

## Flying The Genus Platanus by Ken Douglas

The article by Norman Lee regarding the Hawker Seahawk in which he said that if it looks right it will fly right and that it was one of the prettiest little aircraft he had flown has inspired me to write of another flying machine that did not look right and could never be described as one of the prettiest.

As the slightly more ancient of us recall, our glorious leaders decided in 1959 that the Fleet Air Arm was an unnecessary drain on the national economy and that this effective, but expensive, branch of the Australian Armed Forces should be disbanded. Fortunately, after long and hard lobbying by a few of our senior stalwarts, the Fleet Air Arm was given a reprieve. After twelve months of upheaval, during which time flying training ceased and many experienced aviators either donned Qantas hats or transferred to General Service, it was announced that HMAS *Melbourne* would be kept in service with her role reduced solely to that of Anti-Submarine Helicopter Carrier.

The upshot of this was that many fixed wing aircrew were sent to the United Kingdom for training in this new role and other lucky volunteers were introduced to 723 Squadron and the black magic of rotary wing flight. I was one of the latter and together with **Rowley Waddell-Wood**, **Ron McKenzie** and **Patrick Vickers** fronted up to commence the helicopter conversion course. At that stage in life we had all completed Front Line fixed-wing tours and were full of confidence. Little did we realise what was in store for us.

During the Fifteenth Century a learned gentleman named Leonardo Da Vinci invented a machine which he considered capable of flight. Not much happened with this concept until World War II when another very clever gentleman called Igor Sikorsky slightly improved on Da Vinci's invention and called it a helicopter. The Bristol Aircraft Company then got into the act and produced the Sycamore helicopter; a name which was to mean salvation to the many people it rescued, but which was

also sufficient to reduce many stout-hearted and seemingly otherwise skilful pilots to tears of frustration.

The Sycamore is the common name for a tree of the American species the genus "Platanus" which is similar to the London Plane Tree and features three lobed leaves with a long petiole swollen at its base. Those familiar with the tree could see some obvious similarity between these leaves and Bristol's first successful helicopter.

In an era when aircraft were becoming streamlined and aesthetically pleasing the first impression of a Sycamore was one of ungainliness, it was certainly not streamlined and looked as though it should never fly. This first impression was invariably strengthened as initial flying training was progressed. It seemed ungainly but it did manage to lumber into the air.

After a brief classroom introduction we four intrepid aviators were ready to take to the air in the expert hands of **Shamus O'Farrell** and **David Orr**. We had already been impressed by David's skills in mirror writing on the blackboard with both hands at the same time saying "Help I am trapped behind the blackboard" and we were worried that we may have had to reach this expertise in ambidexterity before qualifying.

My own previous knowledge and witnessing of Shamus' hypnotic skills were never far from the back of my mind and hoped they wouldn't be used on us.

The first mistake was to get into the wrong seat. For some reason the helicopter pilot sits in the right-hand seat, presumably so that you don't think you are in a fixed wing aircraft and open the throttle and pull the stick back! Having changed seats, and with three grinning but very concerned contemporaries in the back, we were confronted with an assortment of controls. During previous flying training the intimacy of instructor/pupil relationship was sacrosanct but because most of the training in the Sycamore was carried out at Jervis Bay airfield the four of us travelled together and on the way to and from that field were



*Not much Safety Equipment in those days! A Sycamore aboard Melbourne, date unknown. Anybody recognise the folk in the picture?*

given the opportunity to assess the skills and progress, or lack thereof, of our contemporaries.

In the centre of the cockpit there was a big lever with a throttle coming out at right angles from the top of it. You shared this with the instructor. This lever controlled vertical motion of the helicopter by increasing or decreasing the pitch on the rotor blades. When the pitch was increased, more power was required to keep the blades turning at a constant speed so that whenever the lever moved up or down, the throttle had to be twisted to increase or decrease power to keep the rotor revolutions constant. Between our legs we had what looks a control column but was called a "cyclic" which controlled the horizontal movement of the aircraft. Our feet rested on a pair of pedals that controlled the tail rotor pitch and fortunately worked like rudder pedals.

The next thing we learnt was that Newton was wrong when he said that "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction". In the Sycamore there were three or four reactions. The first reaction was always the voice of David Orr or Shamus O'Farrell (whichever one was lucky enough to draw us for the day) screaming "REVS", as the slightest movement of one control needed a reaction in every other control in order to maintain constant REVS. In just about every chopper built after the era of the Sycamore and its contemporaries the revs are set after the rotors are engaged and are automatically controlled, thereby taking away half the fun of chopper flying.

To increase lift the rotating blades of a helicopter have to increase their angle of attack (or pitch) with a subsequent increase in drag requiring an increase of power (more throttle on the twist grip). If the weight of the aircraft is such that at full power the rotor blades still need more lift and the angle of attack is increased further the blades will slow down because of the extra drag. There are then two options, the aircraft has to descend to maintain rotor revolutions or the blades slow down to the stage where they eventually "clap hands" and the whole shebang plummets earthwards. The loss of revolutions is called over pitching, hence the excitement in the cockpit about maintaining the optimum revs.



*An unusual shot of Sycamores in the hangar deck and Sea Venoms ranged above. (Jeff Chartier)*

A few months before we started our conversion a Portuguese exchange officer very ably demonstrated the result of over-pitching when he took a load of well-fed relatively senior aircrew officers from HMAS Melbourne to an RN Carrier in company. With too much weight aboard and slowing to approach for land - gracefully, at full power, onto, then rapidly into the

practice where a wooden box was dropped into the sea and the pilot, who could not see the box, was directed to the hover over it under the verbal instructions of a fellow pupil or winchman, in an endeavour to keep the end of the winch cable in the box.



*A dramatic image of a Sycamore plucking a survivor from the Maitland Floods in 1955. A little more information about this event can be found [here](#).*

In those days all good Catholics were supposed to eat fish on Fridays and, as we had a very good member of the faith as our Commanding Officer, a helicopter was dispatched to go fishing every Friday morning. This fishing involved putting a few tins of aircrew flying rations (maccas) in a waste paper basket, finding a fishing boat and hovering over it while the wpb was lowered and the maccas exchanged for the catch of the day.

On completion of the Sycamore conversion my three course contemporaries drifted off to their various postings while I stayed in 723 Squadron flying Sycamores to gain experience before going to UK to complete the Helicopter Instructors Course. This involved flying from the left-hand seat and

using the opposite hands on the controls, that is the lever/throttle in the right hand and the cyclic in the left. With the pupil's big hand just about covering all the throttle twist grip another trick to be perfected was the art of twisting the throttle with the thumb and forefinger while lifting and lowering the lever with the other three fingers and palm. While it proved to be very difficult initially, once mastered, I preferred to fly from the left-hand seat.

Indian Ocean. All swam away and the passengers tried to keep well away from helicopters from then on. The exchange officer was happy to revert to fixed wing flying shortly afterwards.

Because of the challenge in mastering this new and difficult form of flying the initial embarrassment of having our contemporaries sitting in the back seat to watch our struggles on the way to and from JB became an unexpected bonus. We found that we could draw comfort from the fact that we all experienced the same difficulties and frustrations. It took about 10 hours before any of us were ready to fly solo. A very sophisticated method of adjusting the centre of gravity for solo flying was used. A series of weights were strapped into the left-hand seat!

After the first solo flight the course became more enjoyable as we became more familiar with co-coordinating the different controls and with the challenge of flying the aircraft to its limits. I found that learning how to come to a fast stop achieved the biggest adrenalin rush as I had witnessed a failed attempt many years before when a chopper visiting Point Cook came to an extremely fast stop when the tail rotor clipped the tarmac while in a near vertical attitude. To achieve the fast stop the aircraft was hauled into a very nose up attitude, at the same time the lever was dropped to the floor and the throttle closed, thereby disengaging the clutch. When all speed was washed off, the aircraft was brought to the hover position and a great handful of lever and throttle were brought in and the clutch re-engaged, while maintaining, of course, the mandatory 270 revs. All this happened very close to the ground and in very quick time so there was no room for error.

There were many new experiences to enjoy in our new aviation adventure. Winching and box knocking, a form of winching

Meanwhile **Rowley Waddell-Wood** and **Pat Vickers** went off to the UK and continued their chopper flying, while **Ron McKenzie** escaped back to fixed wing flying. In due course both Rowley and Patrick served with great distinction flying helicopters in Vietnam and the Fleet Air Arm suffered the loss of a very capable pilot and a great messmate when Patrick was killed while leading an EMU flight during the TET offensive.

Despite my initial apprehension about being able to master this new phase in my flying career I found that, once comfortable with my competence, I thoroughly enjoyed the couple of years I spent flying the Sycamore. There were always interesting and sometimes exciting missions to be flown with someone always coming up with new and strange requests for this relatively new and unfamiliar workhorse. The mind boggles at what our current environmentalists would have to say about mixing insect spray with AVTUR and spraying married quarters for mosquitoes. At least we were able to warn residents in Daily Orders so that they could get their washing off the line. The children could often be seen standing outside watching.

Meanwhile training continued with conversions of fixed wing pilots and the basic flying training of would-be pilots. During this time I had the privilege of having two future Presidents of the Fleet Air Arm Association as pupils. As soon as the first

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graduated he got wind of a job becoming available as CO of 816 Squadron, when fixed wing flying was being resurrected, and he couldn't escape fast enough. The other completed his course and was later to serve with great distinction in Vietnam but not before also having to endure the indignity of a front line tour and a dunking in Gannets.

And me. I commenced a Wessex conversion but had a pier-head jump to serve as Flight Deck Officer of HMAS Melbourne just as the course was getting interesting. After this I was posted back to fixed wing squadrons for the next few years. I look back on my time in 723 Squadron with great fondness and despite the initial difficulty in mastering this new form of flying I really enjoyed the Sycamore. The old girls had a very distinguished career, and despite their lack of beauty, saved many lives and trained a large number of pilots who went on to bigger and better things in the Service and in Civil Aviation.

by Ken Douglas (from Slipstream) ✈

## The Mystery P-51 Pilot

In the morning sun, I could not believe my eyes. There, in our little airport, sat a majestic P-51 Mustang. They said it had flown in during the night from some U.S. Airport, on its way to an air show. The pilot had been tired, so he just happened to choose Kingston for his stopover.

It was to take to the air very soon. I marvelled at the size of the plane, dwarfing the Pipers and Canucks tied down by her. It was much larger than in the movies. She glistened in the sun like a bulwark of security from days gone by.

The pilot arrived by cab, paid the driver, and then stepped into the pilot's lounge. He was an older man; his wavy hair was grey and tossed. It looked like it might have been combed around the turn of the century. His flight jacket was checked, creased and worn - it smelled old and genuine.

"Old Glory" was prominently sewn to its shoulders. He projected a quiet air of proficiency and pride, devoid of arrogance.

He filed a quick flight plan to Montreal ("Expo-67 Air Show") then walked across the tarmac.

After taking several minutes to perform his walk-around check, the tall, lanky man returned to the flight lounge to ask if anyone would be available to stand by with fire extinguishers while he "lashed the old bird up, just to be safe". Though only 12 at the time I was allowed to stand by with an extinguisher after brief instruction on its use.

"If you see a fire, point, then pull this lever!", he said. (I later became a firefighter, but that's another story).

The air around the exhaust manifolds shimmered like a mirror from fuel fumes as the huge prop started to rotate. One manifold, then another, and yet another barked. I stepped back with the others.

In moments the Packard-built Merlin engine came to life with a thunderous roar. Blue flames knifed from her manifolds with an arrogant snarl. I looked at the others' faces; there was no concern. I lowered the bell of my extinguisher.

One of the guys signalled to walk back to the lounge. We did. Several minutes later we could hear the pilot doing his pre-flight run-up. He'd taxied to the end of runway 19, out of sight. All went quiet for several seconds.

We ran to the second story deck to see if we could catch a glimpse of the P-51 as she started down the runway. We could not. There we stood, eyes fixed at a spot halfway down the runway. Then a roar ripped across the field, much louder than before. Like a furious hell spawn set loose — something mighty this way was coming.

"Listen to that thing!" said the controller.

In seconds the Mustang burst into our line of sight. Its tail was already off the runway and it was moving faster than anything I'd ever seen. Two-thirds the way down 19 the Mustang was airborne with her gear going up. The prop tips were supersonic. We clasped our ears as the Mustang climbed hellishly fast into the circuit to be eaten up by the dog-day haze. We stood for a few moments, in stunned silence, trying to digest what we'd just seen.



The radio controller rushed by me to the radio. "Kingston tower calling Mustang?" He looked back to us as he waited for an acknowledgment.

The radio crackled, "Go ahead, Kingston."

"Roger, Mustang. Kingston tower would like to advise the circuit is clear for a low-level pass."

I stood in shock because the controller had just, more or less, asked the pilot to return for an impromptu air show!

The controller looked at us. "Well, what?" he asked. "I can't let that guy go without asking. I couldn't forgive myself!"

The radio crackled once again, "Kingston, do I have permission for a low-level pass, east to west, across the field?"

"Roger, Mustang, the circuit is clear for an east to west pass." "Roger, Kingston. I'm coming out of 3,000 feet. Stand by." We rushed back on to the second-story deck, eyes fixed toward the eastern haze.

The sound was subtle at first, a high-pitched whine, a muffled screech, a distant scream. Moments later, the P-51 burst through the haze, her airframe straining against positive G's and gravity. Her wing tips were spilling contrails of condensed air, prop-tips again supersonic.

The burnished bird blasted across the eastern margin of the field shredding and tearing the air. At about 500 mph and 150 yards from where we stood she passed with the old American pilot saluting!!

Imagine. A salute! I felt like laughing; like crying. She glistened; she screamed; the building shook; my heart pounded. Then the old pilot pulled her up and rolled, and rolled, and rolled out of sight into the broken clouds and indelibly into my memory.

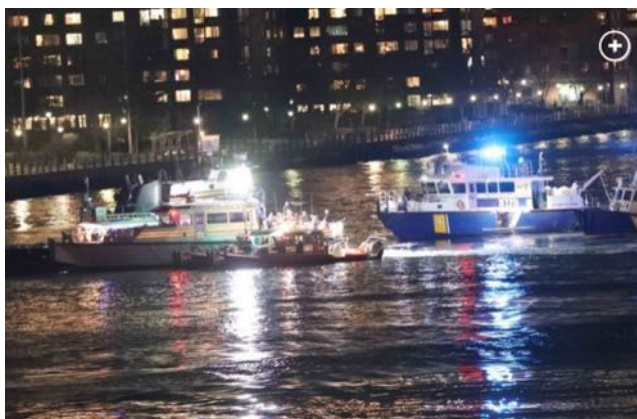
I've never wanted to be an American more than on that day! It was a time when many nations in the world looked to America as their big brother – a steady and even-handed beacon of security who navigated difficult political water with grace and style; not unlike the old American pilot who'd just flown into my memory. He was proud, not arrogant; humble, not a braggart; old and honest, projecting an aura of America at its best.

That America will return one day! I know she will! Until that time, I'll just send off this story.

Call it a loving salute to a Country and especially to that old American pilot: the late JIMMY STEWART (1908-1997), actor, real WWII hero (Commander of a US Army Air Force Bomber Wing stationed in England), and a USAF Reserves Brigadier General, who wove a wonderfully fantastic memory for a young Canadian boy that's lasted a lifetime. ✈

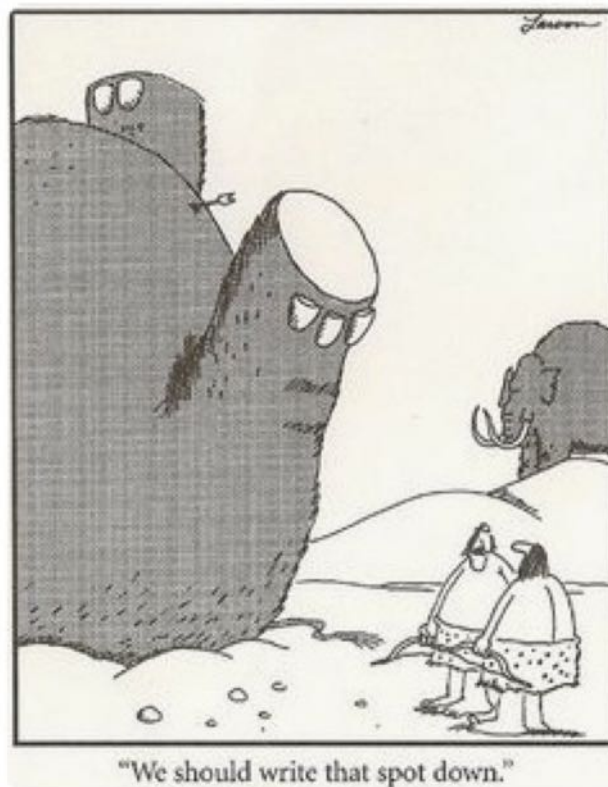
## The Most Unsuccessful Ditching Ever?

*The following article was written by Captain K.P. Sanjeev Kumar, an ex-Navy veteran now flying rotary wing aircraft offshore. It first appeared in 'The Global Aviator' Vol 10 No 5, of May 2018, and draws some thoughts about the unsuccessful ditching of the AS350 into New York's East River on 11 March 2018. Of the six souls aboard, only one made a successful egress from the aircraft – the pilot. In some places this article has been illustrated by RAN images to give it greater context.*



Scene of the East River crash, 11Mar18. Image G.N. Miller, NY Post.

Helicopters are often piloted by single pilots, and clear airfield diversions are not always a given. For this reason, seasoned helicopter pilots always keep an eye out for force landing fields where the aircraft can be put down in an emergency. If flying



over large expanses of water, this may necessitate a water-landing for which the helicopter has to be specifically equipped and cleared by aviation authorities.

### Nature of helicopter flying

Helicopter flying may also involve low flying and constant manoeuvring in certain roles. Unlike an airliner where the seat belts sign is turned off after the aircraft reaches cruise, passengers in a helicopter require being belted in at all times. This is in the nature of helicopter flying where the machine is capable of translating in six degrees of freedom. Large sideslip angles can develop as a result of manoeuvring flight. Sudden onset of bank and pitch angles, sharp acceleration, deceleration and side forces are all in the helicopter's routine envelope. So when you fly in one of those machines, you keep your seat belts always ON.

### Accidents Happen

Airbus AS350 helicopter N350LH belonging to a private operator was one such helicopter undertaking a 'doorsoff' tourism flight with one pilot and five passengers when it crashed into New York's East River on 11th Mar 2018. The helicopter was on a photo shoot where passengers are given a 'doors-off' ride over the Manhattan skyline with ample opportunities to take spectacular aerial photos. Flying over beautiful (but hostile) terrain in an open helicopter with the wind rushing through your hair is a magical, edge-of-the-seat experience. I have done it many times in the line of duty.

But during all such flights undertaken while I was in the Navy, we were always prepared for the exigency of a water-landing. Fortunately for most people, such an event may never occur. For those who do experience an emergency requiring water landing, years of emergency egress training and appropriate gear ensures a high chance of escape and survival. As it

seems, passengers on board that ill-fated AS350 helicopter did not have either the good fortune or training.

### No Miracle on the Hudson

US Airways Flight 1549 flew into a flock of geese soon after take-off from New York's La Guardia airport on 15 January 2009 and lost both engines. However, under the command of Captain **Chesley Sullenberger** and First Officer **Jeffery Skiles**, the flight undertook a copybook water landing described as 'Miracle on the Hudson', and all 155 aboard were safely rescued.

The East River helicopter crash of 11 March 18, however, suffered a much worse fate and must go down as one of the most unsuccessful ditchings ever. The lone survivor was the pilot. Five passengers secured to the aircraft with harnesses and tethers that facilitate aerial photo shoots failed to escape the inverted aircraft and their bodies had to be cut out of harnesses by rescue divers. As per reports, passengers were given a 10-minute safety video and tethered into the helicopter with an eight-point proprietary safety harness, complete with a knife for cutting it off in case of an emergency requiring quick exit. Serious doubts have been raised whether this arrangement provided a 'quick release buckle' or any instant, single-point release mechanism so vital for underwater escape from a downed helicopter. NTSB investigations will reveal the reasons why none of the passengers could escape from the sinking helicopter.

### Design for safe exit after ditching

Helicopters and their crew who fly over sea have to be always prepared for a ditching exigency. In the navy, we used to fly



*A civilian Bell 412 with flotation gear deployed.*

the single-engine Allouettes over sea without doors. This was not for any thrill or photo opportunities. It was meant to facilitate easy egress from the helicopter should any failure necessitate a ditching into the sea.

We operated without floats where a downed helicopter would sink rapidly. Therefore, no effort was spared to enable easy and quick underwater exit as per a drill that the aircrew trained in at regular intervals. A quick-release buckle (QRB) on the waist provided instant release from the four-point harness. Such QRBs are found on all types of aircraft for obvious rea-

sons. Bigger helicopters with doors like the offshore configuration of AW139 are specifically designed with floats, liferaft, markings, emergency lights and easily deployable emergency exits, all of which serve a singular purpose – safe egress from a helicopter that lands up in the drink.

Fitment of emergency floatation gear is not a guarantee against helicopters sinking or developing unusual attitudes inside water. An Indian Navy Kamov-28 that ditched at sea in March 2009 capsized and sank due to faulty operation of floats. On 29 April 2017, an AW139 from Abu Dhabi Aviation undertook controlled ditching due to a gear box malfunction. The helicopter ditched upright but inverted soon after due to deflation of the left aft float. Fortunately, in both cases the passengers and crew managed to evacuate the aircraft in time by following the emergency egress procedure meticulously.

### Helicopter Underwater Escape Training

Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) prepares crew and passengers to deal with the unlikely event of helicopter ditching into water. In a controlled ditching, if all goes well, floats operate and nobody panics, there will be adequate time for crew and passengers to unbuckle and evacuate. However, water is a terribly unforgiving medium.

In unplanned ditching, if the aircraft inverts or floods with water, life can ebb out in seconds. Brace for impact, orient yourself, take a deep breath, wait for the violent motion to stop, operate the emergency exit, unbuckle and out you go. That's all there is time for. A ditching like the one in East River, New York where the aircraft inverted in icy waters under poor light conditions is perhaps as tough as it gets.

### Risk appraisal from a ditching perspective

Operations that allow people to be strapped up with 8-point safety harnesses has to undergo a thorough risk appraisal to ensure that escape is possible even under the worst case scenario of ditching. Passenger safety is supreme. The odd tourist who undertakes a flight once in a while cannot be expected to undergo a full-scale HUET training. Hence it is paramount that all equipment used in the aircraft undergo a thorough risk appraisal from the ditching perspective if over-water flights are envisaged. Briefings cannot be perfunctory or leave things to imagination. When you are upside down in the water, even the most mundane task can pose daunting challenges as breath runs out.

Without discouraging the versatility of helicopter operations or loading operators with impractical regulatory requirements, there is a need to ensure that over-water flights provide every chance to the passenger and crew to undertake a safe emergency, underwater egress from a ditched helicopter. Without this, the safety and risk assessment matrix is not complete as revealed by New York's deadly crash. We don't have to look far. The offshore helicopter industry flies over water 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. There is much to learn from offshore operators who have undertaken safe over-water operations for years, learning through many costly crashes and innumerable loss of lives.

### Helicopters and Underwater Escape

Let the East River crash raise some questions in your mind



*The RAN's HUET is a state of the art device that teaches aircrew and frequent passengers the correct procedure to escape from a ditched aircraft. This form of training is not given to casual or opportunity passengers, who despite verbal pre-flight briefings will only have a rudimentary idea of what to do in an emergency.*

every time you sign up for an over-water flight. Take the briefing seriously. Ask questions. Familiarise with the gear. Rehearse till you get the confidence. Better prepared is halfway home! ✈

### A Bit of Historical Trivia...

*By Ed. I found this whilst trolling through some old magazines. It would seem the author may have harboured the same old inter-service rivalries that his or her predecessors have had for as long as aircraft have been flying...*

**The Naval Pilot.** On a carrier, the Naval Aviator looks over at the catapult Officer who gives the run-up signal by rotating his finger above his head. The pilot pushes the throttle forward, verifies that all flight controls are operational, checks all gauges and gives the Cat Officer a brisk salute, continuing the Navy tradition of asking permission to leave the ship. The Cat Officer drops to one knee while swooping his arm forward and pointing down deck, granting that permission. The pilot is immediately catapulted and becomes airborne.

**The Air Force Pilot.** We've all seen Air Force pilots at the air force base look up just before taxiing for take-off and the ground crew waits until the pilot's thumb is sticking straight up. The crew chief then confirms that he sees the thumb, salutes, and the Air Force pilot then departs. This time-tested tradition is the last link in the Air Force safety chain to confirm that the pilot does not have his thumb up his bum.

**The Army Pilot.** If you've ever seen an Army helicopter pilot preparing for take off, you will note the pilot gives the ground crew a thumbs up before he is given hover signals. There are two theories about the origin of this gesture. One is that it shows that the pilot has identified which of his digits is the thumb so he will be able to properly operate his controls. The most compelling theory, however, is that this is to show the ground crew that the pilot does indeed know which way is up.

### Pilot Criminal Charge a Stark Reminder



The decision by the British Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to instigate criminal proceedings against the pilot of a British Hawker Hunter jet which crashed into the A27 near Shoreham in the UK is a stark reminder of the responsibilities of pilots in air display situations.

The CPS has announced it will charge Andrew Hill with manslaughter by gross negligence in relation to the deaths of 11 people at the 2016 Shoreham Airshow.

The reviewing lawyer from the CPS Special Crime Division, Simon Ringrose, made the announcement to families of the deceased at a private meeting in Lewes on March 21. Simon Ringrose said 'The Crown Prosecution Service has considered a full file of evidence received from Sussex Police in relation to the deaths of 11 men at the Shoreham Airshow in 2015.'

'At approximately 1.20pm on 22 August 2015 a Hawker Hunter aircraft piloted by Andrew Hill attempted to perform a loop manoeuvre as part of an aerobatic display. The aircraft failed to complete the manoeuvre and crashed onto the A27 dual carriageway. Eleven men who were either in vehicles on the carriageway or standing by the roadside were killed in the incident. Mr. Hill was thrown clear of the aircraft and, although seriously injured, he survived.'

'Sussex Police conducted a thorough and detailed investigation into the incident and in November 2017 submitted a full file of evidence to the CPS in relation to the actions of the pilot, Andrew Hill. In accordance with the Code for Crown prosecutors, I have considered whether there is sufficient evidence to charge Mr. Hill with any offence and if so whether it is in the public interests to do so.'

'Following a careful review of the evidence I have found there is sufficient evidence to charge Andrew Hill with the manslaughter by gross negligence of the 11 men who died. I have also authorised a further charge against Mr. Hill of endangering an aircraft, contrary to Article 137 of the Air Navigation Order 2009.'

'Mr. Hill will be formally charged with the offences and will appear before the courts in due course. I would like to remind all concerned that criminal proceedings have now commenced and the defendant has a right to a fair trial. It is extremely important that there should be no reporting, commentary or sharing of information online which could in any way prejudice these proceedings.'

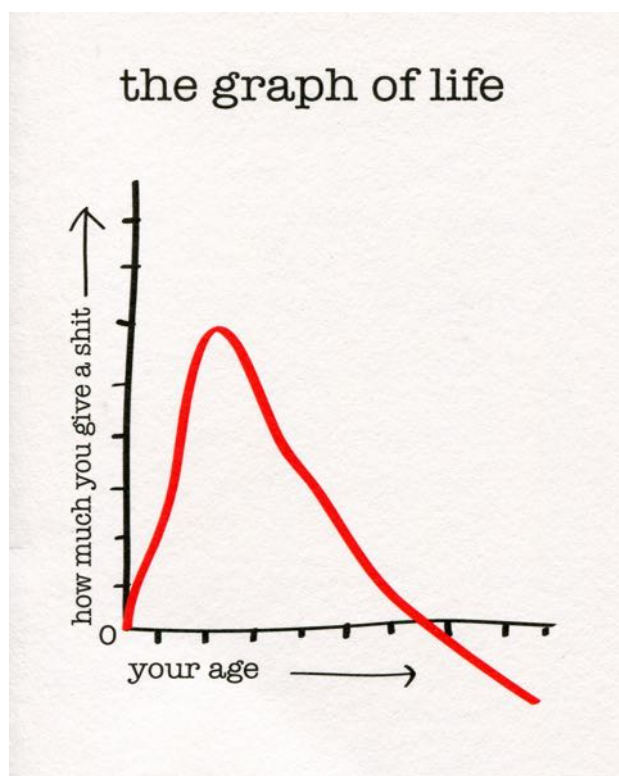
Mr. Hill (54) of Hertfordshire, appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court on April 19, 2018, where he entered a plea of not guilty. He was released on bail and will be expected to formally enter pleas at the Old Bailey in May of this year.

Air show accidents are relatively common, with more than a dozen reported each year around the world – but in most cases they involve death or injury only to those aboard the aircraft. In 2010 the pilot of a Tiger Moth was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and negligent injury when his aircraft killed one and injured 38 in Germany. There have been other such charges but typically, they are rare.

The British CPS decision is a stark reminder that pilots are expected to comply with the provisions of their relevant countries' Air Navigation Orders and, should they be in breach of them, can face the consequence of criminal charges. ✈

## The Graph of Life

I had a birthday not that long ago (each one seems a bit more miraculous than the last, which is sobering), and a kind friend gave me a card bearing the following cover. I was struck by the truthfulness of it. What do you think? ✈



## True or False?

The following article appears in Wikipedia, which uses as its reference a book by Francis K. Mason 1966:



*"The first production Sea Hawk was the F.1, which first flew in 1951, entered service two years later with 806 Squadron, first based at Brawdy, then transferred to HMS Eagle. All Sea Hawks were in service by the mid-1950s and eventually over 500 were built.*

*During service evaluations of the Sea Hawk, both Australian and Canadian pilots from each of their respective naval services would fly examples of the aircraft, and there were official suggestions they would adopt the type as standard equipment. However, not nations were also interested in American built aircraft; only a handful of Sea Hawks would be transferred to either nation, notably some would operate from the flight deck of the Australian Majestic class aircraft carrier **HMAS Sydney**, though these did not enter full squadron service."*

The research team for 'FlyBy' have some doubt about the veracity of the above report, but would be interested from anybody who has a view on it. Thanks to Ron Marsh for forwarding it on. ✈

## Mystery Photo No 42



Mystery photo No.43 was found in a file in the Fleet Air Arm Museum. It shows an oriental lady standing near a Sea Venom. Can you tell the webmaster what the significance



of this event was, and when it occurred? Click [here](#) to send your answer.

### Mystery Photo No 41 Answer



Mystery Photo No.41 was of a Sycamore Helicopter operating from the Maitland area during the big floods of early 1955. Navy responded quickly to the emergency and the first Sycamore, flown by **Gordon McPhee**, was airborne within half an hour of receiving the first call.

Over the next few days up to five Sycamores conducted rescues, medical evacuations and dropped essential supplies to the beleaguered people of the district. One medivac was of a mentally ill patient who, despite handcuffs and shackles, required three men to get him into the aircraft. Another unusual job was to lift a kerosene refrigerator from the local Pub to a hospital across the Namoi River, to allow the hospital to keep essential drugs cool.



One aircraft was lost (see below) in a dramatic rescue attempt that went wrong – McFee had flown to the West Maitland signal box in which a group of men were marooned. The box collapsed just as he reached it. Two men grabbed the winch cable but lost their grip during the rescue as the helo tried to manoeuvre around adjacent power lines. The aircraft then lost directional control and spun into the torrent. The pilot was rescued by an Army Duck five miles downstream and the Observer a mile further on. McFee was flying again almost immediately afterwards, but the two men were drowned.

You can see a lot more about the flood relief [here](#), and can see our full collection of Mystery Photos [here](#).

### Are You At Risk?



*By Ed. The following article appears on our website, but is reproduced here for your information.*

Anybody in the Navy who has more than a few grey hairs on their head will, in all probability, have been exposed to Asbestos. Ships of the day were riddled with it, mostly in the lagging around pipes snaking along the passageways and though mess decks. You'll probably remember painting them, which in some cases was all that held them together.

I remember serving on HMS Eagle in the 70s, and how the air turned a faint blue colour whenever an aircraft thumped down on the flight deck not far above the accommodation I was in. We thought it was just dust, but I suspect it was more sinister than that.

Anyway, I recently saw an email chain that prompted me to write this reminder. It was from a sailor who had been a crew member of HMAS Parramatta back in the mid-60s, and therefore in a 'high-risk' asbestos environment. He was initially placed on an annual screening program, then downgraded to a bi-annual program. He stopped participating about 20 years ago as he was not showing any symptoms and believed that he was safe after 15 years of screening without any indications of asbestosis.

He's recently had a call from a mate, however, who also served in a destroyer in the mid 60s. Hd's just turned 75 and had been diagnosed with the disease after suffering from shortness of breath. His story is a sad one, as told in a recent email:

*"Regarding this matter and for your information I was in the 5th entry. Last February, after many regular tests throughout the years I developed a cough which I could not get rid of. Subsequent tests confirmed advanced pleural mesothelioma in April.*

*I underwent a course of chemotherapy but despite this the mesothelioma has spread to my abdomen. In mid February this year I was given 2 months to live because there are no more treatment options available for me. At the moment I am at home being cared for by my wife and family and receiving assistance from the my GP and the local palliative care team.*

*I had hoped, being a no- smoker, that I might have dodged the bullet, but unfortunately that is not the case.*

*Good luck to all the guys out there. Get your lung health checked by at least your GP, if not your thoracic specialist."*

Asbestosis is a chronic lung disease caused by scarring of lung tissue which stems from long term exposure to asbestos. Symptoms include wheezing, shortness of breath, a persistent cough or chest pain. Complications may include lung cancer, mesothelioma and pulmonary heart disease. The particularly disturbing feature of the disease is that once you have been exposed to the trigger (asbestos) there is a 'latency period' that may last for years before the symptoms present. A good article on the disease can be read [here](#).

The moral of this story is simple. If you served on ships with asbestos, or you believe you were exposed to it in some other way, then you should be having regular check ups. Talk to your doctor about it, and also register with DVA if you are concerned about your health. ✈

## Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor,

A very good Newsletter and many thanks. I was looking at the videos of early deck landings, having read most of the writings of Capt. Winkle Brown. In one of the embedded videos mention is made & a pic shown of a F7U Cutlass landing on the Aircraft Carrier, USS Hancock.

In 1958, HMAS Melbourne was berthed alongside the Hancock at the wharf at Yokosuka, Japan. At that time, the Hancock was in her pre-rebuild condition, straight wooden deck, and towering over the Melbourne. There was one very sleek jet aircraft on the Flight Deck. I had been invited to have lunch on board and then look over the ship. I was told of the make of the aircraft but had forgotten its details. Now, on the video, there it is! Seeing the name 'Cutlass' brought it all back to me! At the time, I thought 'what a fantastic looking aircraft!' My aviation knowledge at the time ranged from Tiger Moth, Auster, Vampire, Firefly and Sea Fury. The Cutlass 'out of this world!' Later, the Hancock was reorganised into an angled steel deck with Mirrors and all mod cons.

Some years ago, my wife and I were given a full tour of the USS Carl Vinson whilst she was in San Diego, loaded up with F18s and just about to head for the Gulf. She had all mod cons, but I was amazed to see that, in the dining mess deck, the old age "plates" were plastic and the same molding as our 'old' mess plates where your gravy ran into the custard, etc, etc. Maybe the Americans reckoned our Mirror system was good therefore our dining system must have been good as well!

Best regards, Barry Lister ✈

Dear Editor,

Sue & I experienced and very moving and informative ANZAC Day at Norfolk Island this year. Mention was made of not only of the men and women from Australia and New Zealand but also the Norfolk Islanders and the people from all the other South Pacific islands who left their homes to serve.



I also caught up with Wes Cooper who many FAA members would remember. Wes has now retired from full time work and is heavily involved with the Norfolk Island RSL.

In 1963 a detachment of Sycamores from 723 was deployed onto HMAS Sydney to ferry the Governor General, Viscount De L'Isle, ashore at Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands.

It was the sight of 852 landing at the oval at NI that inspired the then 13 year old Wesley Cooper to join the RAN as an AA when he turned 16. In the photo below, it is interesting to note that the only workers on the flight were in overalls.



To add another degree of separation to this story, Guy Cooper's brother-in-law's brother was responsible for clearing the oval of cows for the Sycamores to land.



*Standing from left to right: Errol Shelley, Barry Bachelor, John Macartney, Don Parkinson. Kneeling: Dick Wrobel and John Sloan who supplied the HMAS Sydney photos.*

Norfolk Island is a great place to hold a reunion and B Company, 4 RAR/NZ took advantage of this and had a get together

for ANZAC Day. Perhaps some bright eyed, bushy tailed Sycamore type person would like to organise one for ANZAC Day next year. Ed Bell did I see your hand go up? Nothing like a good volunteer ☺

John (Mac) Macartney ✈

Dear Editor,

I was wondering if you can help. I'm trying find some information on this Vampire (see photo). There were only 5 T34s made for the RAN.( bird cage):

A2-79 837 crashed 67  
A2-79 -838 crashed 69  
A2 79-839 crashed 56  
A2 79 -840  
and A2 79-841 crashed 56

I've been doing some research and only found one Vampire that made a wheels up landing (A2 79-842) in 1959 but that was not a T34A (not a birdcage) type , unless 842 was a T-34 . Are any of your readers able to help me?

Cheers

Steven Demanuele

*By Ed: If you are able to provide Steven with any advice, please click [here](#) to respond to him. ✈*



**More letters to the Editor are on page 16.**

### DHAAT Recommends Citation for RANHFV

Forty-six years after it was disbanded, the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal has recommended the RAN HFV be awarded a Unit Citation for Gallantry.



The Citation, which is a rhodium-plated rectangular frame surrounding a ribbon of deep green, is a warrant presented to selected ADF

Units for acts of extraordinary gallantry in action. The Citation consists of a certificate to the unit, signed by the Governor General, and insignia that can be worn by individuals to denote their membership of the unit once their Commanding Officer has been formally invested with the Citation.

### The RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam

The RANHFV flew active service operations with the 135th Assault Helicopter Company of the United States Army during the Vietnam War from 22 October 1967 to 8 June 1971. Over this period slightly less than 200 men in four contingents fought against a committed and resourceful foe in a hostile and difficult environment. The unit lost five men killed in action, 22 wounded and earned for itself a reputation second to none for consistent gallantry in action. Their story can be found here.

Over the total period of its Service, the RANHFV comprised four consecutive Flights of 48 personnel. Each Flight comprised eight pilots, four observers, four aircrewmembers and a team of maintenance personnel from each aircraft specialisation – plus essential support personnel of cooks, supply clerks, writers and photographers. All fitted in to the 135th AHC according to specialisation and rank. The HFV personnel were well experienced in their trade and in service life.

The 135th AHC was new in country as was HFV1 when the integrated unit formed up at Vung Tau in South Vietnam in Sep/Oct of 1967 with 26 troop carrying UH-1H Iroquois and 8 UH-1C gunships. After a short work-up period the 135th began operational flying and very high flying rates were not long in coming. Daily missions in support of Army infantry units comprised 10 troop carriers, 4 gunships, the command and control aircraft and a spare troop carrier and could occur anywhere in the II, III or IV Corps, in and around Saigon and the Delta area. The day began very early and often finished late in the evening.

The high rate of flying demanded high rates of aircraft availability and continuous strong efforts from the maintenance organisation, working all night as well as during the day to maintain the availability rate required. Spares were often a problem. It all meant a well-functioning, high performance, concerted effort from everybody in unison and this was the daily norm.

Flying troop carrying aircraft in a formation of 10 day day-in day-out often into small areas with high vegetation around them tested every pilot's nerve, fortitude and skill. Each troop landing made the aircraft vulnerable to ground fire with the enemy normally waiting until troops were on the ground until opening fire. Night operations without lights or landing aids added further stress. Monthly flying hours were as high as 170 for some Aircrewmembers, 120 – 140 was the norm for all aircrew.

Although some individuals deservedly won decorations for their outstanding performances in the many situations which arose, many did not. This was, in part, because of quotas for

#### Wanted

On Navy Day 1963 a formation of Wessex 31As flew under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Does anybody have any photographs of that event? If so please contact the [webmaster](#).

There was also a whisper of an unsanctioned bridge under-fly by a Venom. If this is true we'd love to have a photo of that, too.



135th helicopters discharge their troops at LZ-5 (Max Speedy)

medals in the Australian system and because the extraordinary became regarded as 'the ordinary': 'just another day in the Delta', as was the saying! The most glaring shortfall in the system was the lack of an award which recognised the supreme achievements of the whole Unit.

### Criteria and Consideration

The US awards system provided for a Unit Citation whose purpose was to recognise superior teamwork resulting in excellent operational performance. This provision was ideal for units such as ours, but the Australian system did not have such a provision until 1992.

In appreciating that there was at last an award in the Australian system of honours and awards, a submission to the Valour Inquiry was raised in May of 2011 though the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia, which argued for consideration of a Meritorious Unit Citation for the HFV. The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal Inquiry was sympathetic to the proposal but advised it was outside its Terms of Reference. It was to take another six years before the Minister of the day agreed to expand the Terms of Reference to allow the Tribunal to inquire into the award of a Unit Citation for the Flight. You can read those TORs [here](#).

From mid-2017 a number of written submissions were prepared for the DHAAT, including by RADM **Neil Ralph**, RADM **Mark Campbell**, CMDR **Max Speedy** and CAPT **Rob Ray**. The Tribunal also conducted hearings during which it interviewed many former HFV members in support of the proposal.

The Tribunal's report was released in early May of 2018, and goes into great detail regarding the evidence brought before it and its reasons for its recommendations. You can read it [here](#). Interestingly, it considered the award of a Meritorious Unit Citation, as suggested, would not properly reflect the extraordinary and consistent level of gallantry displayed by the whole of the HFV, and instead recommended the award of the higher Unit Citation for Gallantry.

Whilst there were many examples of exceptional gallantry and bravery throughout the period RANHFV was deployed, the

Unit Citation for Gallantry recognises extraordinary gallantry in service of the collective unit over a period of time. Only four UCGs have been approved since their introduction and it is properly regarded as the most prestigious honour that can only be granted after careful and forensic examination of the circumstances of a unit's service.

In making its recommendations the Tribunal noted:

*"...that the performance of the RANHFV is a clear example where the unit as a whole, and every member individually, performed so outstandingly through the entire campaign that official recognition of all members of the unit is warranted.*

*In this instance, whilst individual awards for gallantry in action were completely justified, given the mutual interdependence specific to the RANHFV, the Tribunal considered it would be inappropriate if all members were not recognised for their extraordinary gallantry."*

Although the effort to achieve this historic recommendation can be attributed to many people, Max Speedy's written submission earned particularly favourable comment by the Tribunal. It is an interesting document as it provides a compelling snapshot of the achievements of the Flight, and why the service it provided was truly sustained and outstanding. You can read it [here](#).

The Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia is delighted to hear of the recommendation and urges the Minister to announce the

### Wanted

Our request in the last FlyBy for Tracker articles, photos and stories didn't get much response. Please help by sending what you have to the [webmaster](#), to assist in making the forthcoming Tracker article as accurate and informative as possible.



award as soon as possible. It also extends its warmest congratulations to all those who assisted the Tribunal in their deliberations, and to the nearly two hundred men who served with such extraordinary gallantry over the period of the Flight's tenure whose story is so compelling

Time has remembered them as a Unit that performed in the very highest traditions of the Fleet Air Arm, and the award of the Citation would cement that view into history. ✈

## July FlyBy Will Be Late

By the time you read this edition of FlyBy, the Editor will be here:



As you might imagine, connectivity in this part of the world is not great, so the July FlyBy will be a little late, and may be a little (or lot!) thinner. Further, if you plan to email the Editor over the next month or so be prepared for a wait before you get a response. The same goes for queries on the website. ✈

## Did You Pick the April Fool?



The last edition of *FlyBy* featured a story about how one of the few remaining Fairey Swordfish warbirds in the world had been fitted with a turbine engine as the original Bristol Pegasus was no longer supportable.

Granted the last edition wasn't distributed in April, so that was a big red herring, but the original 'TurboFish' article published by *Vintage Wings of Canada* was – on April 1<sup>st</sup>, to be exact!

*Vintage Wings* is notorious for producing well developed and

(almost) believable April Fool stories, which they scatter amongst their excellent other articles at the relevant time.

So, nobody has put a PT-6 turbine engine into a Stringbag, and if they want to keep the airframe in one piece, never will.

You can see 'Vintage Wings' stories [here](#). They are invariably excellent – beautifully researched, evocative and well worth a look for anyone with an interest in Aviation. ✈

## Airwolves' Anzac Day, Fort Rucker

ANZAC Day was recently commemorated at the United States Army's Aviation Centre of Excellence in Fort Rucker, Alabama by RAN personnel currently posted to the United States Navy's Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 40, known as the Airwolves.

Whilst the ANZAC Day services remembered those personnel who had served in all wars, military and peacekeeping operations, the Fort Rucker service focused on those personnel who deployed as members of the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam and the United States Army's 135th Assault Helicopter Company. Several of the veterans had travelled from Australia for the annual event as well as to spend time with the US veterans in attendance that they had served alongside, reflecting on their joint efforts many years ago.

RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam was formed by members of 723 Squadron in 1967 following a request from the United States Army to send more helicopter crews to the conflict. Australia responded and on 14 July 1967, the unit was formed and was integrated with their US counterparts flying Iroquois helicopters in both gunship and utility roles.

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the combined Australian-United States unit was renamed the Experimental Military Unit, colloquially known as the Emu's. Since this was a unique unit, they required a unique motto to which they chose 'Get the bloody job done'.

Attending the ANZAC Day service was LTCOL Fred Dunaway (US Army, ret.) who was the Commanding Officer of the 135th Assault Helicopter Company from 1970-1971. He said the Emu's "often flew in close proximity to the ground and close to the scene of action, requiring the crews to implement all of their training, personal ability and courage". He also stated that "helicopters were frequently shot at while performing these manoeuvres which required challenging rescue operations". The crews were supported throughout the campaign by their maintenance and support teams as well as members of the Fleet Air Arm based at HMAS Albatross, Nowra, NSW. During their four years in Vietnam, hundreds of flights supporting joint combat operations were flown. Unfortunately Australia's casualties included five killed, 10 seriously wounded and many more with other injuries.

### † REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of Graham Wright, Matt "Jake" Jacobs, Laurence Mena-due and Les Childs. You can read a little more of these sad events on our [Obituary page here](#).



Anzac Day at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Left to Right: Mr David Bengé RAN Ret'd (LSATA SAR Diver); CDRE David Farthing, DSC, RAN Ret'd. (CO RANHFV 3<sup>rd</sup> contingent); LEUT Grant Rushford; LEUT Aaron Cochrane; LSA Leeann Mumby; CPO Rod Tremlett and LTCOL Fred Dunaway US Army Ret'd. (CO 135<sup>th</sup> EMU 70-71.). Image Fiona Tremlett.

Also attending the service was CDRE David Farthing, DSC, RAN (ret.) who was the Commanding Officer of the third RAN contingent. He said “the camaraderie and mateship has only grown over the last few years”.

Leading Seaman Aircrewman Leeann Mumby who attended the service in Fort Rucker as an RAN representative said “it was an absolute honour to meet the Australian and US veterans that served in Vietnam”. She added that “listening to their remarkable stories, that they were able to describe with comedic flair, was eye opening”.

The three Royal Australian Navy personnel that attended this year’s commemorations are currently conducting MH-60R Seahawk operational conversion training at United States Navy Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 40 in Jacksonville, Florida. This Squadron has been supporting the training of Royal Australian Navy MH-60R aircrew since 2013 and demonstrates Australia’s continued interoperability and alliance with the United States Navy.

The three personnel were also members of 723 Squadron last year when the 50th Anniversary of Helicopter Flight Vietnam was attended by more than 200 veterans and their families. CDRE Farthing noted that the “50th anniversary was excellent recognition for those veterans”. 723 Squadron now trains Army and Navy rotary wing aircrew using contemporary Eurocopter EC135 aircraft and is operated as the Joint Helicopter School whilst also operating the Bell 429 helicopter.

Author: LEUT Aaron Cochrane, RAN. ✪

## Did You Work On Sea Kings?

Back in August 2016 we were asked to post a notice on our

website, as follows:

*“A recent review into the death of a serving member by the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force concluded that the member’s cancer was in all likelihood caused by exposure to respirable asbestos fibres, petroleum, petroleum by-products, toxins or a combination of these whilst serving at 817 Squadron from 1999 to 2012.*

*Former 817 Squadron members should be aware that the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) provides health care to eligible ex-ADF members suffering from cancer, even where the cancer was not caused by their ADF service. An ex-member may be eligible if they served on an operational deployment during their career or served at least three years between December 1972 and April 1994.*

*Where an ex-member is concerned that a medical condition may have been caused by their ADF service they should consider lodging a claim with DVA. Additional information on the process is available on the DVA website: <http://www.dva.gov.au/benefits-and-payments/compensation> or by contacting DVA on 133 254.”*

We believed that this advice begged more questions than it answered, and since then have been striving to find out more. It has not been easy, with what can only be described as obfuscation from certain areas within Defence HQ. It has taken us almost two years to get any form of progress.

After appealing directly to CDF we were finally granted approval to view the Inspector General’s report, but not to remove a copy from the locality. The National President and Marcus Peake therefore attended at the agreed place in Canberra on 14 May 2018.

## Background

The member had joined the RAN in March of 1997 and was

subsequently posted to HS817 Squadron where, aside from one 18-month stint, he served until the Sea King retired from service in 2012. In March of that year he was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma and widespread metastases, from which he died in early 2014.

The member was not a smoker nor was there any history of kidney cancer in his family, so the Inspector General conducted an investigation to determine, prima facie, if his cancer could be attributed to his Service; and if so, what measures should be taken to protect other people who may be at risk.

### Facts and Findings

The report concluded that during his time on HS817 Squadron the member was likely to have been exposed to a range of potentially harmful products. These included engine oil lines, the shrouds of which were found to contain asbestos, and many chemical products, 24 of which contained Toluene Dyes (exposure to Toluene increases the risk of collecting dust carcinomas).

In the absence of any family history of cancer and the lack of any other identified source of exposure, the IG concluded that the member's illness was most likely caused by his Service. The report noted, however, that it was rare for carcinomas to cause kidney cancer, nor is such a cancer common in one so young. In that regard the case was very unusual.

The report then went into some length on the practices in the Squadron during the time the member served. It reached the conclusion there was either inadequate knowledge of the hazards associated with some materials, and/or a less than optimum regime for avoiding (or at least minimising) exposure to those that were known. That is not to say that progress was not made, but the steps were slow, and in many cases safety processes were not adequately enforced.

The report also examined to what extent such hazards existed from 2012 to the present. It noted that aircraft post the Sea King era do not have the same hazardous maintenance requirements (for example, entering fuel tanks). Further, there is far greater understanding of chemical hazards and a much stronger regime of safety practice and enforcement in the Fleet Air Arm. It concluded that the processes and practices now in place are adequate to avoid tragic cases like this one.

Whilst the IG's report was thorough within its scope, it did not, in our view, adequately cover the matter of risks for other people in the member's cohort. Further, it did not raise whether the same hazards existed on other Squadrons and/or Flights of the time. We know that some components of the Sea King were not replicated on other types – for example, the nature of the oil line shrouding – but many of the fuels, oils, cleaners and chemicals used on HS817 may well have been in common use elsewhere at that time, and the practices and processes in using them were likely to have been similar.

### Are Others At Risk?

Our National President discussed the report's finding with COMFAA on 15 May. It is important to place on record that he has consistently engaged us on this matter, within the limits of his authority, and there is no doubt that he has given the interests of past members much thought.

In consideration of the circumstances of this case a possible conclusion is that everyone who worked on Sea Kings prior to 2012 – and possibly those who worked on other aircraft of that era – had the same level of risk as the deceased member. We believe this is incorrect for the following reasons:

- In the absence of any other explanation the member's exposure to potential hazards on HS817 was attributed as the cause of his illness – but it is known that carcinomas seldom cause kidney cancer, and respiratory fibres (such as from asbestos) are more likely to affect the lungs. This was a very unusual case.
- Not everybody who was working on HS817 (or other units) would have been exposed to the same level of hazard as the deceased member. In fact it would be almost impossible to identify which people were at a 'high' level of risk and which were not: and even if they were exposed to that level, it does not mean they will necessarily get cancer.
- There is no evidence of a trend of similar cases in the timeframe involved: indeed, we are not aware of any others of this type.

COMFAA is of the view that the best strategy to manage the situation is to make all members of that timeframe aware of what happened; to encourage them to monitor their health, and provide them with options should they be concerned. On balance, we agree. The suggestion that some form of screening be established is impracticable as the medical fraternity are at a loss to know what sort of screening would be effective in the context of the three dot points above.

Those who served in HS817 and other Squadrons at that time are scattered to the four winds, and this magazine is probably the most effective networking mechanism we have. So – if you were one of them please take on board the following advice.

- Monitor your health and, if you have any concerns visit your GP for advice and a check-up. Many of us are getting on in years, so this should be something you are doing in any case!
- If you are concerned that a medical condition may have been caused by your service, register with DVA. Their website is [here](#), and their phone number is 133 254. ✈

### How Do They Do It?

Here's an interesting video, for anyone who has not seen it before. It shows how Boeing manages to produce over forty 737s each month. [Click the image below to view.](#) ✈



## Wall of Service Update

The Wall of Service is literally that – a brick wall outside the FAAM at Albatross that bears brass plaques of those who have served in the FAA.

At the last count it had 913 plaques upon it, and this number grows each year as people purchase new ones to be affixed there. Having your name on the wall is a wonderful way to preserve your little bit of history, or perhaps you might consider it as a special gift to someone who has everything.

Order No. 18 with 12 plaques has been received back from the Foundry and will be fixed to the wall in the next week or three, weather permitting. Order No 39 is currently open with six applications so far. We need at least 10 to submit it to the Foundry. Names so far are:

**Cook C.J, Edgcombe G.S, Huntress W.D, Young S.L, Duffey K,** and one other.

You can find out more about the Wall, and how to order a plaque, by clicking [here](#). ✈

**Stop Press. Advice from Canberra is that the proposal to award the ASM(CT) to aircrew involved in [Operation Bursa](#) is still progressing through the system. It is hoped that more news will be available in the next FlyBy.**

## Letters to the Editor (continued)

Dear Editor,

I was appointed to 750 squadron in Sept 66 from 816 operating off Butterworth. 750 Observer training squadron had moved from Culdrose to Hal Far in Malta and then to Lossie.

My C.O. was Monty Mellor who had been in the Pacific at the end of the war. He retired to go Tea planting in Ceylon and then decided to rejoin the FAA as a passed-over two and a half. The senior pilot was Eric Taylor who famously pulled off both wing tips of a Gannet pulling out from rocketing in Northern Ireland, and amazingly managed to land at presumably at a rather fast speed!!!

Apart from usual Observer training in Both Sea Princes and Sea Venoms, I was the Station IRE for these and the Devon and Vampires.

In 1967 Winkle Brown took over from Doug Parker as station C.O.. Winkle had come from Bonn and hence needed a check out for instrument flying, so I flew with him several times in both the Devon and Vampire, including one trip in the Devon when he decided that he'd like to land on a beach over near the isle of Mull. I having signed for the aircraft only breathed again once we were airborne [after a perfect landing] When I asked him how he knew the sand was hard? He replied "it was low tide lad!!" Anyway after leaving the Navy in Dec 68 and spending 5 months sailing and motoring our 32ft Fairey Ata-



A reminder of the reunions coming up:

### Vietnam Veteran's Reunion, Old Bar NSW

**When:** 17-21 August 2018

**Where:** Old Bar, NSW

**Cost:** Depends on the events you choose to attend.

**Contact:** John Macartney (02) 6557 4165

Open to all Vietnam Vets and their family and friends, and particularly 9 Squadron personnel. Full details can be found [here](#).

### 2018 General FAAA Reunion

**When:** Thursday 25 - Sunday 27 October 2018

**Where:** Nowra Locality

**Cost:** Depends on the events you choose to attend.

The big one! This reunion includes different events including an official 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner. You need to register now, so click [here](#) to find out all the details. ✈

lanta from the Thames via Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, Marseilles and Hyerers Elba and a port near Rome where we left the boat for friends to use and ship back to OZ. We lived at Avalon and in 1973 a disastrous fire destroyed everything including my Great great Grandfathers Trafalgar medals and all my flying Log Books.

Just recently I saw that after Winkle died aged 97 his family donated his Log Books to the FAA museum. On writing to them asking if I could get copies of his time as CO of Lossie, I got a delightful letter from Malcolm Tennant saying he went through 750 whilst I was there and sent me several pages of Winkle's immaculately written log book, plus a lot of other 750 squadron details of the time. Incidentally by the end of '68 he had flown 5455 hours and 487 different types!!!

While I was at Lossie Barney Barron was the phot officer and he was retiring to fly in some civilian outfit and wanted a twin engine conversion and instrument rating which we managed at the RN's expense!! He eventually got the job of flying the Scotch Whisky Association's aircraft, luckily right up his alley

Kind regards, Robin Spratt. ✈