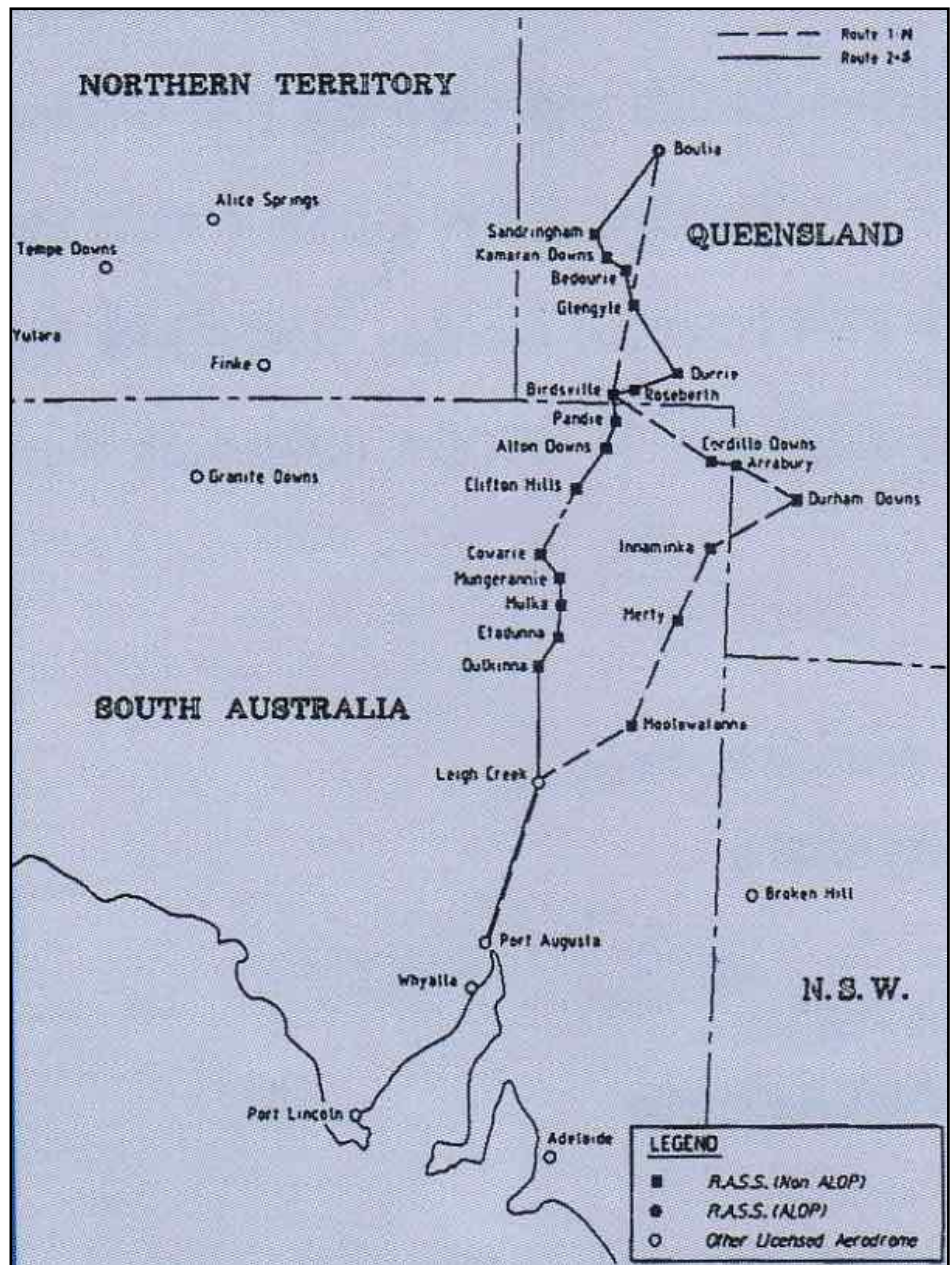
On from Bedourie our next stop was Glengyle and Durrie stations, before landing at Birdsville for a hot lunch.

After lunch at the Birdsville Pub the 'mail run' landed at Roseberth station located just 12km from Birdsville. The reason we landed there was because the station subsidised the 'mail run' and felt because of this the mail aircraft should also deliver mail there.

The 'Mail Run' then continued back into South Australia and onto Pandie, Alton Downs, Clifton Hills, Cowarie, Mungerannie, Mulka, Etadunna and Dulkaninna Stations. It then landed back at Leigh Creek, the final stop before returning to Port Augusta arriving at approximately 5.30 pm.

It was at Mungerannie after shutting down that I first spotted her. A 10-year-old girl 'known as Mouse' driving her father's ute with blocks of wood on the pedals and her small figure peering through the steering wheel with hands raised above on it. For air-conditioning, the father said a flap was cut in the roof to scoop up air! Mungerannie was a pub and roadhouse located in the middle of nowhere on the Birdsville Track.

Passengers overnighted at Port Augusta before retuning on Monday morning to Adelaide departing Port Augusta at 7.30am.



**Map of the "World's Longest Mail Run"**

Overall the experience flying RPT services in the outback was to provide me with a good background in the development of my aviation career as a commercial and later as an airline pilot.

*Luke Shiels born in Nowra NSW is the son of the Editor and a B737NG Captain with an Australian Airline. He joined his current employer in 2004 and undertook command training on the B737NG in early 2008. Prior to this he was a BAe-146 pilot (FO) where he flew with many ex-RAN A4 and S2 pilots. His previous experience had been as a pilot flying SAAB SF340 (FO) aircraft. He first employer was August Airways (later Airlines of South Australia) on a casual basis flying Senecas. This company then employed him full-time, converting him first to the EMB-110 (FO) and later to command the PA-31, AC500 and EMB-110.*

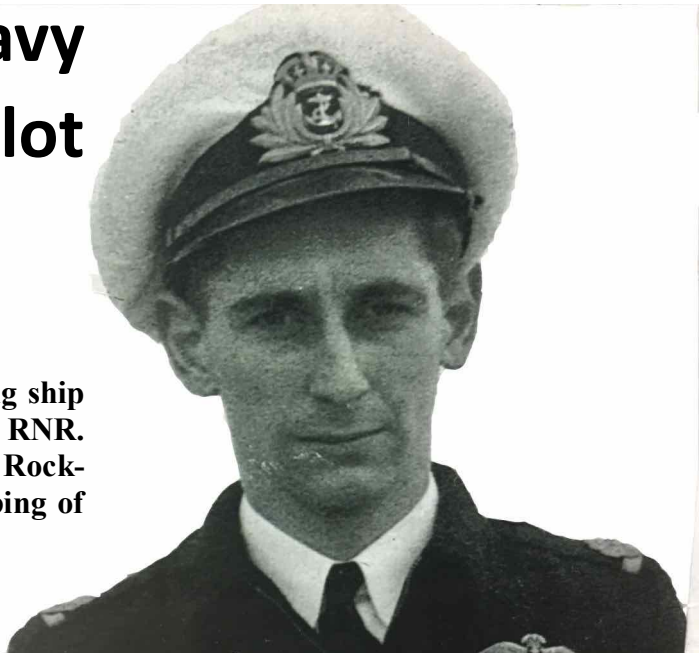
## June Edition

**Closing date for Articles & Reports  
to be into the Editor no later than**

**1 June 2020**

# My Life as a Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Pilot

By Basil Nash



I joined HMS *Conway* the Merchant Navy training ship at Bangor North Wales in May 1941, as a cadet RNR. This was just after the *Conway* had moved from Rockferry, Liverpool to Bangor as a result of the bombing of Liverpool.

In 1942 a number of cadets asked Captain Goddard if we could have an Air Class, as we all wanted to fly. To his credit he agreed. We did meteorology, theory of flight, air navigation, and aircraft recognition instead of the usual naval subjects. We were able to visit Saro who had an aircraft maintenance service at Beaumaris while Coastal Command were at Menai bridge with Sunderlands and Catalinas. We also had the opportunity to visit airfields at RAF Lanroost and Mona and did some flying. At this time there were active boat building yards at Bangor turning out 'ML', 'MGB', 'MTBs' and air/sea rescue boats all fitted with twin Merlin engines.

I left the *Conway* in December 1943 and went to Royal Naval College, Greenwich in early January 1944 as a Midshipman RNR under the beady eye of Commander Marsden. The fire raids on London started immediately and they continued for three months. We had fire -watching duties on the roof each night and we slept in the tunnels under the college. It was not unusual to be surrounded by fire for

360 degrees and the shrapnel came down like rain (it was much more dangerous than bombs). There was a large rocket battery at Blackheath and you could feel the air suction as they fired them off 100 at a time. Apart from one stick of bombs, which damaged the Wrens quarters and King Charles block, we did not get hit.

On completion of the 'knife and fork' course we went to Chatham for a month to do gunnery and watched thousands of aircraft coming and going in the softening up process before D-Day.

All the sea going bodies went to join their ships before D-Day and Russell Ferguson and I went to HMS *Macaw* at Bootle in Cumberland, to await transit to Canada for flying training. Ferguson and I were joined by Peter Lubbock and Alan Blenkinsop, both Lieutenants RN.

We sailed in the old, four funnelled '*Aquitania*' from Gourock with a destroyer escort for a day and then were on our own. We travelled south down by the Azores and eight days later arrived in New York.

There were about 500 naval and RAF personnel on board and 3000 German and Italian prisoners of war so we also had to do guard duty. In New York, being just after D-Day, four berth bunks were taken on board and about 12,000 Americans returned to Europe in the *Aquitania*. From New York we went by train to Moncton New Brunswick, Canada to the transit camp. As Pensacola would not take officer trainees we divided into Canadian and American contingents.

We started at Victoriaville in Quebec for two weeks ground school and then to St. Eugene for elementary training on Fairchild Cornells at



*HMS Conway at anchor after moving to Bangor*

13 EFTS RCAF. After two months and 70 hours dual and solo flying we moved to Kingston, Ontario in October to No 14 STFS RAF, which later became 31 SFFS RCAF, flying Harvards. My instructor was Flying Officer Whightman, a large, solid bush pilot and an excellent instructor. We worked an eleven-day fortnight and were able to spend various weekends in Watertown and Syracuse across the international bridge in Northern New York State and at Christmas had a week's skiing in the Laurentians Mountains above Montreal.

Having had a beautiful Fall the snow came down in December with about eight feet of snow. The authorities simply put the rollers in the runways and away we went. No brakes worked but at least the cabin heater did. We had two weeks air firing at Gananoque both air to ground and air to air targets towed by Lysanders and after 120 hours flying came the great day in February 1945 when we got our wings.

The average temperature from January to March when we left was 30 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Even the great lakes froze and I saw Niagara Falls while on leave in Buffalo in March 1945 when you could see no water flowing.

While at Kingston other Naval Officers on other courses included Orr Ewing, Trussler, Hammett and Robathan, most of whom died in various accidents by 1950, and this included Lubbock who was killed in a Firebrand at Donibristle and Blenkinsop in a Sea Hornet off Lossiemouth.

Back to UK from Halifax to Liverpool in the



**A Harvard from 31 SFFS RCAF**

'Louis Pasteur' in March 1945 unescorted and met by aircraft off UK — 26 knots all the way, about 6000 on board, so two meals a day. After leave it was back to Bootle and then another two weeks at Greenwich. From Greenwich I went to No. 9 AFU at RAF Errol near Dundee and did a further 30 hours on Harvards and Masters before doing a week's instrument flying course at Hinstock in Shropshire on Oxfords. After leave it was back to Bootle where we were all allocated Squadrons. Russell Ferguson went to 805 Sqn Seafires at Machrihanish and I went to 1837 being formed at Eglington in Northern Ireland on Corsairs. The CO was LCDR Tebble and Senior Pilot Dowell. About thirty pilots consisting of four Brits, one Rhodesian, two Canadians and lots of ex-RNZAF who transferred to Fleet Air Arm as RNZNVR.

As a Sub-Lieutenant RNR I was the odd man out so I became the Stores Officer with 30 Corsairs on my slop-chit. As training I was sent to Worthy Downs for a week's stores course and while there had the opportunity to fly a Tiger Moth for the first time enjoyed a few happy hours. I found my first solo on the Corsair very frightening because it dropped about 500 feet when you put the undercarriage down so having survived that, we continued a steady squadron work-up.

On the 1 August we transferred to Nutts Corner (now Belfast Airport). Immediately the atom bomb was dropped the war ended and all the Squadrons



**Royal Navy Corsair lined up for take-off on a grass airfield**

were disbanded and the aircraft being 'lease lend' were taken by carrier to the middle of the Atlantic and pushed over the side, otherwise they would have to have been paid for. Our sister squadron in Northern Ireland was 892 under the command of Major Jack Armour Royal Marines with 15 Avengers, among their pilots was a New Zealander Viv Maisey who later joined me at 790 Squadron at Dale. If the war had continued, we would have moved to Australia on 15 September and then worked up for 3 months before joining a carrier to take part in the invasion of Japan.

We were all sent on indefinite leave and I put in for a four-year short service commission. In the meantime, in November 1945 I was offered the job of being a guinea pig for tropical heat experiments at the psychological labs in Cambridge. This means sleeping under tropical heat conditions in the lab and every time you turned over or moved it was measured. Cambridge in winter is a very cold place so sleeping at 80 degrees Fahrenheit and being out during the day at freezing point was quite a contrast. The countryside being so flat the wind comes straight from the North Pole. My co guinea-pig was Peter Grant, a Rhodesian ex RAFVR who was with me in 1837 squadron, who went on to become a doctor in Tanganyika and Tasmania. We persuaded the Admiralty to let us fly with 22 EFTS the RAF training unit at Marshals of Cambridge so were able to fly their Tiger Moths during the day and had fun annoying the army types that they were teaching to fly.



**Seafire with wings folded on dispersal of a RNAS**

In December 1945 I was granted a four-year short service commission so became Sub-Lieutenant (A) RN. After Christmas leave, I was appointed to No 1 Ferrypool at Henstridge, Somerset. At this time, I had very limited experience having only flown Tiger Moths, Harvards, Masters, Martinets and Corsairs so I was converted to Seafire III.

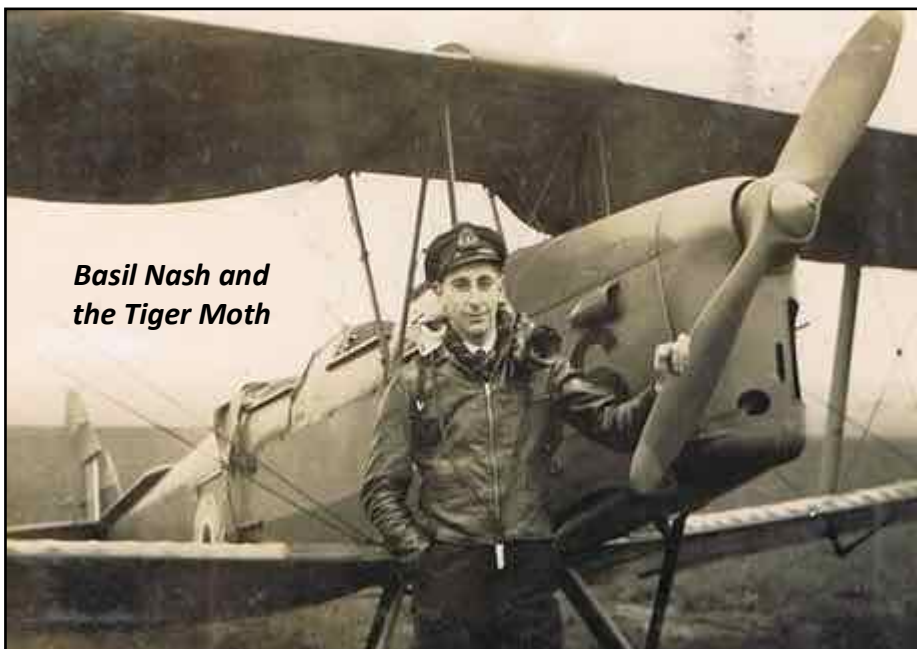
In the meantime, I had applied for the twin conversion course and was sent in April to 762 Squadron RNAS Ford and after 20 hours on Oxfords I started on Mosquitoes. My instructor was John Brister, a RAF Flight Lieutenant on exchange to the Fleet Air Arm. A total of 20 hours on Mosquitoes III and VI completed the course. The course included night flying and single engine landings. The Squadron CO was Lieutenant Commander Joe Mills RN.

After qualifying some of the course pilots went to 811 squadron on Mosquitoes at Ford and I was posted to 790 Squadron at Dale in South Wales (HMS *Goldcrest*) and it was our job to train RN navigators to become fighter direction officers.

At the time 790 had Seafire IIIs and some Mosquito 25s with Packard Merlins which weren't a patch on the Rolls engines. The sister squadron on the station was 784 with Fireflies with ASH Radar so they had Observers as well. The CO was Major Jack Armour RM.

The CO of 790 was LCDR Spike O'Sullivan RN who had spent a number of years in Stalag Luft 3. He was, I believe, a 'forger'. Ron Farell a LEUT (A) RNVR was senior pilot.

Our job was to fly for the radar school at Kete, next door.



**Basil Nash and the Tiger Moth**



**Fleet Air Arm Pilots in various forms from left to right:  
a SBLT (A) RNR (Chain stripes), a LEUT (A) RN (straight stripes)  
and a LEUT (A) RNVR (Wavy Stripes).**

**The RAN had a similar system in WWII with RANR 'Seagoing'  
(Chain stripes), RAN (straight stripes) and RANVR (Wavy stripes).  
RANR 'Seagoing' was equivalent to the RNR - (i.e. Merchant Navy  
on service to the RN/RAN)**

The controller at Kete was that well known character LCDR 'Bogey' Knight RN who after the war ran the Battersea Dogs Home for many years. Two Seafires in pairs or one Mosquito worked as fighter or bomber, the fighter being directed by radar from Kete onto the bomber. We generally flew at about 10,000 feet and with a weather factor of 0.5, there were a lot of cancellations owing to weather conditions. We flew between South Wales and Ireland over the sea and we all flew with May Wests, and Dinghies and did water training.

Fortunately, during the eighteen months that I was there no one ever fell 'into the drink'. In addition to Kete we used to do exercises with HMS *Boxer* and HMS *Roebuck* who provided the practical sea training to the Navigator Directors.

With the Mosquitos we could take a passenger so where possible, fighter direction trainees flew with us for air experience and I flew one day by chance with my cousin Derek Howes (LEUT RN) who was later Curator of the Observatory at Greenwich and wrote a lot of books on Navigation. Otherwise, we flew the air-mechanics, wrens or anyone who wanted a ride.

Being Navy, we used to fly carrier circuits in all single engine aircraft but at 1000 feet not 300, which meant a final approach on a turn, so you could see where you were going. In a twin

we did a similar circuit, with a straight final (approach. All landings done with plenty of power and a three-point landing.

The RAF used to wheel land Mosquitos at about 140 knots. We used to come over the fence at 97 knots with lots of power -and drop them on the end on three points (they stalled at 93knots), I found the easiest way to do this was to get 10 feet, chop the throttles, haul back on the stick and do a high speed stall, you hit the ground and stopped there! In a Mosquito it was a matter of honour when landing at RAF airfields that you plonked on the end of a runway and turned off at the first intersection; it certainly put the fear of God up the RAF controllers who had never seen this done.

By August 1946 the Mosquito 25s had been phased out and were replaced by 6s, which were a much better aircraft with more power. Later we had Sea Mosquito 33's with Ash bombs and four bladed airscrews, which were the nicest of all the Mosquitos to fly.

In February and March 1947, we had snow blizzards which restricted flying and created awful housekeeping problems at Dale. Like Devon, all the roads around Dale were sunken roads so they filled with snow. No road access was possible from Haverford West so food had to be brought in by boat from Milford Haven and landed at Dale Beach. It was manhandled up the back road by all station staff and this went on for about four weeks.

While we were at Dale, Brawdy near St. David's was taken over by the Navy and was made into a Master Airfield and 811 Squadron came there with Mosquitos. In July LCDR Gardner became Squadron CO after the death of LCDR Muir MacKensie



**A Sea Mosquito with wings folded**



**Royal Navy Dominie aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm**

who was killed in an accident and Percy Cole became Senior Pilot.

By August we had a fun weekend when LCDR Sproule came with his glider circus consisting of two Grunau Babies and a Kranich two-seater. I had to go to Gosport to collect a Tiger Moth for towing. The trip took me two hours and twenty minutes for the 150-mile trip back to Dale via St. Athans. We were lucky that the weather was perfect but no thermals and only one pilot managed to stay "up". We all had a go at towing and I had six flights in the Grunau. I found gliding a delightful sport. Life continued until December 1947 when Dale closed and all aircraft and personnel were transferred to Culdrose.

Dale was a station many miles from anywhere with some 500 sailors and 250 Wrens. It had to make its own entertainment with weekly dances and the cinema, with trips to Haverford West being the only town nearby. We did some sailing and there were good walks around the cliffs. We were fortunate with the Captains, the first being Captain J. J. Jeffries RN and later Captain Martin Evans RN both whom were sensible enough to run the station on a fairly loose lead. We all worked very hard and succeeded in what we were there for. This was particularly relevant because many personnel were RNVR and awaiting demob.

One amusing episode was the arrival of CMDR Courage RN (Nutty) in mid-1948 who came from one of the battleships. We all rode bicycles because no petrol and wore Irvin jackets in the mess etc and were generally fairly scruffy. Nutty did not appreciate this bit and tried busily to bring everyone to battleship standards for about two months. After that

he was sensible enough to realise that he was wasting his time and let us get on as we always had. Dale was in fact a very happy ship. While at Dale, I had converted onto Fireflies, Ansons and also Seafire XV's.

I applied to become a maintenance test pilot and so reported to Yeovilton (HMS Heron) on 4 January 1948. CMDR Phil Illingworth RN was the CO of 700 Squadron and CAPT Eddis RN was the station Captain.

We used five aircraft types on course: Seafire XV, Firefly, Barracuda, Sea Otter and Harvard. I always did think the Sea Otter was a horrible thing to fly. Shortly after, as I was a qualified Mosquito pilot

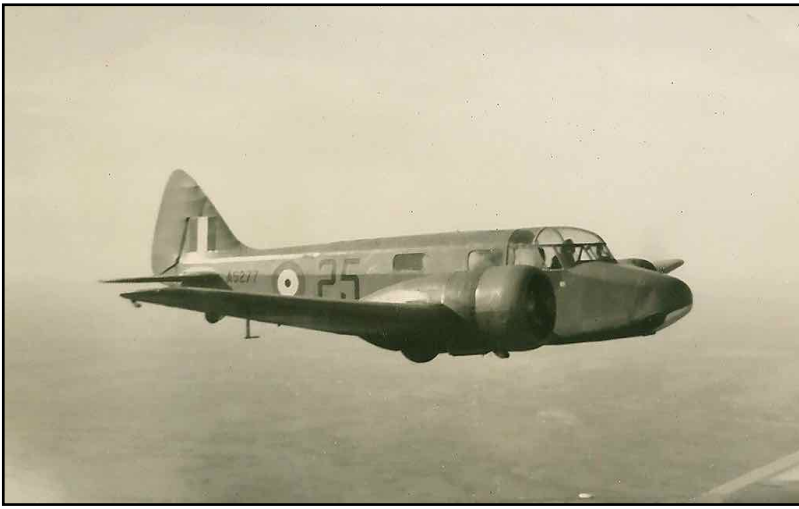
I had to collect the prototype Mosquito 33 LR 387 from Worthy Downs which was closing. Also, I flew various new aircraft at Stretton: Dominie, Sea Fury, Firefly IV's and V's, Sea Hornet XX's Firebrand, Firefly trainer (dual control), Auster V and Seafire 47, the latter had a Scimitar Laminar finer wing contraprops - you had a six inch clearance with the prop tips on take-off so you didn't hold the tail too high.

In 1949 the Mosquito 39 conversion started through with the big glass nose designed for target towing, most of which got ferried out to Malta for the Fleet Requirements Unit. This version was without doubt the most horrible Mosquito ever designed.

One amusing incident was in June 1948 while David Parker and I were checking out the Sea Furies to go with the fleet carriers accompanying the battleship HMS Vanguard with Princess Elizabeth and Phillip Mountbatten to South Africa. I had a temporary cut-out of the engine as I closed the throttle on the downwind leg prior to landing. Da-



**Sea Otter landing aboard an aircraft-carrier**



***An Oxford aircraft in flight***

vid Parker had the same thing on a different aircraft the following day so we grounded the lot (two squadrons worth in all). As this was about week before the carriers were due to sail you can imagine the 'furore'. We were accused of everything from anarchy downward and were instructed to rescind the grounding. We stood our ground and fortunately CAPT Myers (bless him) backed us, as our argument was that it was peacetime and that we saw no reason that some poor SBLT should fall into the drink and be killed because we hadn't done our job properly. Little men from Hawkers, Bristol, Claude Hobson and various accident investigators descended on Stretton and worked solidly for two days. There was in fact a fault in the carburettor and a modification was done so we were exonerated but not thanked!

Accident-wise I was fairly lucky. I was landing at Heston near London Airport in a Mosquito and had a faulty airspeed indicator. Through lack of experience I did not realise this, and stalled out at about 60 feet, the aircraft hit the ground flat and the undercarriage came through the wing and it stopped in about five yards. My passenger had a bottle of scotch in his suitcase and it didn't even break.

The second one was bad luck because I decided at the last minute to do an overshoot while landing at Stretton in a Mosquito and as I opened up, the port engine seized. The undercarriage was down with full flaps. I was at about 100 feet so there was little chance of getting up to a safety speed of 160 knots. I poured on the live engine and whipped up the undercarriage and some flap but immediately decided it would not work so I cut all power, sat and waited. The aircraft hit the ground about two miles up the road in a ploughed field, going through various trees and it stopped after about 500 yards. The propellers had come off, one engine lost, the wing tips

and the tail had all parted company. All that was left was the cabin section and one engine. My passenger was Air Mechanic Hancock and when the plane stopped, we bailed out quickly in case of fire. Looking at the wreck afterwards we realised how lucky we had been, because from bruising and shock, we were unhurt. I remember holding on to the control column for all I was worth to discover when we stopped that it wasn't attached to anything at the bottom. The engine had done three hours since major overhaul.

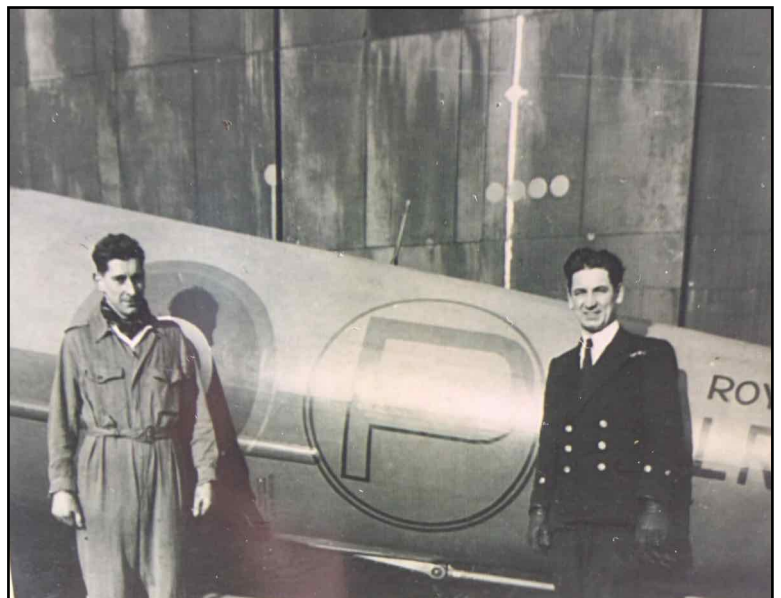
There was bleedway in the casting design to take oil the high pressure to the low-pressure oil systems. It had become

blocked and no one noticed, so the low pressure oil system seized up through lack of lubrication. I was exonerated from blame.

In November 1949 my four year short service was completed so I left the Navy having accumulated just over 1000 hours flying time in 19 types of aircraft. This covered the end of the war and post-war era, being the end of the propeller period. **After six years in the FAA I think I hold a record. I never went to sea in a ship flying the White Ensign, I never landed on a Carrier and I didn't even go on the Gosport Ferry!**

*(Basil Nash, now in his 90's has contributed before to Slipstream, in the June 2019, and repeated in December with his article on flying the Tiger Moth).*

*"Flying Restored Mosquito KA114 at Ardmore Airport NZ in 2012" can be seen [here](#). The other is of a Royal Navy Instructional film made in 1946 on deck landing the Corsair. It can be found [here](#)."* ..



***Basil Nash and a Chief Maintainer alongside prototype Mosquito 33 LR flown from Worthy Downs***



## Letters to the Editor



### Mystery Object in December 2018 issue of 'FlyBy'

Readers of the FAAAA's little newsletter "FlyBy" might recall the article in the December 2018 edition that presented the following 'mystery photograph' and asked what the device in the yellow circle was for. The answer was that it was a Sea



Venom's radar installed on Melbourne's superstructure for the purpose of conducting Ship Controlled Approaches for the Venoms and Gannets she carried at the time. I got some very good (and accurate) replies to the Mystery Photo, but I thought readers might like to know why/how the radar got to be there, when one might reasonably have expected the ship's own radars to be

used for such approaches.

The story can be found in the book "Fly Navy – The View From The Cockpit 1945-2000". The particular excerpt of interest was written by Lieutenant Bob McCulloch RN who was a Venom Observer at the time, which can be found at page 78 of that publication. I quote:

"I was airborne on 9 August (1957) in a pair of Sea Venoms NF22s doing practice radar intercepts, when towards the end of the sortie the weather suddenly closed in. The only way of getting back on deck was going to be a primitive Carrier Controlled Approach (CCA), Air Traffic Controllers using the ship's radar to talk us down until we were close enough to see the deck and land.

Such was the theory. In fact none of the ships' radars was designed for such precise close-in work on a small fast-moving target, and not surprisingly we saw nothing of the ship on our first approach. Next time around, after a large missed approach pattern that consumed a lot of fuel, in our eagerness to get aboard we probably went a little lower than we should, for very shortly after the controller advised 'Look ahead for the mirror...' *Eagle's* 150ft

grey superstructure, bristling with aerials, flashed past our left wing-tip in the fog. It should have been on the other side. Half the line-up error and we would have flown square into the back of the funnel. I made our feelings known to the controller as pilot Bunny Warren powered us back up into the cloud and all aircraft were then ordered to divert and land ashore.

RNAS Lossiemouth being closed for runway repairs, RAF Kinloss was equipped with precision Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) radar with which to talk us down on to their enormous runway.

Such was the theory. In practice Kinloss GCA operators were used to dealing with one or two slow-moving Shackleton maritime patrol aircraft movements a day. Eight or ten Navy jets, short of fuel, all clamouring for immediate landing in marginal weather, were another kettle of fish and things did not go smoothly. As far as Bunny and I were concerned, our fuel gauge told us we could not afford to take our turn in the Kinloss 'stack'. Could base was 200 feet and getting worse. it was a matter of *saue qui peut* [every man for himself]. We would do our own approach. Using the sharp coastal echo on my AI-21 radar, I conned Bunny down below cloud over the sea and into Findhorn Bay towards the western end of Kinloss's east-west runway. But we shot past it without seeing anything until in desperation Bunny called for the runway control van to fire some Very lights. Seeing the glow of one of these, he did a very tight circuit, extremely low, and just managed to put the aircraft on the concrete before the engine stopped. Both tyres burst on touch-down. Our momentum was just enough to get us off the runway to let the others land, which they all did safely.

Back in *Eagle* the incident had stimulated the Boss of 894 Squadron, one Peter Young, and Senior Observer Ox Moore, into a bit of lateral thinking. Given that ship's radars were useless for getting aircraft down in really bad weather, and given that the AI-21 radar in the Sea Venom was specifically designed to track small contacts, which it did very well - pick up range was about ten miles and Observers regularly conned pilots in as close as 100 feet behind the 'enemy' for a gun attack, close enough to see the red-hot turning ring up the victim's jet pipe - why not try using AI-21 for Carrier Controlled Approaches?

And so it was soon after that we got back aboard I found myself sitting in a Venom parked facing aft





just behind the island, using my radar to 'talk down' a couple of Venoms on simulated CCAs. This was done by passing headings to steer to keep them on the ship's extended centreline, and also their range to touchdown and the height they should be at every half mile as they descended. Giles Carne piloted the first Venom on the first AI-21 controlled CCA. The rest, as they say, was history.

The trial was such an obvious success that during *Eagle's* next short maintenance period at Rosyth a special 'shack' was built just aft of the island to house an AI-21 radar with all associated communications, and very soon after this hasty 'modification' was fitted in all RN fixed-wing carriers - the first dedicated CCA radar. Deservedly, Peter Young and Ox Moore were awarded a Herbert Lott Trust Fund prize for their contribution to Naval Aviation.

The only drawback was that to begin with we Venom observers, as well as flying, also made up the CCA talk down roster, making for some very long days and nights. The only operational problem I recall was trying to sort out with the ship's Direction Officers, who fed the aircraft into our approach pattern using their own big radars, which 'blip' was which. It was fairly important to be sure you were talking to the right one. Do I hear somebody say, 'What's new?'

By the time the modification was fitted to RN carriers, the brand-new HMAS *Melbourne* was already in Oz (she arrived in JB to unload her Gannets and Venoms on 7th May 1956). The radar device only appears in photos of *Melbourne* between about '59 and '63, so we think it may have been installed during her August 1959 refit. In any event, I thought it was an interesting bit of history your readers might be interested in - and thanks to Ron Marsh for pointing me in the right direction.

Marcus Peake.  
Webmaster FAAAA

PS for those interested in acquiring the above book, the details are: Title: "Fly Navy - The View From The Cockpit 1945-2000" Edited by LCDR Charles Manning AFC RN, and published by Pen & Sword 2000 (ISBN 0850527325, 9780850527322). It's available for purchase from various sources (Amazon etc) both electronically and in hard copy if you search the web. Alternatively, if you don't mind buying your books second hand, you might try 'World of Books Australia'. Great selection and half the price!

*(HMAS Melbourne changed the Carrier Controlled Approach Radar to the SPN-35 Quadraradar for Precision Approaches with the introduction of the USN A4G and S2E aircraft. A photo of this radar is seen behind the LSO and above 'Flyco' at the stern of the island on Page 8 in a dome. This radar was gyro stabilised and offered both Glideslope and Centreline information. The pilot would 'call the ball' when visual at about a 1/4 NM and the LSO who was on the same frequency as the CCA Controller would take over. . . . . Ed)*

### Happy with New Version of Slipstream

BZ on the best Slipstream in my memory!

You've made a real difference ... the quality of your work shows through each article, the superior layout and the choice of articles - well done!

They'll be those that miss the jokes and I'm sure there will be room for the odd one, but well done on lifting the quality of the entire product.

'Cridge'  
David Collingridge

### Photos Arrived Late

I have just had a quick look at the December issue and well done on another great job.

You did send me an email letting me know that our photos arrived late and missed this issue.

I did think that our Victoria Division news would have made it as I emailed it on 2 December.

Did you not receive it or was I a day too late?

Mal Smith  
Secretary Victoria Division

*(Vic news was in Dec issue on Page 29. Unfortunately pics didn't arrive by post until 7 Dec, six days after copy closed. They're in this issue. . . . Ed)*

### 100th Anniversary (last year) of the London to Darwin Air Race Deferred

. . . and 50 years ago, 81 aircraft took part in a re-enactment of the race. Among the contenders was an RAN Fleet Air Arm team: Dusty King, Peter Coulson, Peter Plunkett-Cole and Peter McNair. Peter Coulson has offered to tell the story of this re-enactment for Slipstream and would appreciate input from the other team members.

This Article due to be published in this issue has been deferred and is expected to now appear in the June issue. The Air Race website is [here](#).

# Why the MV *Jeparit* became HMAS *Jeparit*?



*MV Jeparit, later commissioned HMAS Jeparit on a logistical support voyage to Vietnam*

In June 1966 the Australian National Line (ANL) cargo vessel MV *Jeparit* sailed on her first voyage to Vietnam. The vessel had been chartered by the Department of Shipping and Transport to carry supplies for the Australian forces engaged in the Vietnam War. However, after five voyages some merchant seamen refused to man the vessel. To overcome this difficulty, crew members who were prepared to continue to serve in *Jeparit* were supplemented by an RAN detachment.

In February 1967, the Seamen's Union of Australia decided that it would not provide crews to *Jeparit* or *Boonaroo* for further voyages to South Vietnam. Its members left both ships and were subsequently sacked by ANL. This move was not initially supported by most of the union movement, and members of other maritime unions remained on board. While *Boonaroo* was commissioned into the RAN for a single voyage in March 1967, *Jeparit* remained under ANL control but was given a mixed crew of 20 merchant seamen and a RAN detachment of an officer and 17 sailors.

This party of of sailors, under the command of Lieutenant Robert Winter RAN, embarked in *Jeparit*, under the command of her Merchant Navy master, Captain J. W. Nelson. The vessel then sailed from Sydney for Vietnam on 11 March 1967. Later OICs of the detachment included Lieutenant C. G. McCracken RAN, an SD Direction Officer and

Lieutenant M. Tiffen RAN, an SD AV Air Traffic Control Officer.

There was disquiet when it was discovered that the civilians' received a small "war bonus" during time spent in the war zone while the RAN personnel received only the usual allowances. This was resolved by paying the difference into the RAN Relief Trust Fund.

*Jeparit* remained the occasional focus of anti-war attention between 1967 and 1969. The ship was targeted by a small protest in December 1967 and re-loading in Sydney was occasionally disrupted by union activity. These protests came to a head in November 1969, when the Waterside Workers Federation refused to load or unload *Jeparit*.

After a period of negotiation, the ship was commissioned into the RAN as HMAS *Jeparit* on 11 December 1969. The ship's master was appointed *Jeparit's* Commanding Officer the next day and received a commission in the rank of Commander RANVR but the ship continued to operate with a mixed civilian-naval crew. The civilians primarily being the Deck Officers and Engineers.

This did not end the ship's problems, however, as RAN personnel assigned to load the ship were initially slow and a building contractor had to be engaged to load tanks onto *Jeparit* after civilian crane operators refused their services.

HMAS *Jeparit* continued to travel between Australia and Vietnam as a ship of the RAN. These

voyages were generally uneventful, and the mixed crew continued to work together well and there were few further labour relations problems at Australian ports.

*Jeparit* completed her final trip on 11 March 1972 and decommissioned on 15 March 1972, after which the ship was returned to ANL. She received the battle honour "Vietnam 1969-72" in recognition of her service while a commissioned vessel.

*Jeparit* continued in ANL service until September 1979 when she was sold to the Greek company Massis Charity Shipping and renamed *Pleias*. She was renamed *Celestial I* in 1984, *Maria M.* in 1987 and *Sea Coral* in 1988. *Jeparit* was broken up in early 1993.



*HMAS Boonaroo flying the White Ensign*



*HMAS Boonaroo loading ammunition and supplies before departure for Vietnam*

## ***HMAS Boonaroo First Ship Commissioned Under the 'New' White Ensign***

**In 1966 the Australian National Line cargo vessel MV *Boonaroo* was chartered by the Department of Shipping and Transport to carry supplies for the Australian Defence Forces engaged in the Vietnam War.**

As MV *Boonaroo* she completed one round trip to Vietnam, departing on 17 May 1966 and returning on 8 July 1966 under the 'Red Ensign'.

HMAS *Boonaroo* commissioned into the RAN on 1 March 1967, after members of the Seaman's Union refused to sail the Australian National Line ship to Vietnam. *Boonaroo* was the first ship of the RAN to commission under the 'New' Australian White Ensign. Commander P. R. Burnett RAN assumed command. Except for two engineer officers with RANR commissions, the crew was replaced by RAN officers and sailors.

*Boonaroo* proceeded to Port Wilson, Victoria, on 3 March 1967 for loading of cargo. Loading was completed on 10 March and the ship cast off and proceeded to sea for the passage north. A fuelling stop was made at Cairns on 17 March.

*Boonaroo* entered the approaches to Cam Ranh Bay on 28 March and anchored in the inner harbour. United States Army personnel from the 24th Terminal Transport Battalion unloaded general cargo into barges. On 29 March the ship shifted berth to the Ammunition Pier where ammunition was unloaded by the 154th Terminal Transport Company.

The ship departed Cam Ranh Bay on 2 April and anchored that night at Cape St Jacques, Vung Tau, receiving stores by RAAF helicopter the following morning. The ship then departed for the return voyage to Australia via Singapore (5-6 April) and Darwin (12-20 April), and arrived in Sydney on 29 April.

*Boonaroo's* final voyage under the White Ensign began on 3 May 1967 when the ship departed Sydney for Melbourne. The ship berthed at No 11 North wharf, Melbourne, on 5 May and paid off from the RAN on 8 May 1967, being handed back to the Australian National Line. The ship had covered 10,655 miles during her period as a commissioned unit of the RAN.

# ***A 'Report of Proceedings' in Verse Creates an Admiral's Response in Verse!!***

M.V. JEPARIT,  
SYDNEY  
15<sup>th</sup> June 1968

Flag Officer in Charge,  
EAST AUSTRALIA AREA.

Copy to:- The Secretary, Australian Commonwealth Naval Board. (2)  
The Captain, H.M.A.S. KUTTABUL.

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## REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS – M.V.JEPARIT – NAVY VOYAGE No.10.

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APPENDICES: 1. DIARY OF EVENTS  
2. HOURS WORKED/STEAMING DISTANCES

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### GENERAL NARRATIVE.

The Master, the Mate and all of the crew,  
Cooks, stewards, greasers, and engineers too,  
Despite other differences, unanimously agree,  
That Friday's a bad day, to put to sea.

But, aversion or not, 'twas on that day,  
At 4P.M. May 10<sup>th</sup>., we left Walsh's Bay,  
Bound for the Vietnam port of Vung Tau,  
With as much mixed cargo, as holds would allow.

The route that was taken, was just as before,  
The diary attached, will give the full score,  
Sea was so gentle, the weather was hot,  
With fair wind behind, we arrived on the dot.

Unloading was faster, than it's ever been,  
And five days later we left the scene.  
Then a Singapore stop, for some shopping and fun,  
Departing next day, on our homeward run.

Headwinds impeded us, most of the way,  
Lengthening the voyage, by nearly a day,  
Making 36 days, till we greeted with cheers,  
The sighting of 'Our Bridge', and the usual pier.

### HEALTH

Onboard we treated, some minor infections,  
By reading the Medical Manual's directions,  
But, it tends to make the patient most nervous,  
To find the last chapter, is the burial service.

---

RECREATION. SEA.

To fill in the evenings, Oh! Goodness knows,  
How many dart games, and poor film shows,  
Tombola nights, tournaments, all formed the main  
Diversion indulged in, to keep us still sane.

VUNG TAU

The Army at darts, gave our boys a good thrashing,  
And to cap it right off, drank all our beer ration,  
But strangely enough, we had no feeling of shame,  
It's their party next trip, and we might do the same

MORALE, DISCIPLINE.

On morale and discipline, there are no complaints,  
The detachment as a whole, have been regular saints,  
The trouble with this, it makes a monotonous life,  
There are times when you long, for some trouble and strife.



C. G. McCracken.  
LEUT RSEX PR

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Office of the  
Flag Officer in Charge  
East Australia Area  
Garden Island NSW 2000

Lieutenant C. G. McCracken RAN,  
H.M.A.S. WATSON

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS — M.V. JEPARIT— NAVY VOYAGE NO. 10

Reference: R.I. Appendix 29A  
Enclosure: Your Poem (3 copies).

I have read your report,  
Of cruise number ten,  
How you sailed to Vietnam,  
And then back again.

The Board though merry,  
Are sometimes quite terse,  
To receive such reports,  
In poetry and verse.

So I needs must ask you,  
To take up your pen,  
And start—get McCracken!  
To do it again.

(Signed) W. Dovers  
A/REAR-ADMIRAL

# WA Activities

## Jan – Mar 2020

By Sharron Spargo

The beautiful words of Dorothea Mackellar in her evocative poem, 'My Country', come to mind as I write this today. The Eastern States are certainly experiencing everything this country has in the way of challenging weather while we in the West remain relatively unscathed; for now, at least.

Our AGM was held this month and we have retained our leadership unopposed. It would seem that our members realise we have the best people for the job and have expressed their gratitude for the work of Greg, Keith, Mike, Jim and Theo and the committee members who support them. Our meetings continue to be well attended and we occasionally welcome a visitor from the East and in December it was Geoff Dalglish. Geoff joined the navy as a fifteen-year-old Junior Recruit and became a Topman and headed to aircrew training. Geoff was on 57 pilots' course and the 257 pilots course graduated in early December and Geoff joined five other centurions and two double centurions in congratulating the two navy and eleven air force members who graduated.

Geoff took up the invitation (he had little choice) to give a potted autobiography of his very varied-FAA career which was well received as was his graciousness in being put on the spot. Geoff had been invited to catch up with old mates and enjoy a good



**A group of 'Geriatric Refugees' photographed at Rosie O'Grady's in Northbridge on Jan 19, 2020. Left to Right: Jack Suriano, John Brown, Keith Taylor, Don Buchanan, Jim Buchanan, Greg Kelson and Stuart Rawlinson.**

lunch and a few drinks but found himself centre stage.

Our members have expressed their reservations about the need for the online magazine 'FlyBy' which is seen to be in opposition to 'Slipstream'.

There has been some discussion here in the West that 'FlyBy' content has expanded while that of 'Slipstream' has shrunk. Jim Bush pointed out to Marcus Peak that in the article regarding the new Veterans Card, mistakes were made regarding cover for veterans and although the articles are well researched generally, many members were misinformed. The consensus is that more important articles are featured in 'FlyBy' while 'Slipstream' seems to be relegated to a supporting role.

There is no doubt that Paul Shiels is doing a great job as Editor, but the fear is that the hard copy version of 'Slipstream' will not survive and those members who are not on the internet will miss out. In the West there are 53 members out of 88 who still take the hard copy of 'Slipstream' and it's seen as a very important part of the communication between the states, especially for members here in the West. Although the magazines are published two months apart some members would like to see them merged but always retaining a hardcopy because as one member put it; 'It's much easier to take a hardcopy of 'Slipstream' into the dunny then it is to take a computer'!

Our Christmas lunch was held the week after our December meeting for the first time, which seemed to be a very popular



**Ian and Florence Henderson, Greg and Ann Kelson and Peter and Penny Feszur.**

change. We were once again looked after by Rosie O'Grady's and many members who can't attend on a regular basis swelled our numbers considerably. It was great to be able to offer our hospitality to two visiting couples; Ian and Florence Henderson and Peter and Penny Fesczur and we hope they'll join us again. It's fair to say that a great time was had by all and I'm pleased to report that the old sailors were on their best behaviour with no arrests reported.

Keith continues to represent the FAA at various ADSO meetings, with Unit and Kindred being held again in February. February also sees many of our members attending the HMAS Perth and USS Houston Memorial Regatta at the Netherlands Yacht Club. This annual event is an invitation for off beach dinghies, catamarans, keelboats, trailable cruisers, sports boats and multi-hulls to participate in six races throughout the afternoon in respect for the 352 Australian and 693 United States servicemen lost in the Battle of Sunda Strait on March 1st 1942. The Anglican Parish of Fremantle also hold a memorial service which is also attended by the FAA along with representatives of numerous ADSOs.

I have given my third talk to the 'Perth Stay Sharp' group of over fifty fives who have been fascinated to hear about the Fleet Air Arm, your history and current activities. The men and women I speak too have never heard of the FAA and are amazed to hear about this small branch. They are interested, enthusiastic and as one woman commented: 'mesmerised'! It's lovely to have the opportunity to spread the word and I'll continue to do so at any and every invitation.

### ***A Movie to Watch?***

For all you Tom Cruise fans and former A4 pilots, especially AWIs (then known as Air Warfare Instructors on fixed wing aircraft) this is the film for you—**Top Gun Maverick**, the second Top Gun movie using F-18 aircraft. It is to be released in Cinemas in June 2020! In the film, Tom Cruise is now a Captain USN and head instructor at the Air Weapons School, NAS Mirimar (notwithstanding the movie was filmed at another NAS). A trailer released in December 2019 can be seen [here](#) (online subscribers only) and for hard copy subscribers the URL is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHt1IbuYgJo>.

A USN F-18 Pilot describes the aircraft used; missiles used; aircraft manoeuvrers etc; and explains the close ups etc for filming [here](#) (online subscribers only). For Hard Copy subscribers the URL is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-KfFOHMeqs>.

## ***RANHFV Pilot Rescues Disabled Patrol Boat***



***Jim Buchanan unloading his pistol after his last flight in Vietnam***

James Collier Buchanan joined the RAN in October 1962 as an aircrew officer. He began his flight training in March 1963 and after qualifying as a pilot he was posted to HT 725 Squadron in February 1964.

Following several postings at sea and ashore, Buchanan was posted to the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV), arriving in the Republic of Vietnam in October 1970. There, he became the commander of the Second Lift Platoon, flying daily combat assault missions at the controls of a Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter in which he routinely came under heavy enemy fire.

On 4 December 1970 Buchanan performed an extraordinary act of flying skill while operating in the U Minh Forest area. While engaged in the medical evacuation of a wounded crew member from a South Vietnamese patrol boat the group came under heavy attack, with another patrol boat, 50 metres away, exploding following a direct hit from an enemy rocket. Realising that the boat with which he was operating was disabled and drifting towards the enemy-held shore he pressed the skids of his helicopter onto the deck of the vessel and manoeuvred his aircraft to push the boat to safety. All the while, his aircraft was receiving heavy automatic weapons and 82mm mortar fire. For his coolness, determination and courage under fire in the face of a determined enemy, Buchanan was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

# Seahawk 'Flying Display' Thrills Crowds in Canberra

By Dallas McMaugh and Photos

By Cameron Martin (Navy Daily)

Nearly 100,000 people gathered on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin on Saturday 14 March to enjoy the magnificent display that is Skyfire, a celebration of the Canberra region, people and community.

The skies above the lake were filled with firework and aerial displays and a highlight of the program was the winching display from 816 Squadron.

The Squadron operates the MH-60R Seahawk helicopter and Skyfire presented a great opportunity for the audience to see the RAN'S next generation submarine hunter and anti-surface warfare helicopter in action as it demonstrated a range of manoeuvres.

816 Operations Officer LCDR Marcelo Lagos had the challenging role of coordinating the many moving parts of this activity.

816 Squadron recently participated in Operation BUSHFIRE ASSIST 19-20 where the MH-60R Seahawk helicopters provided Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) through its sophisticated cameras and other sensors.

"Skyfire is a great opportunity to demonstrate the skills of the aircrew and strengths of the aircraft and I'm sure many would have left with an appreciation of the MH-60R and its capabilities." LCDR Lagos said

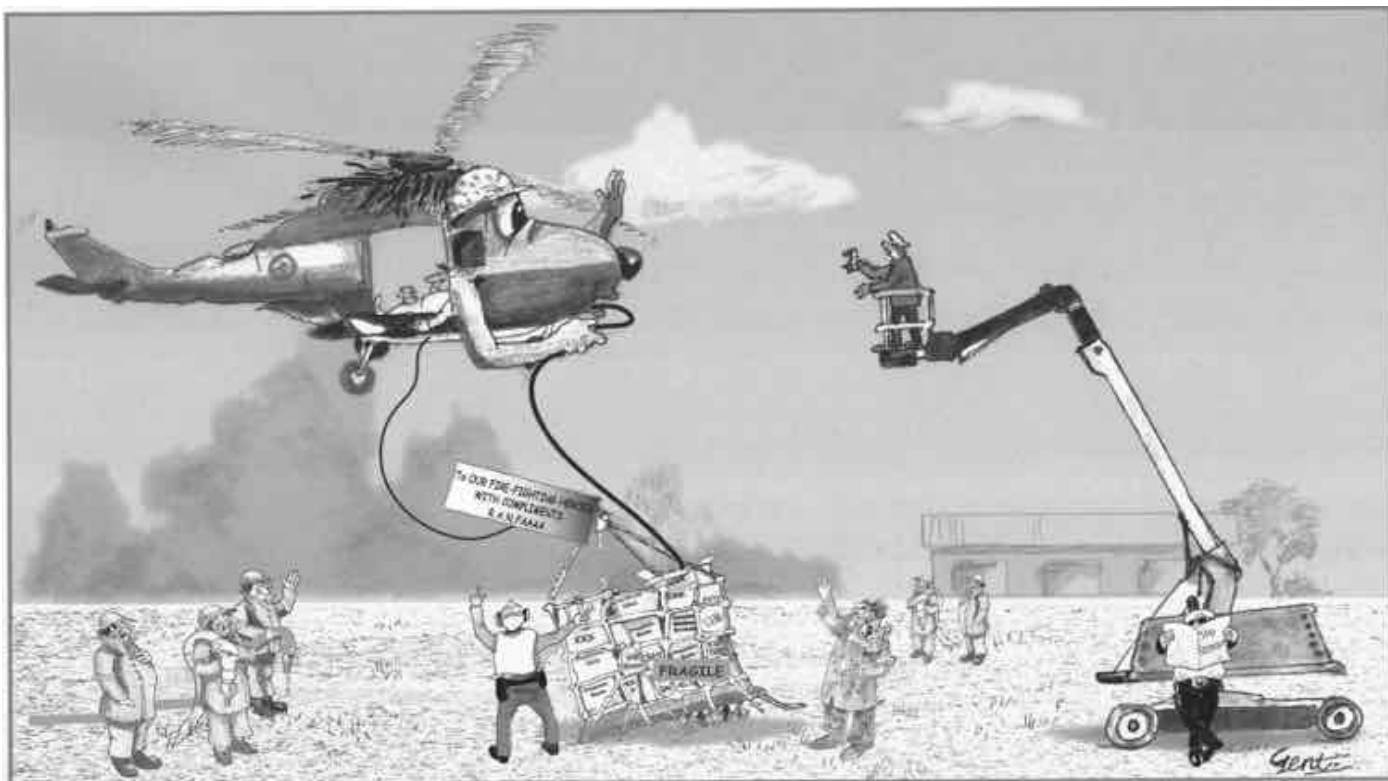
LCDR Eugene Cleary, the Seahawk's co-pilot, says he enjoyed the event and saw a lot of smiles on a lot of faces.

"Navy helicopters are always popular attractions and we always look forward to showing off exactly what the Seahawk can do - which is a lot!"

"There's a lot of work behind the scenes from many people including our Operations staff and maintainers, but it's all worth it if we get kids thinking "That's what I want to do when I grow up!" LCDR Cleary said.



**PO Aircrewman Blake Woolard the winchman for the winching demonstration held at Canberra**



"I have reason to believe you are drunk in charge of an airborne vehicle! Just blow in this please"





***Royal New Zealand Airforce MSH90 aircraft conducts deck landing qualifications on HMAS Adelaide during Operation Bushfire Assist 2020.***



***Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC looking at the bushfires in Eden while onboard an MRH-90 helicopter during a visit to HMAS Adelaide for an update on defence's assistance to the bushfire fighting and recovery efforts as part of Operation Bushfire Assist.***

# Victoria Holds AGM—Office Bearers Elected and Luncheon Photographs

Greetings to all members from the Victoria Division.

Sunday 2nd February our Annual General Meeting was held at the Mission to Seafarers. The election for office bearers went smoothly and the committee for 2020 is as follows.

**President:** Chris Fealy

**Vice President:** Scott Myers

**Secretary:** Mal Smith

**Treasurer:** Paul Thitchener

**Committee:**

Rob Gagnon

Ron Christie

John Champion

Ken Pryor

**Auditor:** George Self

ANZAC Day is our next get together and I was hoping to have details of our step off point and time by now. Major road and rail works are still disrupting our normal route and I think it will be similar to last year but will advise members as soon as possible. We regularly have some interstate visitors join us on ANZAC Day and any who are wishing to do so please contact me prior to the day and I can give them the details.

Our after march reunion will be at the Mission to Seafarers as per usual.

In my December members update I listed the dates for our 2020 meetings. Please note that the June date has changed to Sunday 14th.

*Yours Aye*

*Mal Smith*



*Left to Right:*

*Frank O'Grady, wife Janet,  
Ken Prior, Paul Thitchener (Treasurer),  
Kim Dunstan, and Dick Prentice*

*Left to Right:  
Mal Smith (Secretary),  
Lindy Smith,  
Grace Tiesse Smith RAN,  
Jason Smith, and Nikki Smith*

*Grace is the daughter of Jason and  
Nikki; and the Granddaughter of  
Mal and Lindy*



## *More Photographs of Vic Lunch*

### *Rob Earle Family*

*Left to Right:  
Than (wife of Chris),  
Chris (son of Rob and Marion)  
Ashew (daughter of Than and Chris),  
Marion (Rob's husband) and Rob*



*Left to Right:  
Shirley Thompson, Betty Hobbs,  
Val Christie, David Hobbs (Betty's  
son), and Ron Christie (past  
President)*

### *Officials*

*Left to Right:  
Scott Myers (Vice-Pres.)  
Mal Smith (Secretary)  
Chris Fealy (President)  
and  
Paul Thitchener (Treasurer)*





***His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General shakes hands with the Commanding Officer of 808 Squadron, Commander Paul Hannigan, RAN, thanking 808 Squadron personnel at HMAS Albatross for their assistance in the bushfire recovery activities.***



***Another pic of the Governor General David Hurley, and Mrs Linda Hurley greeted by Commodore Fleet Air Arm Commodore Don Dezentje CSM, RAN and the Commanding Officer of HMAS Albatross, Captain Robyn Phillips, RAN at HMAS Albatross, Nowra.***



# DVA Factsheet BR04

## Bereavement Information

### Purpose

This Factsheet provides information on bereavement payments, funeral benefits and other assistance provided under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA). It also provides basic information about the creation and effect of a will.

**\*Note:** - For information about bereavement payments and funeral expenses available under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA), please instead refer to [DVA Factsheet MRC17](#) and [DVA Factsheet MRC18](#).

### What is a bereavement payment?

A bereavement payment is a one-off, non-taxable payment designed to help with the costs that may follow the death of a pensioner. Where the deceased pensioner was a member of a couple, the bereavement payment will assist the surviving partner to adjust their finances following the cessation of the pensioner's payments.

There are two types of bereavement payment under the VEA: those made after the death of a person who was receiving disability pension, and those made after the death of a person who was in receipt of an income support payment. If the deceased was receiving both disability pension and an income support payment, it is possible for bereavement payments to be payable in respect of both payments.

### Who is eligible for a bereavement payment? - for members of a couple

If the pensioner was a member of a couple, the payment is usually made to the surviving partner, if the couple were:

- living together;
- living separately because one or both of the members of the couple were ill or frail;
- living separately because either of them was in respite care at the time of death and the pensioner was receiving disability pension.

However, if the pensioner was receiving:

- service pension;
  - social security age pension;
  - Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA); or
  - income support supplement;
- the surviving partner is only entitled to a bereave-

ment payment in respect of that payment if they were themselves in receipt of a service pension, income support supplement, social security pension or the DFISA at the time of the pensioner's death.

### Who is eligible for a bereavement payment? - for a single pensioner

The bereavement payment is usually made to the deceased person's estate, if the pensioner was single, separated, or widowed when they died, and they were receiving:

- service pension;
- social security age pension;
- Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA);
- income support supplement;
- disability pension at the Special rate (T&PI) and died in needy circumstances; or
- disability pension at the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) rate and died in needy circumstances.

**\*Note:** - A person died in needy circumstances if their estate has insufficient funds to pay for all outstanding liabilities including the cost of the person's funeral.

### How do I get a bereavement payment?

You do not generally have to apply for a bereavement payment if the deceased person was a member of a couple. Payment will occur automatically upon notification of the death to DVA.

If the veteran was single, died in needy circumstances, and was receiving a Special rate (T&PI) or Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) disability pension prior to their death, then a bereavement payment may be able to be made to the estate. To apply for a bereavement payment for a single veteran, please fill out [DVA Form D9145](#) and return to DVA. An application for payment must be made within 12 months of the veteran's death.

### How much bereavement payment can be paid?

The amount of bereavement payment depends on the pension that the pensioner was receiving prior to their death and whether they were single or a member of a couple.

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## **Income support bereavement payment - member of a couple**

When an income support pensioner was a member of a couple and the surviving partner is eligible for a bereavement payment, that payment continues the pension entitlements of the deceased person for a period of 98 days starting on the day on which the person died.

In most cases the surviving partner will receive a lump sum payment made up of the difference between the new single rate of pension and the previous combined rates of each member of the couple, multiplied by 98 days. If the new single rate of pension is equal to or higher than the previous combined rates of each member of the couple, no separate amount is payable to the surviving partner. However for 98 days the part of the single rate of pension that is equal to the pension that was payable to the deceased just prior to death is exempt from tax.

For an illness-separated couple, the bereavement payment is calculated using the partnered rate of pension (as if they were not living apart), rather than the illness-separated rate that the couple had been previously receiving.

The actual amount deposited may have been adjusted because pensions are paid in advance. In the event that a pension payment is made after the pensioner's date of death this will be included in the bereavement payment calculation. The bereavement payment lump sum will be automatically paid into the account where the surviving partner's pension is paid.

## **Income support bereavement payment - single pensioner**

When a single income support pensioner dies, one instalment of the rate of pension that the pensioner was receiving prior to their death is paid to their estate.

## **Disability pension bereavement payment**

A bereavement payment equal to six instalments of the fortnightly rate of disability pension that the veteran was receiving prior to their death may be paid to the estate of a single special rate (T&PI) or extreme disablement adjustment (EDA) pensioner who died in needy circumstances.

Where a disability pensioner was a member of a couple, the disability pension bereavement payment paid to the surviving partner is the equivalent of six fortnightly pension instalments, at the rate of pension paid prior to death.

## **What is a funeral benefit?**

A funeral benefit is a one-off payment, up to a maximum of \$2,000 to assist with the funeral costs of an eligible veteran or dependant and may also assist with the costs of transporting the veteran's body from the place of death to the normal place of residence. Where eligibility for a funeral benefit arises due to a posthumous grant or an increase to the rate of disability pension, the amount payable as a funeral benefit is the rate applicable at the date of death.

## **How do you apply for a funeral benefit?**

An application from the estate of a deceased veteran or dependant for funeral benefit must be made on the funeral benefit form within 12 months of the death, or from the date that the veteran's death was accepted as war caused. The receipt or account for the funeral should be attached. The benefit can be paid directly to the funeral director at the request of the executor. To apply for a funeral benefit, please fill out [DVA Form D307](#) and return to DVA.

## **Who is eligible for a funeral benefit?**

Australian veterans are automatically entitled to a funeral benefit if, at the time of death, they were:

- receiving Special rate (T&PI) disability pension;
- receiving Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) rate pension;
- receiving disability pension plus an allowance as a multiple amputee; or
- a former prisoner of war.

A funeral benefit may also be payable for Australian veterans and former members who died:

- from an accepted service-related disability;
- in needy circumstances;
- in an institution (including a hospital or nursing home);
- travelling to or from an institution;
- after discharge from an institution in which the veteran had received treatment for a terminal illness; or
- while being treated at home for a terminal illness.

A funeral benefit may be payable where a war widow(er), child under 16 or full time student under 25 dies in severe financial need. Applications must be made within 12 months of the dependant's death.

## Restrictions on dual payments of funeral benefit

A funeral benefit is not payable under the VEA if an entitlement to a funeral benefit exists under the MRCA.

Where a person has dual entitlement under the VEA and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA), any funeral benefit paid under the VEA will reduce the amount payable under the DRCA.

## War widow(er)'s pension

War widow(er)'s pension may be payable to the partner of deceased veterans and orphan's pension may be payable to dependent children of deceased veterans. For further information, please see [DVA Factsheet DP60](#).

## Other assistance

Recipients of war widow(er)'s and orphan's pensions are issued with a gold DVA Health Card. This card entitles the holder to a range of health care for all conditions. For further information regarding the Gold Card, please see [DVA Factsheet HSV60](#).

War widow(er)'s may be entitled to income support supplement, an income and assets tested pension that provides additional regular income. For further information, please see [DVA Factsheet MRC47](#).

On request, DVA will provide a statement of taxable service pension paid to the deceased pensioner. Bereavement payments are not counted as income for taxation purposes.

A veteran whose death has been accepted as being war-caused may be entitled to official commemoration. For further information, please see [DVA Factsheet WG02](#).

Rehabilitation aids and appliances can sometimes be re-used if they are returned after the death of a veteran. Their return can be arranged by contacting the original supplier.

## What is a will?

A will is a legal document that enables you to exercise your right to select the relatives, friends and others (such as charitable organisations) who will inherit your assets when you die.

## Making a will

You may choose to make your own will. If you choose to do this you must ensure that it is a clear and valid will. You may also choose to consult a solicitor, a public trustee or private trustee to assist you in drawing up your will. The will must be

signed by yourself and two independent witnesses who are not beneficiaries. Your executor should be made aware of their appointment as your executor.

## Why do I need a will?

By having an up to date will at the time of your death you will ensure that your assets and possessions will be distributed according to your wishes.

If you have no will at the time of your death your assets will be divided according to a formula set out in Government legislation. This formula may not divide your assets the way you would have wished.

## Planning Ahead - A guide to putting your affairs in order

An information package, called: 'Planning Ahead - A guide to putting your affairs in order' provides detailed advice on preparing for and coping with bereavement. In particular, the package's booklet provides further details about legal and financial issues, such as: wills, power of attorney and guardianship arrangements.

## DVA General Enquiries

Phone: 1800 555 254 \*

[Email](mailto:GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au): GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

[DVA Website](http://www.dva.gov.au): www.dva.gov.au

[Factsheet Website](http://www.dva.gov.au/factsheets): www.dva.gov.au/factsheets

\* Calls from mobile phones and pay phones may incur additional charges.

## Related Factsheets

[DP60 War Widow\(er\)'s Pension and Orphan's Pension \(VEA\)](#)

[HSV60 Using the DVA Health Card - All Conditions \(Gold\) or DVA Health Card Totally & Permanently Incapacitated \(Gold\)](#)

[IS03 Income Support Supplement Overview](#)

[LEG01a Arrangements for Other People to Act on Your Behalf](#)

[MRC17 Funeral Expenses \(MRCA\)](#)

[MRC18 Bereavement Payments \(MRCA\)](#)

[MRC47 Education Schemes](#)

[MRC50 Compensation for Dependents under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004](#)

[WG02 Official Commemoration](#)

## Related Forms

[D0307 Claim for Funeral Benefit](#)

[D9145 Claim for Bereavement Payment for single veterans](#)



# Memorabilia from when 'it' all Started!

*Ex-RN Telegraphist  
Air Gunners training as  
Observers for the RAN at  
HMS Vulture, RNAS  
St. Merryn in Cornwall  
UK—1949.*

*L—R rear: Malcolm 'Nobby'  
Clarke, Gordon 'Taff' Hughes,  
Gwyn 'Taff' Morris, James  
'Knocker' White,  
Philip 'Hank' Hancox,  
Leonard 'Ken' Kenderdine  
(TAGs—in 'round rig',  
only named).*



**RNAS  
St. Merryn**



**RNAS  
Yeovilton**

*Training in the UK included teaching the British at RNAS Yeovilton Aussie Rules. Maintainer training, 1949*

*L—R rear: Alan 'Happy' Clarke, Lofly McCarley, Lou Cuther, Lofty Millington, Jack Lombard, Joe Malcolm,  
John Cashmore, Bluey Haarsma*

*L—R middle: Stan McCutcheon, Les Wilson, Spike Jones, Alan Goddard,  
Danny Duigan, Bill Hitchcock*

*L—R front: John Hibbert, Clive Cotter; Brian Edwards, Max Gant, Dave Rice*



*Cartoon by Ian Hughes*

# Change of Command—725 Squadron



**Outgoing CO 725 Squadron, CMDR Stan Buckham, left, passes the 'gauntlet' to incoming CO, CMDR James Hawley at a ceremony conducted at HMAS Albatross.**

**By Ms Dallas McMaugh  
Photograph by Cameron Martin  
(Navy Daily)**

Outgoing Commanding Officer, Commander Stan Buckham, has handed the 'gauntlet', the symbol of the Squadron, to Commander Hawley in a ceremony conducted in front of the whole Squadron and family members.

Commander Hawley said he was most excited about the responsibility and challenge of leading the dynamic and motivated men and women of 725 Squadron in order to prepare them for deployed Flights and ships.

"725 Squadron is responsible for training and developing Aircrew and Maintainers to operate one of the most complex and capable bits of kit in the Australian Defence Force," Commander Hawley said.

"The complexity of the Maritime Combat Helicopter needs to be matched by the aggressive professionalism of our people."

He said his principal goal is to foster a broader understanding of the maritime strategic context in order to develop the squadron's people as better warfighters.

He flagged a program of training days, educational briefs, guest lecturers, reading lists and tactics development sessions to further the squadron's warfighting culture and professionalism.

Commander Hawley is very familiar

with *Albatross*, having first posted there in 2005 when he commenced Operational Conversion at 805 Squadron.

He said returning to *Albatross* after the Christmas leave break was "bittersweet."

"The amazing investment in *Albatross* as the home of the Fleet Air Arm is evident everywhere you look. The Romeo precinct stands proudly where just a short while ago there was only a grass field," Commander Hawley said.

"However, the impact of the bushfires is starkly evident with the charred earth stretching to the runways.

"I returned early from leave to assist in support of 'Operation Bushfire Assist', and this provided me with a clear understanding of the extent of the devastation, and the tragic impact upon our Shoalhaven community."

The change of command ceremony also allowed Commander Buckham the opportunity to reflect on his experiences at the Squadron.

Commander Buckham, who has assumed the role of Deputy Director, Future Domestic Plans in Military Strategic Commitments in Canberra, said he would most miss the privilege of Command and working with the people that supported him throughout, both professionally and personally.

"725 Squadron is made up of a dedicated and focussed team of people, all striving for excellence in training MH-60R Aircrew and Technical Sailors.

"Amongst the many highlights of my time as Commanding Officer, the main one was seeing aircrew and technical sailors achieve graduation or their authorisations and post to the operational space, be it a Flight or 816 SQN and knowing that we had a small part to play in their career.

## **Editorial Correction**

The photograph of 'Pally' Carr on Page 31 of the December 2019 issue of Slipstream in RAAF uniform is incorrect.

Pally Carr is, in fact, standing on the far right, in front of the car.

# Former Senior FAA Officer Justifies Why ADML VAT Smith is the 'Father of the FAA'

By John DaCosta

In response to the article in Slipstream December 2019, I believe the story needs further clarification. Lieutenant Commander Palgrave Ebdon ("Pally") CARR DFC RAN, who was a Navy Pilot and Observer in the 1930s and 40s, poses the question: "Was (he) the Real Father of the RAN Fleet Air Arm"? (As opposed to the generally accepted answer that it was LCDR V.A.T. Smith RAN [later Admiral Sir Victor SMITH AC KBE CB DSC RAN] in 1944/45.

The answer is complicated in that there were two different RAN Fleet Air Arms formed during the 20th Century.

Following the Imperial (Defence) Conference in 1923, the RAN proposed the formation of an Australian Fleet Air Arm (FAA). This was strenuously opposed by the head of the RAAF, Wing Commander R. Williams, who had been an Australian (Army) Flying Corps pilot in WWI before the formation of the RAAF. However, in his absence at an RAF Staff Course in the UK, his Deputy, ex- Royal Naval Air Service pilot Wing Commander Goble (father of the late CDRE John Goble), agreed to the formation of an RAN FAA. (Later, Williams set about reversing the state of affairs and was ultimately successful!)

The (first) RAN FAA was created by the issuing of Commonwealth Navy Order (CNO) 137/1925 "Establishment of a Fleet Air Arm of the RAN". This FAA, which was based on the scheme adopted by the Royal Navy at the time, was cancelled in 1928 when the RAAF prevailed and resumed control of aircraft, pilots and maintainers (which echoed the RN/RAF experience!). The RAN retained operational control of embarked aircraft (mainly sea-planes in cruisers) and provided Naval Observer aircrew, who continued to be RAN Officers.

The second, and current, FAA was established by the Chifley Australian Government in 1947. VAT Smith played a major role in the formation of this FAA despite (to quote his words) "...it would be fair to say that the RAAF were strongly against the RAN having a Fleet Air Arm".

Looking at the 1925 FAA, a number of RAN officers were trained as pilots (a few before its formation, but a number subsequently). Records show at least eight earned their Pilot's Brevet (Wings) between 1923 and 1927, prior to Pally Carr in 1932. (Incidentally, VAT Smith trained as an Observer in 1937, as pilot training was not available to RAN Officers at that time.)



**Admiral Sir Victor Smith AC KBE CB DSC RAN**

In summary, without detracting in any way from Pally's outstanding career, I do not think that he could reasonably be referred to as "The Father" of the first, or second, RAN Fleet Air Arms. On the other hand, no other RAN officer contributed more to the formation of the present Fleet Air Arm than VAT Smith.

*References:*

- *Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia Newsletter: Slipstream Vol 30 No 4*
- *Wings Across the Sea by Ross Gillett*
- *A Few Memories of Sir Victor Smith (Australian Naval Institute 1992)*
- *Flying Stations: A Story of Australian Naval Aviation Australian - Naval Aviation (now Fleet Air Arm) Museum*

*(John DaCosta joined the RAN in 1955 as a Direct Entry aircrew. He underwent the usual RAAF pilot training, graduating as an ASLT. John and the then LEUT King were the first RAN pilots to train on the A4 and he subsequently commanded 724, 805 Squadron and the Melbourne Air Group, remaining in the RAN to rise to the rank of Commodore. He retired in 1989.)*

# SA Divisional Report Ending March 2020

**By Roger Harrison  
(Whipping Boy)  
South Australia Division**



Here we are into March 2020 already and I am not managing to keep up with the speed of things generally. I would like to think that I am not alone.

I am hoping you all enjoyed the Christmas madness, heat and bushfires which have plagued this Nation for so long. Is it a sign we should all sit back and study the climate change real or imagined?

For the Whipping Boy, he spent Christmas and part of the new Year in the UK visiting a daughter and family. While everyone here were battling heat, fires and heavy smoke, I was freezing my tits off in Saffron Walden, wearing the Fox Hat?

Loraine and I attended the Navy Week Church Service, North Adelaide, on 16th November, chatted to the Commanding Officer, NHQ SA, Commander Andrew Burnett after the Service.

The January 2020 General Meeting at John and Anna Siebert's home was a success as we were blessed with cooler weather. It was a BYO everything but the Sieberts supplied chips and dips. Those present were John/Anna Siebert, Ian/Dee Laidler, Mal/Chris Parrington, Mike/Kathleen Cain, Gordon/Eve Gray, Jan Akeroyd and Roger Harri-

son. Quite a few apologise from the regulars and without Michael Stubbington and his family, it halved the attendance we would have expected. The Meeting was chaired by the Vice President (me) and was unusually scrappy, but we got most of it sorted. Then down to lunch with a decent Red from the whipping boy and Mal Parrington. Speaking of Mal (my resident Doctor) Parrington, he gave me a good serve for sprinkling salt over my lunch. He's looking out for me. Apologies from M. Stubbington, P. Coulson, P. Shiels, D. Morris, I, McBeath, J. Cooper, B. Scobie, G. Bailey and V. Byas.

A great view from the foothills of Pasadena overlooking smoke shrouded Adelaide.



**Left to Right: Michael Cain, Mal Parrington, Ian and Dee Laidler, Kathleen Cain, Chris Parrington and Jan Akeroyd**



**Left to Right: Eve and Gordon Gray with John Siebert**



# Wessex 821 Ditches after Cable Caught in HMAS Vampire's Guard Rail



**Navy Divers attempt to secure Wessex 821 while HMAS Vampire awaits alongside**

On 13 November 1969, Wessex 821 ditched while carrying out a transfer with HMAS *Vampire*.

A winch cable possibly snagged on the ship and the ship rolled in the swell causing the cable to part, spring back hitting the captain of the aircraft LEUT Murray Buckett in the face on the way through before it entered the rotor head. No doubt, Murray was leaning out of the cockpit watching the transfer?

The aircraft ditched and sank 8NM east of Point Perpendicular. The crew comprising LEUT (P) Buckett, SBLT (P) Reick, LEUT (O) (later ADML) Cooke-Priest RN, LACM Barnes and passenger CMDR (E) Phillmore RN off HMS *Galletea* were picked up by HMAS *Vampire*.

Back at NAS Nowra, Wessex 815 was scrambled with LEUT (P) Hill, SBLT (P) Winterflood, LACM McIntyre and LACM Connolly. 725 Sqn AEO was taken out to HMAS *Stalwart*.

Wessex 821 floated upright for 1¼ hours then tipped upside down. Most of the mail was recovered. However, in the subsequent effort to salvage the helicopter, it sank.

The aircrew were all transferred to HMAS *Melbourne* where Wessex 815 and an Iroquois (involved in the rescue) stayed due to inclement weather at NAS Nowra.

Later, the weather improved enough for the survivors to arrange a lift back to NAS Nowra later that night.

The ditching and rescue can be viewed [here](#) (online subscribers only).

*(Rumour had it that when a 'Seaman' saw the winch wire coming down, his first reaction was to 'secure' the line to the ship's guard rail, like any good 'Seaman' would be expected to do, to ensure the helicopter didn't go away. I know it's only a rumour but it sounds good. A 'round turn and two half hitches' to stop the aircraft from moving!! More reports of accidents can be found on the FAAAA Web-site in the 'Members' section. . . . .Ed)*



# Eagles Over the Sea 1935-1942

By Lawrence Paterson

The striking cover picture of two Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Condor aircraft attacking merchant ships sets the tone for this magisterial account of German naval aviation. The author, Lawrence Paterson, has spent many years researching German naval operations and has written several books on the Kriegsmarine. He opens with a brief summary of German naval aviation in World War 1.

In a chapter headed "Renaissance", the author describes how Germany, despite being bound by the terms of the Versailles Treaty at the end of the war, accumulated a secret "Ruhr Fund" to covertly develop military forces. Much of this money went to aircraft manufacturers.

When Hitler assumed power in 1933, the Küstenfliegergruppen or Coastal Naval Air Services were established. The Spanish Civil War provided a fruitful operational arena for the men of the naval arm (as for the Luftwaffe).

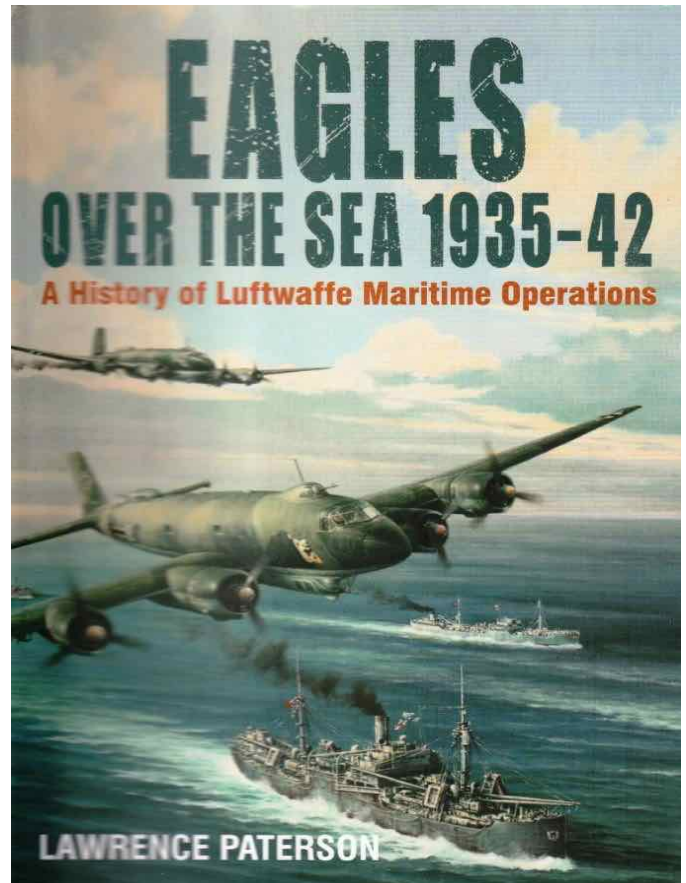
By the time that WW2 broke out, work was well advanced on the German Navy's aircraft carrier, the Graf Zeppelin, which had been launched in December 1938. This was potentially an impressive vessel, well armoured and theoretically capable of 34 knots. An Air Group had been planned. The construction of the aircraft carrier was a stop-start affair, comments the author, that serves as an illustration of the fate of the entire naval air arm.

Despite the diminution and subsequent demise of the fixed-wing aircraft carrier role, the naval air arm stepped up operations with the He 115 multi-purpose torpedo bomber, minelaying and reconnaissance aircraft.

The author describes the role of naval aviation in the German invasion of Norway, patrolling the North Sea approaches to southern Norway. The operation marked the combat debut of the Fw 200 Condor, a remarkable aircraft that had started life as an airliner. It was used as a long range transport and in the reconnaissance and anti-shipping role. As the German forces went ashore, the naval air arm was heavily occupied in identifying and attacking RN vessels shelling the landings, also in mine-laying.

In a chapter entitled "The End of the Beginning" we read that Hitler issued an order in February 1941 giving the Luftwaffe the lion's share of naval aviation and stating that there were no plans to maintain a separate naval air arm. The arrival of X Fliegerkorps in the Mediterranean had a dramatic effect on allied forces, including highly-effective

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attacks on RN units supporting the evacuation from Crete.

In a description of German attempts to disrupt allied convoys in 1941/42, the author comments that the Luftwaffe's refusal to use Kriegsmarine data on torpedo development "erupted in a ridiculous bout of inter-service rivalry". Combined bombing and torpedo attacks on allied convoys took a terrible toll in loss of life and the continuing delivery of supplies. The book ends in 1942, with the Luftwaffe's maritime operations probably at their peak of effectiveness.

As well as many accounts of airborne action, Lawrence Paterson provides detailed descriptions of inter-service disputes at the highest levels.

This is an outstanding production by Seaforth and is in every respect a most useful source of reference. The author provides an extensive bibliography and scholarly notes, together with a comprehensive index. All serious students of naval aviation should have this volume on their bookshelves.

Malcolm Smith

<http://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/book-reviews/>  
(Edited Version)

## Wings of Gold

By Trevor Rieck, Jack McCaffrie and Jed Hart

At the end of the 50s the Australian Government decided that the RAN flagship, HMAS *Melbourne*, would be scrapped – together with the whole of the Fleet Air Arm. Fortunately this decision was reversed two years later and by 1964 not only was the future of the FAA assured, but a new generation of fixed and rotary wing aircraft was being procured.

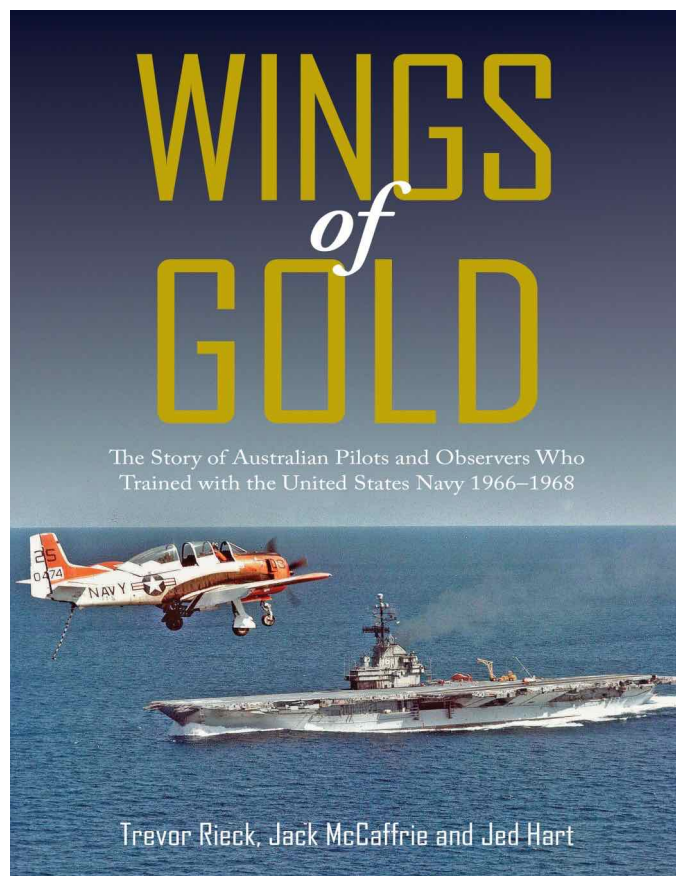
Like so many RAN projects, however, consideration of the human element was left until the last moment. Just how was the Fleet Air Arm to get highly trained crews to fly these aircraft, in a system that had been ‘ramped down’ for years and which relied on such slender throughput in the RAAF and RN training systems?

The answer was innovative and bold: send a group of young, aspiring aviators to the United States Navy (USN) for pilot and observer training – but this had never been done before, and there were a million questions to be answered and almost as many problems to solve.

Wings of Gold is the story of that generation of aircrew over the period 1966-68, from their very first day at HMAS *Cerberus* (all short service officers did their training there), through the innovative process of Flight Grading at the Royal Victoria Aero Club at Moorabbin, to the huge training machine of the USN. It is the story of 49 young Australians who blazed a trail the like of which has never been seen since – and it is one of remarkable success too, as only two of their number failed to graduate in a system where a 30% wastage rate or more was common.

It would be easy for such a book to slip into a technical monologue, but the authors have inspired it with a light touch. For technical buffs there is much detail about how the USN training system worked: but the pages also have a delightful personal feel, as much is told through the eyes of those who were there. Individual impressions of the old and bold instructors on the RACV’s Chipmunks, of Survival Training, of Flight Gradings and Carrier Landings – all recorded with remarkable recollec-

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tion to paint a picture not only of how it was, but how it felt. And woven through the central story are other threads too – of the scale of a foreign training system geared for the enormity of the Vietnam conflict, of the generosity of American hospitality, and of friendships forged that endure to this day.

The book finishes by telling you a little of what happened to each of the 47 graduates, most of whom went on to distinguished careers in aviation or other fields. It is a delightful way to end, as by then the reader feels he knows many of them.

Wings of Gold is one of those rare finds that neatly captures the rich history of that era, the story of a unique experiment, and the personal impressions of those who trod that road. It is a worthy addition to any library.

*Marcus Peake*

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