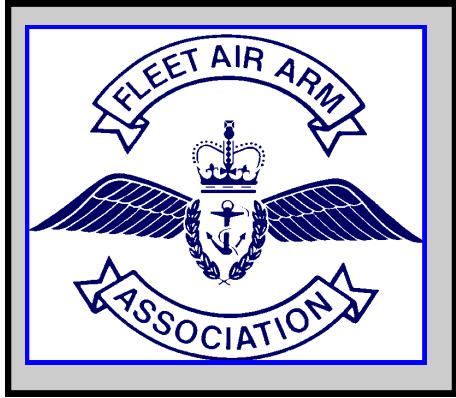


Slipstream

Established HMAS Albatross 1957



**The Quarterly Journal
of the
Fleet Air Arm Association
of Australia Inc.**

Volume 17 Number 4 2006



FOREWORD

CDRE P D Jones, DSC, AM, RAN



It is a great honour to be asked to write the foreword to this edition of SLIPSTREAM. Some of my most vivid career memories are from my time as a young Sub-Lieutenant training to get my bridge watch-keeping certificate in the carrier HMAS MELBOURNE. Since that time I have thoroughly enjoyed my association with the talented and individualistic officers and sailors who glory in the collective name of "birdies".

Since the early days of World War I the Royal Australian Navy recognized that naval aviation was an essential capability for any Fleet to fight and win at sea. The naval aviation achievements of HMA Ships AUSTRALIA, MELBOURNE and SYDNEY in the North Sea during that conflict were pioneering in nature and have their rightful place in annals of naval aviation history. In the wake of World War I the RAN continued within its modest means to lead the way in aspects of naval aviation. In particular it explored the use of naval aviation in expanding the reach and eyes of the Fleet. The purpose-built seaplane carrier HMAS ALBATROSS was the crowning symbol of that innovative thinking.

During World War II the RAN was a second tier participant in the revolution that saw by war's end the aircraft carrier be the locus of maritime power. During that conflict RAN was able to develop a cadre of officers who either flew off or commanded carriers. To many the golden years for the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) were the carrier years. Indeed the achievements of the new HMAS SYDNEY during her 1951 deployment to Korea was impressive by any standard. The contribution of MELBOURNE maintaining security in the Cold War era was equally significant. It was during those years that the Fleet Air Arm grew in stature and a group of leaders emerged that would lead not only the FAA but the Navy and Defence. Admiral Sir Victor Smith headed that legion. We owe him an immense debt for his leadership and wisdom. Others that followed in his wake were heavily influenced by his unremitting professional standards and vision.

The loss of the carrier MELBOURNE was one the Navy's great watershed moments. Her loss and that of her ear marked replacement HMS INVINCIBLE scarred a naval generation. But the Navy under Admiral Hudson's strong hand moved on. In the post-carrier Navy the FAA had to be reborn again. It did so with fledgling steps such as the embarkation of Kiowas and Squirrels in the new FFGs. The 1990 Gulf War and subsequent Operation DAMASK deployments accelerated a process in which the FAA reasserted itself as a key capability plank of the Fleet. In operations from East Timor, the Solomons, Heard Island to Iraq, FAA helicopters performed admirably.

Yet despite these unqualified successes the FAA is now at another watershed. The loss of momentum caused by the Super Seasprite project, the drift of critical expertise out of the Service and then the tragic loss of the Seaking at Nias have all contributed to our current situation. 2007 will prove to be a year of immense significance. I say this because the Seaking Board of Inquiry recommendations will be announced and no doubt implemented with complete resolve. The future of the Seasprite will be decided and the shape of the FAA clarified. In meeting this challenge, all those in and associated with the FAA can take heart from its rich heritage. As I have charted in this foreword, the FAA, like its sister submarine service, has changed in nature and capability over the decades. Both arms of the RAN experienced periods of intense activity and good fortune. Both almost died on a number of occasions only to be revived with even greater energy. In part this was due to perennial financial and personnel shortages. It was also due to a lack of understanding on the part of the mainstream Navy. A less recognized factor is that both arms operate at the technical and operational edge. Both have experienced tragic losses that have left a searing legacy. But the resilience of the FAA and submarine arms is a tribute both to their critical importance to the Navy. But I believe it is more fundamentally due to the spirit and dedication of their people.

The FAA's professionalism, esprit de corps and sense of community are its greatest asset. These qualities will ensure that the FAA of the 21st Century remains the spearhead of the Fleet.



Commander Australian Navy Systems Command Commodore Peter D. Jones, DSC, AM, RAN

Peter Jones joined the Royal Australian Naval College in 1974 and is a gunnery officer by specialisation. His shore appointments have included Research Officer to the Chief of Naval Staff, Director Doctrine, Tactics and Operational Analysis at the Canadian Forces Maritime Warfare Centre, Commander Operations in Maritime Headquarters and the Director of Naval Strategy and Futures in Navy Headquarters.

Commodore Jones' sea-going postings have included Executive Officer of the frigate HMAS *Sydney* and command of the frigate HMAS *Melbourne*. Both ships were involved in UN Sanction enforcement operations against Iraq. In 2002 as Captain, he returned to sea as the Commander Australian Surface Task Group. From September 2002 until April 2003, Commodore Jones commanded the RAN Task Group in the Gulf. For much of that time he also commanded the multinational Maritime Interception Force (MIF). Peter was the Maritime Interception Operations Screen Commander during the 2003 Iraq War and commanded the MIF in the Khawr Abd Allah Waterway clearance operation.

In late 2003, he was promoted Commodore and appointed Director General Integrated Capability Development, within the Capability Development Group. Commodore Jones became Commander Australian Navy Systems Command in July 2006.

Commodore Jones was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his command of *Melbourne* and work in Navy Headquarters, and was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross and a US Legion of Merit for his command of the Maritime Interception Force. He is also a recipient of a Maritime Commander Australia Commendation and a Canadian Chief of Maritime Staff Commendation.

Commodore Jones has maintained an interest in naval strategic and historical affairs throughout his career, with contributions to professional journals and the Australian Dictionary of Biography. He was inaugural editor of the journal *Australia's Navy* and co-edited *Reflections on the RAN*, and contributed to the official *The RAN - Volume 3 of the Australian Centennial History of Defence*. Commodore Jones is a council member of the Australian National Maritime Museum, the Australian Naval Institute, and member of the CSIRO's Wealth From Oceans Flagship Committee.

Front page :

Mike Heneghan, Greg Wise, Tom McDonald and John Arnold taken whilst discussing the story about the re-opening of "The White Ensign Club" a few days earlier with a representative of the South Coast Register, who kindly provided the print from the papers' archives for use in the magazine.

Out with the 'Old' , in with the 'New'

The changing of the guard at HMAS *Albatross*

It's farewell to the Captain of '*Albatross*', Grant Ferguson has been here for almost two years and finds the Navy needs him in other places. It has been a friendly and favourable time and the Association thank him for making the job as easy as possible for us. We also extend our congratulations on the notification of his impending promotion to Commodore and wish him the best for the rest of his career, no doubt his parents Joan and Ian (of Armourer fame) are very proud of his achievement. His father-in-law (another well known aviator of the FAA) probably had a sly smile as well.

To the new Captain, Bob Morrison we extend our congratulations on your appointment and wish you a successful stay amid the multitude of 'birdies', probably be a bit strange for a seaman for a while, a lot of runways instead of water to navigate. We as an association hope that the goodwill from previous CO's continues and together we can continue on the way to combine the older gents with the younger lads, thus ensuring the aims and ideals of the Fleet Air Arm stay alive for many years to come.

Whilst on the subject of postings, another that has helped us a lot during his stay at *Albatross* is also on the move to the USA, I refer to Lt Cdr Mark Koost ; to you and your family goes our thanks for the assistance provided over the years.

The year is rapidly closing, Xmas shopping is at the top of most peoples' " to do list ". Hopefully we have managed to complete most of the things we so carefully listed last New Year's Eve as essential for this year that is now almost gone and if not then you can add them to the top of the list for next year.

It is a time of the year that family and friends really come to the fore and a time to remember those 'Friends, mates and companions' that will not be here this coming festive season. We that are home can appreciate those that are serving overseas and our thought go out to them and we wish them all the best and a safe trip home as soon as possible.

Those members stuck in hospital or other similar places, our thoughts are with you and although you may be inconvenienced repairs to the 'frame' at our stage of life is a forgone conclusion and if they are not attended to we stop altogether. Hopefully there will be a couple of nurses chasing you round the wards to keep you active.

Its not too late to forward your shopping list to that bearded chap at the North Pole, with this new format (email) it goes a lot quicker than the old 'snail mail' so add a few more items onto the list.

Seasons' Greetings to all, have a Merry Xmas, drive safely and we will see you all in 2007

EDITORS' CORNER

Ed,

Apart from death and taxes there is another sure thing, print something that is not 100% correct and someone will come up with the right answer.

In relation to an article in the last magazine by Don Roberts on page 4 regarding the PTA Flight he states that the 'EM' is Owen Hughes, more commonly known as 'Og'. This is not correct as the pictured 'EM' is myself, EM Nev Hall or more commonly known as 'Nobby'. I was posted to the PTA at the same time as 'Tassie' Anning in 1965 and it was certainly one of the best postings I ever had in my 12 years in the Fleet Air Arm.

Interesting to note that at the time of the photo the Commanding Officer of HMAS Queenborough was also a 'birdie', the late Cmdr J Van Gelder.

I have included a photo of a RAAF Sabre being 'held down' by a couple of staunch 'sparkers', the date was 1957 and the occasion was a visit by 8 of these aircraft and they were set upon by our ever present 30kt Westerly winds. Bill Julius (now deceased) in overalls and myself, the site was near 'J' Hangar.

Makes one feel nostalgic to see the ever faithful tool-bag in the 'claw', OH&S and Work-cover would shudder at the ability of that single item to convey so much gear so efficiently.

Thanks for a great magazine. I look forward to receiving my copy each quarter and I have every issue since joining the FAAA in 1993 and often get one or two out and browse over the stories again,

Fond regards to all.

Nev Hall



Dear Ed,

I thought the membership might find the following interesting, I found it very moving.

Margaret and I have attended the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance in the Albert Hall in London for many years. For the past four years, we have bunked into a hotel for the night after which I have marched with the FAAA Armourers Association the following morning at the Cenotaph in Whitehall at which HM leads the ceremonies. On completion of the

ceremony in Whitehall, about 150 FAA Organisations attend a short wreath laying at the FAA Memorial on the Thames Embankment. This year, Margaret and I were in a hotel near London Bridge railway station, so I took the tube to Westminster for the 10 minute walk to Horse Guards Parade where I mustered with about 10,000 others at 0915. On completion of all, at about 1300, I walked to the Westminster tube for the short run back to London Bridge. I was therefore ready for, and enjoying my sit down on the tube train.

Opposite me in the carriage was a middle aged lady with greying hair and five lively but lovely children in her charge; three being every one's idea of the typical piccaninny, two white. The lady, who was white, was eyeing my modest little display of three WW2 gongs. Suddenly she rose, crossed the aisle, gave me a wonderful smile, shook my hand, said "Thank you" (that was all) and then sat down again, obviously believing me to be a battle scared hero. I was so taken aback, I could only mutter "That's very kind of you". A few minutes later, as we were standing by the door ready to abandon ship at London Bridge, I said "You know Ma'am, you have really made my day". As she stepped off with her charges, she gave me another smile and said "Ah yes, but you have made our world". What could one say? She almost reduced me to tears. There I was, having just spent about four hours appreciating approximately 1 3/4 million poor blighters who did not make it, yet here was one little lady expressing appreciation of one who did.

About three hours later, I related the above to my 26 year old grand daughter who said "Oh Grand ad how lovely for you" which, I thought, just about summed it up nicely. There are two aspects of the Whitehall Parade which impressed me most of all. (The whole thing is very impressive to be a part of). The first is the great number of young persons attending as spectators— young couples with little children sitting on Dad's shoulders etc. The other is that apart from the 10,000 participants, there must be even more spectators behind the barriers the whole length of Whitehall and the route around to the saluting base on Horse Guard's Parade where a Royal does a "Thank You", this year the Duke of Kent. So there must have been about 25,000 in all told yet, during the two minutes silence, there was not a sound to be heard, not even a child. Such a silence, in the heart of London, is fascinating.

To end on a lighter note, it is traditional, during the Albert Hall performance, for every one to stand and applaud when the Chelsea Pensioners slow march in. It was last year when the penny dropped for me, as I noticed that many of the pensioners did not have WW2 medals, which makes them younger than me, yet here I was giving them my applause! I consoled myself with the thought that we matelots were ever noted for taking pity on poor 'pongo's'!

Best wishes for the festive season to all "Down Under",

Maurice Ayling

Ed,

I was delighted to see the photograph on page 12 of the last edition. I am pretty certain that it is a shot that I took of mess D5 of which I was Killick at the time, and the laddy who did all the work was an Electrician named Harry Foster, year 1953/1954. His best mates at the time were John Bruce, Max Boyes and "Dad Emmerson" all of 723 Squadron.

There is a photograph of Harry, John and Max on page 78 in the Albatross Collection of Memories in the Albatross Athletic team.

Best wishes to all,

Bob Dumigan.

Ed,

I am trying to find out about an article in Slipstream 2-3 years ago, regarding a possible award for VS 816 personnel who were on the Ship in 1980. This relates to a series of missions to locate and shadow the USSR Fleet in the vicinity of the Gulf.

I would appreciate it if you could locate the article and send it to me. My wife and I enjoy the magazine and also a mate who served at the Tross in mid 50s.

Thanks

Ray 'Beachball' Godfrey

If anyone can assist Ray drop me a note and I will forward the info on—had a look but I can't put my finger on it

Ed,

In relation to your enquiry about the newly proposed aircraft for the FAA.

Curiously, I have been unable to find any details of the embarked capabilities of the new aircraft. The company responsible for the helicopter in Australia has not answered phone calls, e-mails or other correspondence which has sought to gain information. So, I have been unable to confirm if the aircraft is marinised with power fold and a proven securing/traversing system.

My belief is that this particular variant is the Army version without the normal bits and pieces that add a weight penalty but are necessary to operate at sea. My understanding is that the aircraft has completed only initial sea trials and that an embarked wind and ship motion envelope does not therefore exist. The NATO Frigate variant (NFH 90) is equipped with the European Probe and Grid securing system which is not compatible with the system installed in our FFG's and ANZAC's.

So there are potentially major ship modifications implicit with this procurement. I am not sure that these costs have been factored into any cost/benefit studies that I have seen on AIR 9000. (which amongst a number of objectives aims to reduce the numbers of different types of helicopters operated by the ADF).

Cris George

Ed,

In relation to Bill Strahan's article about the dreaded trip across the Nullabor.

I read in the Sydney Daily Telegraph sometime in the 50s of an English journalist who travelled to Perth on the train and he said, "The prettiest sight he had ever seen was the setting sun reflecting off all the empty beer bottles along side the railway lines"

Yours Barry Simpson

Letters to the Editor

Volume 17 No3 2006 PTA Flight

A correction to Don Roberts article on the PTA Flight photo. The EM named as "OGG" Hughes is in fact EM(AW) Nev (ille) Hall and the big bloke "Fury" I believe was a Leading Hand by that time. I was across the water with Sub Lt Peter Bryce onboard HMAS Hobart as the flight controlling party, doing her workup before leaving for Vietnam; little knowing that in approx two months I would be packing my bags and heading off there as well.

PTA was one of those great posting's; we got around the fleet and enjoyed some great times and were always well received by our General Service mates.

Keith Taylor

Some military wisdom...

"A slipping gear could let your M203 grenade launcher fire when you least expect it. That would make you quite unpopular with what's left of your unit."

"Cluster bombing from B-52s is very, very accurate... The bombs are guaranteed to always hit the ground."

"It is generally inadvisable to eject directly over the area you just bombed."

"Don't ever be the first, don't ever be the last, and don't ever volunteer to do anything." U.S. Navy Swabbie

"Blue water Navy truism: There are more planes in the ocean than submarines in the sky." From an old carrier sailor

"When one engine fails on a twin-engine airplane, you always have enough power left to get you to the scene of the crash."

Airspeed, altitude, and brains. Two are always needed to successfully complete the flight."

"Flying the airplane is more important than radioing your plight to a person on the ground incapable of understanding or doing anything about it."

Provided by Michael Sandberg

The White Ensign Club

The renovation of our two demountable rooms on the airfield side of the Fleet Air Arm Museum came about from numerous discussions and suggestions. The rooms were used basically for A. Slipstream production and distribution (the southern building) B. Secretary's Offices and general storage of archives (northern building)

To say they were under used is probably very close to the truth and apart from the odd Committee meetings they were almost idle.

There was at the time quite a bit of renovating going on inside the Museum of Flight and a lot of items were listed as 'not required' so as is the way the bowerbirds started collecting. The first was the array of murals that had been commissioned many years ago to depict the history of the FAA and these were recovered, restored to almost new and positioned around the wall of the southern building. This was probably the catalyst that started things as John Arnold suggested that we remove the wall between the two buildings and make one larger con-joined space that was a lot more usable. Thus it started and from there the ball never seemed to stop rolling.

Discussion was entered into with the Navalman's Association re making it a joint project and sharing the costs of the renovations. Use of the two buildings would leave the FAA without any offices as such and it was agreed that the building that the NAA was using would become the office area for the three sections, FAAAofA, FAA(NSW) and NAA.

The destruction stage never seemed to stop and when it finally faltered there was one very large open space that needed a lot of thought and work to remake. Access to the airfield side was considered essential as it made for a good observation point on Air days and also gave us a large grassed area to use. To this end a large glass sliding door was fitted into the wall on the airfield side, a concrete slab was poured around this and extended out to wards the airfield and both north and south of the doorway. The southern end was ramped to accommodate wheel-chairs and those not quite so steady on their feet. A bit of colouring was spread on the top and then topsoil and turf was used to level the total area and dress it up.



Furniture was a necessity and with the aid of the internet and a few truck trips to Sydney we organized another couple of large

tables and a lot of classy stackable chairs.

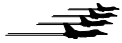
Next the northern room, and this certainly took most of the work. It was decided that at least a small kitchen was needed, also a bar area and bar and as well it was determined a stage area would add a bit of class to the whole place and giving the 'emcee' somewhere to place himself during operations.

The stage came from the same place as most of the other additions, scraps from all over—the old Dep. of Works area provided us with untold goodies and the scrap bins over there were something to behold. One of the new staff of the Museum happened to mention that he had an old kitchen (in bits) that he had removed some time previously so an inspection found that there was enough parts to meet our needs as long as we did a few cuts and shunts. Not only did we complete our kitchen from these parts but there was enough to make an island bar for the centre of the room as well. The stage looked bare so we found a back-



drop in the form of an old enlarged photo of *Melbourne* with *Voyager*, *Vampire* and *Queenborough* alongside, this also was destined for the scrap yard.

A photo of the *Queen* and an Australian National Flag were with complements of the local Federal MP, Joanna Gash and the White Ensign was provided by the Chief of the Navy after a request from Capt Grant Ferguson (CO *Albatross*) on our behalf.



The area around the proposed bar site was bare and it was decided to depict some identities from past eras by displaying some of their 'relics'. Henry Hall and George Blondel (via Zoe's generosity) allowed their personal collection of plaques and memorabilia to be displayed and with the help of the Museum a lot more relevant crests were added to the display.



In the Museum there were also some very pertinent items to our history and some of these also found their way onto the Walls. 5C bathroom taps, 4C mess-deck label, a set of operating buttons for the lifts and from Toz's private storage we got his deck hook that gave him his 500th deck landing.



A 'common room' is no good without a bar so that was the next area that needed attention. A wayward air conditioner was affixed into the wall, a bar complete with glass racks, till and overhead storage area slowly took shape and then JA spent many hours decorating the front faces so that it wasn't just any old bar. The bell from the Chief's Mess came to light and with a bit of fixing up now resides on the end of the overhead storage. A couple of fridges, full of course were fitted. Glass stowages under the overhead storage saw this important sector almost completed. The supports for the overhead storage were derived from an old Singer Sewing machine just to give the whole area a

bit of originality.

The remainder of the wall areas got individual treatment and using a lot of archival items that were obtained by 'Begging, borrowing or stealing' they followed the remainder of the area in depicting life in the Navy. Hopefully we can accumulate some mementos from the later years and continue to tell the story. This whole project gives a lot of people an area which they can use for leisure and pleasure and it is envisioned that the current serving members will avail themselves of this facility for some social functions where all ranks can get together, have a beer and reminisce over what some 'old codgers' used to do.



If you look closely 'Rose S' you will see 'Marbuck's' tapestry up in the corner among other items.



The suggestion for the name WEC) came from Bob Gaelle and in keeping with the old club, the opening ceremony was conducted by John Cooke, the last president of that institution before it closed and at the opening were five of the original directors who were only too happy to be present at the 're-incarnation'.

GENUS PLATANUS

The recent article by Norm 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 realize 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 given the opportunity to assess the skills and progress, or lack thereof, of our contemporaries.

In the center 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.

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 onboard and slowing to approach for land-

gracefully, at full power, onto, then rapidly into the 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 center 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 a 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 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.

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.

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.

Ken Douglas

The New Recruit

Text of a letter from a kid from Eromanga to Mum and Dad (For those of you who are not in the know, Eromanga is a small town West of Quilpie in the far south west of Queensland)

Dear Mum and dad,

I am well, I hope youse are too. Tell me big brothers Doug and Phil that the Navy is better than workin' on the farm. Tell them to get in bloody quick smart before the jobs are all gone.

I wuz a bit slow in settling down at first, because ya don't hafta get outta bed until 6 AM, but I like sleeping in now cuz all you got to do before brekky is make ya bed, shine ya boots and clean ya uniform. No bloody cows to milk, no calves to feed, no feed to stack – nothin'!!

Blokes haz got to shave every day though and that's not too bad as there is plenty of hot water and even a light to see what ya doing.

At berkky ya get cereal, fruit and eggs but there's no kangaroo steaks or possum stew like wot Mum makes. You don't get fed again until noon, and by that time all the city boys are buggered because we've been on a route march- geez it's just like walking to the windmill down the back paddock!!

This one will kill Doug and Phil with laughter, I keep getting medals for shootin' – dunno why. The bullsseye is as big as a bloody possum's bum and it don't move and its not firing back at ya like the 'Johnson's' did when our big scrubber bull got in with their prize cows before the Ekka last year!

All ya gotta do is make yourself comfortable and hit the target – it's a piece of grandma's sultana cake!! You don't even load your own cartridges – they come in a little box ready to use. Don't even have to worry about steadying yourself against the rollbar of the 'roo truck' when you reload.

Sometimes ya gotta wrestle with the city boys and I gotta be real careful coz their bones break easy. It's not like fighting with Doug and Phil, Jack and Boori and Steve and Muzza all at once like we do at home after the muster.

Turns out I'm not a bad boxer either and it looks like I am one of the platoon's got, I've only been beaten once by this bloke from the 'Handler's School' and he was 6 foot plus, 15 stone and three pick-handles across the shoulders and as ya know I'm only 5 foot 7 inches, 8 stone wringing wet but I fought him till the other blokes carried me off to the boozier.

I can't complain about the Navy, tell the boys to get in quick before the word gets around how bloody good it is.

Your loving daughter,

Jill

SAFETY EQUIPMENT REUNION



COFFS HARBOUR

29TH SEPTEMBER- 2ND OCTOBER 2006

It must have been a great pleasure and an honour for the President of the NSW Branch of the F.A.A. Association, Greg Wise to welcome such a large number of members of their branch and their wives and friends to the reunion.

One must not forget those who were at the front of the organising of this excellent "DO"; Kerry Jones, Dennis Skewes and Jaffa Robinson who must feel enormously of the results of their efforts. Without their labours the weekend would not have been the fabulous success that it was.

There were members from nearly all the states with of course the Queenslanders and New south Welshmen who had the least distance to travel.

Mention should be made of those who travelled long distances to join their mates from yesteryear in particular Jim Bush, Alan Winchcombe and Paul Hodgkinson all the way from the West and two members who were part the original S.E. branch and completed their courses in the U.K., Danny O'Keefe from Victoria and Jack Kreig from South Australia.

There must have been in excess of a hundred members who basically "took over" the T.V. room in the R.S.L. much to the advantage of the club who must have sold barrels of beer and a few glasses of lemon squash.

The formal "DO" on Saturday night was a great success, meeting mates from many years ago and listening to the stories that abounded in the room. It made one proud to have been a member of that highly respected branch of the Fleet Air Arm.

Sunday in the T.V. room was "standing room only" filled by the S.E.s and members of the RSL as the rugby league grand final was played and we all now know the results, Broncos won again.

It was a pleasure meeting the ladies that accompanied their men and one can say without any contradiction of fact the ladies were beautiful and participated in the fun and the frolicking that ensured during the whole of the reunion. Thank you ladies one and all.

Some were fortunate when visiting Woolgoolga to see some whales breaching on their way back south something many of us never have the opportunity to witness this sight.

One was not fortunate enough to meet all those present because many took the opportunity to visit some of the delightful towns that were near "COFFS".

Meeting comrades with whom one has spent many runs ashore, trained with and shared experiences that will never or could not be repeated is an experience that will always be remembered and treasured.

Not being able to meet and talk to all those present was disappointing to me personally however with such a large number it was neigh impossible.

To all the ladies who won a motza or lost on the pokies at the club thank you for being with us and providing glamour and beauty to the reunion and putting up with lot of old 'salties' who talked about what they did in the past and can't do now.

Finally the association amongst people was terrific and one motel which had a large number staying there was like being back in PUSSAS again. If you went out to take a photo before you could say, "all present and correct" there would be at least another eight people ready to take the same photo.

There was ONE exception and that was a very experienced and long serving S.E. who having taken twenty or more photos found out that there was NO film in his camera. Sorry Geoff just had to mention it for old times sake.

All the best to you all and remember, happy have we met, happy have we been, to our next happy reunion and let it be soon.

Fred Wessell



Brian Carroll, Paul Hodgkinson, Jack Kreig, Gordon Lee, Greg Wise and Jim Bush



Gordon Lee, Colin (Bronco) Johnson and Barry Andrews

Dear Ed,

Back in Vol 14 No 1, I made a request regarding memorials to the 3 services seeking to know if any of our readers knew of tri-memorials or had any ideas about how to put one together using a gun, anchor and propeller and if they did to let me know about them. Result - a big fat zero. In Vol No 3, I advised that we now had a shelter but no anchor and propeller and again made a request for assistance. Response - once again, zero. No help from our old shipmates.

Let me recount how this all began. During our November meeting in 2002 when Remembrance Day plans were discussed, the subject of the condition of the 25lb Field Gun (which the Babinda Sub-Branch RSL has had for many decades) was raised. It was agreed that a shelter would be placed over the gun and at this stage I suggested an anchor and propeller should be added to the display thus representing all the three services. This was agreed to and I was elected Chairman of a committee to see our local councillor Paul Gregory of the Cairns City Council for funding assistance and approval.

I must have got him at a weak moment as he agreed to fund the project to the tune of \$10 000. Remembrance Day 2003 saw a shelter erected but still no anchor or propeller. I rang all the associations I belong to (Navy & Airforce) to no avail. I then contacted a local firm, Aero Enterprises Pty Ltd and yes, they had twin otter props and they could give us the internal parts of one to make a stand. They also offered to restore to original condition the other prop and today it stands alongside the field gun as the RAAF memorial.

Not long after this, a brother-in law of mine who owns prawn trawlers took me to meet the manager of Tropical Reef Shipyards Pty.Ltd who listened to what I had to say and gave us a prop. Months later when I rang the manager to invite him to the opening, he asked if I still wanted an anchor. "Bloody oath" I replied. In due course the whole 1 570 kgs of anchor was in Babinda. Local rock to hold the three plaques was next on the list with representatives of the three services selecting the wording to be inscribed.

Around this time an injury sustained while I was on the 'Vengeance' on June 24th '55 required surgery. After this knee replacement I then had to have a pacemaker fitted. While I was out of action our Sub-branch Secretary Max Luxton, whose wife had navy connections, took on the cleaning, painting and placement of symbols.

The Tri-memorial is still not fully completed as the anchor still has to have a 7ft white anchor chain welded on. The goal will be to paint it in regimental colour markings. The new shelter also needs to be fully paved.

At 10am on the 4th of November '06 we had the opening of the upgraded tri- service memorial. This was performed by The Honourable Bob Katter, Member for Kennedy. Upon retiring to the local bowls club for refreshments, certificates of appreciation were presented to many of the above aforementioned people. I was presented with both a plaque for my efforts by our sub-branch President, and my Defence Force medal by Bob Katter. Mr. Katter remarked in his presentation speech that many sub-branches in Kennedy wanted his help to obtain similar symbols

but he had found little support government - wise in being able to help them. He stated that we had done a 'mighty job'.

In conclusion, I would again ask my old shipmates if they have seen any like tri-service memorials in and around our country as we would not like to claim that ours is the only one of its kind in Australia.

Kevin Raddatz (Roger)

BZ Roger—It has turned out very well.



REUNION

Attention all ex A, E, A/E, ATA, Mechanics & Tiffies

It is intended to have a branch reunion, either 2007 or during the 60th anniversary FAAA reunion 2008. The 60th anniversary will be the more logistically sound time to hold the event as there will be a lot here for that function. To co-ordinate this we need to establish feedback as to a show of interest. Positive dates to be confirmed, in the meantime we need to know numbers !!!

If it is confirmed to be held in conjunction with the 60th Anniversary then application forms for that function will contain details of all 'mini reunions', the times to be held and venues. It is paramount that some indication of numbers who will possibly attend can be gathered so as a venue can be arranged—time is on our side but it runs away very quickly so please reply ASAP to the initial request for interest.

If you are keen to get together for this the first "Spanner Wankers" reunion then please reply to those listed below.

Emails to:

Peter Penny—betwsycoed1@bigpond.com

Don Parkinson—jandon39@hotmail.com

BIRDS FROM THE SAME NEST

FRANK and DAVID LARTER

FRANK :

My initiation into the Navy was in March 1953, and, after a rather turbulent 'Recruit School' period I was posted to *HMAS Albatross* as a Recruit Naval Airman. My original request for job application read "COOK" but the Navy decided that they did not need any at that time and as they had some areoplanes available that I could play with I should go in that direction—thus a 'birdie'.

On completion of basic training I was allocated to the Aircraft Handler's branch. After completing my trade course I was dutifully employed at numerous sections around the depot until in March 1955, I was posted to *HMAS Vengeance* for 'crew' of *HMAS Melbourne*. I joined the advance party to '*Majestic*' and it was here I met my girl friend. She progressed to fiancé and then wife and we married in Melbourne in 1956 and have had a good life together since.

From *Melbourne* I posted back to *Albatross* and worked in the Fire Section, promotion to 'kellick' was in September 1958 and I stayed there until I paid off in September 1959 returning to re-side in Melbourne.

Just under two years later, in August 1961, the Navy wrote to me and a number of other ex personnel with an invitation to re-join as an Acting Leading Airman, on a two year non contributory DFRB scheme enlistment. 12 months into this enlistment I was offered a PO's Course which I accepted and was rated in August 1963. Now back in permanently this had me back to sea on *Melbourne* for two years and again back to the '*Tross*' in 1965.

1967 saw me posting again to *Melbourne* as the Air Reg PO on the trip to the States to collect the new Skyhawks and Trackers.

Promotion to CPO came in August 1968 and this saw me return to the Fire Section at *Albatross* for two years then on the merry go round again to 816 Squadron and a couple of sea trips with them. Back to the Fire Section and of course back again to a squadron (this time 805) and the accompanying sea voyages.

1976 saw me pay off again after 23 years and finally break the "Two Year Cycle" as civilians don't have this little quirk. Almost my entire Navy time was dealt out in this manner.

In 1989 a reserves unit was formed at *Albatross* and I signed on again, this time I was engaged as a 'Recruit's Instructor' and I stayed in this position until my compulsory retirement at the age of 55.



David, Frank and Commodore Rob Partington—Frank's final discharge papers—September 1990

DAVID :

David joined the Navy on the 30th June 1977 and after recruit training at *Cerebus* he arrived at *Albatross* and was categorised ATWL (Air Technical Weapons Electrical for the old-timers). As a young lad he joined 723 Squadron and went to sea in *Tobruk*. From here to SAMR for a stint and then back to *Albatross* again. In 1982 he was posted to *Melbourne* and was part of her de-commissioning crew in 1983.

Sea time gone for a while it was back home to *Albatross* again and a settling time on 816 Squadron. His time here transgressed more than eight years and saw him go from a leading hand to Petty Officer, Chief Petty Officer and finally Warrant Officer. In 1999 he was presented with an Admiral's Commendation for work in rescuing yachtsmen in the disastrous Sydney to Hobart Race of 1998. In 1999 as a CPO he took the (new) *Melbourne's* Helicopter Flight to the Persian Gulf.

David was promoted to Lieutenant in January 2006 and is now working in the training department at *Albatross*.

My father-in-law, Bill Roberts worked on *Majestic* from early 1944 until the RN decided that they no longer had a requirement for her and work ceased. When the RAN decided to buy her he went back and continued on her again until we sailed from Barrow-in-Furness in October 1955. In all Bill worked for Vickers Armstrong for 52 years and they gave him \$50 when he retired.

In all my family have had a very long association with the *HMAS Melbourne's* of the RAN and we have been in uniform for some considerable time, I have had a wonderful life, met a lot of great mates and would not change one minute of my time in the RAN.

Frank Larter

DECEMBER 4th 2006—30th ANNIVERSARY 'H' Hangar Fire

December this year marks an anniversary that had many people wondering 'How, When and Why' - initially it looked as if this event would finish Tracker flying in the RAN. The detailed Police Investigation information into the event is listed here.

On the 5th December 1976 the Naval Authorities requested the assistance of the NSW Police specialising in Fire Investigations. This involved securing the hangar and its contents, the damaged aircraft and the surrounding area. A 24 hour guard was posted and this arrangement continued for 45 days until the investigation was completed on January 17th 1977. Responsibility for the Fire Scene investigations was given to the Wollongong Scientific Investigation Branch. They were assisted by the Special Breaking Squad attached to the CIB in Sydney.

During the course of the investigations 34 NSW Police and a number of Federal Police were involved.

On the first day of the investigations, a pair of chrome-plated side cutters were found in the sprinkler control room. These had apparently been used to cut the leather strap securing the handle of the sprinkler system control valve. The following day fingerprint experts found prints on the handle and head of the side cutters. At the beginning of the investigation opinion varied as to whether the valve was closed deliberately, by accident, or, in panic during the early stages of the fire. It was decided to obtain palm and fingerprints of all persons likely to have entered the sprinkler control room during the fire. However despite this action the prints on the side cutters remained unidentified. On December 9 experts from the Air Transport Group discovered that a defuelling valve on one of the aircraft was in the open position when the aircraft was destroyed by fire. Investigators realised they were faced with a crime of arson. It was decided to obtain palm and fingerprints of every person who was at Albatross on the night of December 4th for comparison with prints on the side cutters. This was a huge task as more than 2000 personnel were involved.

The heatwave conditions were not conducive to obtaining fingerprints as perspiration prevented the fingerprint ink from adhering evenly to the skin. This problem was solved by wiping the hands of each person with a cloth soaked in methylated spirits. The fingerprints were to be given on a voluntary basis, with the assurance that they would be used solely for the investigation and later returned to the individual concerned.

Each person was required to complete two separate forms. On Form one, personnel were required to enter name, rank, workplace and to state that they had not entered the sprinkler room on the evening of December 4 or the morning of December 5, or on any occasion prior to those dates. The second form required the individual to state his whereabouts on or off the base at the time of the fire, and who he was with at that time. If on Base, had he attended the fire in the normal course of his duty, and did he have any knowledge of the cause of the fire.

This questionnaire was introduced to allow investigators to shorten the interrogation of persons who would obviously be of

no assistance to the inquiry. Proof of identification of each person was obtained at the time. When another defuelling valve was found open on a second aircraft it became paramount to establish the identity of all persons at Albatross on the night of December 4.

On January 19, 1977 an expert attached to the Central Fingerprint Bureau identified the two partial prints discovered on the side cutters as those of the left thumb and right finger of Graham John Trent of 851 Squadron. After weeks of painstaking comparisons and eliminations the culprit's identity was revealed. Trent was taken into custody and in a recorded interview admitted to lighting the fire in 'H' hangar on the night of December 4. Prior to actually lighting the fire he had opened the defuelling valve on two aircraft, and closed the control valve supplying water to the sprinkler system. He used the side cutters to sever the leather strap that held the valve handle in the open position. On January 20, Trent voluntarily accompanied police to various locations around the Air Station, re-enacting his movements on the night he lit the fire in 'H' hangar.

In his record of interview Trent raised matters in relation to certain acts carried out by him on the evening of the fire. These matters were fully supported by evidence that could only be known to the person responsible for the arson.

The case against Trent was presented to a Court Martial held at HMAS Penguin during April 1977. Trent was found guilty and detained at the Governor's Pleasure.

C.B.(Barry)Fay
Detective Senior Sergeant (ret)

**Acknowledgement**

The information on the Police Investigation was provided by Barry Fay, an ex Leading Aircraft Handler who paid off in 1961, joined the NSW Police Force. He transferred from uniform branch in 1963 to the old CIB (Fingerprint Branch).

In this role he studied many thousands of fingerprints from hundreds of crime scenes, including numerous murder investigations, and was regularly called upon to give evidence in the district courts.

On attained the rank of Detective Senior Sergeant and was appointed OIC of the Crime Scene Branch(Latent Fingerprint Unit); he was to remain in this position until his retirement in September 1993, completing 32 years of police service.

His most notable crime case histories were :

- 'The Mutilator'(serial killer)
- 'Killers clutch at straws' (the Kim Barry Case)
- 'My Mummy's Turning Black' (double murder in Jerilderie)
- 'The Devil's Driving (the Monica Schofield case)
- 'The Blacktown Rapist'

Barry occasionally appears on the TV programme 'Forensic Investigators'

Doug Sutherland

Dear Ed,

I'm hoping that your membership may be able to assist me with information and photographs of the operation of the RAN's FAW Mk53 Sea Venom and the Macchi MB326H in the target tug role. I'm currently corresponding with Bob "Windy" Gaele at Nowra who is very generously sourcing information for me on these target tug aircraft. However, I thought that I would expand my search through the membership of "Slipstream".

As a member of the International Plastic Modellers Society (NSW), I'm presently attempting to compile a series of articles for our club CD magazine, "In Miniature", on the target tug aircraft of the RAAF and RAN.

Bob has already been of tremendous assistance with information on the Miles Martinets and LTCDR William Bailey, RN (Retired) is currently compiling information for me on his experiences with 723 Sqn immediately post war. Besides the Fairey Firefly TT, an aircraft for which I have extensive photographic coverage of the preserved example in the Camden Air Museum at Narellan, I would like to cover both the Sea Venom and the Macchi.

I have a recollection of seeing a colour image of a RAN Sea Venom which had obviously been converted into a TT aircraft. I distinctly recall that it was a photograph of the port side of the airframe with the wings folded and clearly showing the yellow and black TT under surface scheme. If I recall correctly, the upper surfaces were aluminium rather than the traditional Extra Dark Sea Grey finish.

I have details of the Winch Type 'B' used by the Miles Martinet with 723 Sqn, the Winch Type 'G' used by our RAN Fireflies and the Winch Type DX4 (Del Mar) which I now learn was used by our Sea Venoms. However, I lack information as to how the Type DX4 (Del Mar) was installed and how the targets were deployed.

Any assistance that your readers may be able to provide would be gratefully received, and of course, acknowledged in the articles.

Regards
Roger Lambert
Carlingford, NSW

Roger.Lambert@environment.nsw.gov.au

To clean artificial flowers, pour some salt into a paper bag and add the flowers. Shake vigorously and the salt will absorb all the dust and dirt and leave your artificial flowers looking like new! Works like a charm! Then give them to your partner and hope !!

Dear Ed,

After recently spending some time with Bob (Tassie) Douglas in Tasmania, I ran into him again in Cairns while we were both caravanning, and our paths crossed several more times as we meandered our way down the East Coast of Queensland.

He indicated to me that he would like to catch up with another one of our original group, Norm Hogg. After some serious investigations I tracked Norm down and surprised 'Tassie' with a visit by him.

Quite a few hours were admonished as we relived old runs ashore and mixed them with even more pissy stories and included the pleasant memories into the bargain.



Tassie Douglas, Norm Hogg and Junior Henderson

Approaching eighty-five years of age, an elderly woman finally decided it was time to give up her apartment in New York and move to Miami.

She was given the name of a Florida realtor, who enthusiastically drove her all over Miami, extolling the virtues of every apartment they looked at.

"And this one, what a steal," he rhapsodized, "the investment of a lifetime. Why, in ten years it's gonna be worth three times..."

"Sonny," interrupted the woman, "at my age I don't even buy green bananas."

The truth should never hurt.

The lonely bachelor wrote to a dating service explaining that he had specific criteria for a potential mate and would not except anyone that falls below his standards. He went on to explain that the candidate should be cute and short, who enjoys water sports, a team player and needs to enjoys group activity. He received an envelope the following week . It was a picture of a penguin.



Armourers invade Bribie Island on Anzac Day

Anzac Day 2006 in Queensland was an 'Armourers' mini reunion.

Commencing with meeting up with Ken McKenna, Reg Turnbull and Don 'Woody' Herman the night before and then marching with the Fleet Air Arm Group on the day.

Immediately after the march my wife and I journeyed back to Bribie Island to catch up with the 'Armourers' of the 1956 era. The boys had gathered at the initiative of Dudley McKenzie who resides at Bribie.

Accompanied by their partners they arrived to celebrate the 50th anniversary of joining the Armourer's Branch, and celebrate they did in normal 'Bombs and Bullets' ways over the next four days.

Dudley's next door neighbour got wind of their pending arrival and decided to vacate the area but not before he graciously offered the hospitality of his house to us for the time we were there. Very nice gesture to a fine group of people.

Don McCaskill, Dudley and Robert (Rat face) Johnson (deceased) were the first recruits to join the branch for some four years and were followed later in the year of 1956 by Leon O'Donnell, Jim Pavier, Henry 'Harry' Huggins, Bob Christie, Streve Donnell and John 'Shorty' Mihell.

With Dudley ensuring the boys were adequately lubricated, (later in the proceedings much like the 'Wets' Dudley closed the bar for brief periods). Carol O'Donnell, Lola Donnell, Marie Mitchell, Carol McCaskill and Margaret McKenzie ensured they were all adequately fed. Unfortunately due to family commitments Harry and Jim's partners were unable to attend the reunion.

The lads had plenty to talk about including the mad pings at the 'White Ensign Club' on a Friday night which invariably saw then hit the road to Tamworth, their sporting days and the usual sailor's runs. They were still going strong when we left and as the photo shows they still scrub up well..

I was given strict instructions to get cracking with the next 'Armourer's Reunion', and as I now reside on the Sunshine Coast it seems a great place to hold a gathering of the 'clan'.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the 'Armourers' of 1956 and "Long Live the Armourers".

Best regards,

Merry Xmas and good cheer,

Bill Hayward

Contact details:

07 54792482

0411 024985

bloggs117@yahoo.com

Looks like 'young' Bob still doesn't own a coat or tie, nothing changes, Ed.



Don Mc Caskill, Leon O'Donnell, Streve Donnell, Harry Huggins, Dudley McKenzie, Bob Christie, Jim Pavier and John Mihell.

'Johnnies' and the Snakepit?

Just after midnight, one winter's night way back in the late 1950s, a slightly befuddled naval rating staggered up the half a dozen steps into 'Johnnies', fronted up to the pigeon-hole wherein dozed the duty booking clerk and with a sigh of relief, handed over five shillings and his Naval identity card.

"Can I have another blanket, please?"

An extra sixpence changed hands and another tired Aussie 'matelot' was soon heading up the broad sweep of the impressive stairway that led to the sleeping cubicles.

About halfway down Grosvenor St on the north side was an old grey building of several stories height. It was of smallish size and stature and the observant passer-by might well wonder how it managed to survive the 'knock it down mania' that has driven Sydney for the last few decades. Unfortunately, it did not!

Sadly in the 2000s all that remains of this historic building, once paid for by individual public subscription, is the facade. Behind the facade is the modern building used by the Sydney Futures Exchange.

This building was long known as 'Johnnies'. More officially it carried the formal name Royal Naval House and for 82 years it was home for the sailors of the Royal and later, Royal Australian and Allied Navies when their ships were in port.

Johnnies was built from funds raised by public subscription as a form of expression of gratitude to the sailors of the Royal Navy and, quite possibly, as a means of 'tidying up' the streets of the port when those uniformed sailors had finished 'having a few' at the many hostleries that catered for their needs.

The original idea of Johnnies was to provide a 'home away from home' for those many men aboard the station ships of the Royal Navy who were in need of accommodation perhaps a little better than the Spartan surroundings aboard the ships of the RN. Less Spartan Johnnies might have been but it was no four star hotel.

When I used it as 'home' in the 1950s and 1960s one or more floors were set up with partitioned plywood-walled cubicles which could be hired for one, two or three nights at about five shillings (50 cents) a night. These cubicles had walls about two metres high, much lower than were the ceilings, and were covered by chicken wire – to stop theft. It did not stop the sounds of sleepers!

Cheap meals could be had in the cafeteria and they were always of good quantity – full and plenty – and offered the kind of victuals that sailors on the lower decks of RN and RAN ships of that period did not often see – butter, condiments, pickles,

fresh milk, cereals and so on.

Getting to Johnnies in those days of excellent public transport was always easy. If one's ship was anchored out or hanging on a buoy in the harbour, ship's boats would run a regular service to the Man-'o-War Steps in Farm Cove. Trams ran from nearby and tram lines ran just a few metres from Johnnies. Private launch companies, mainly Stannards, also worked through 24 hours from Man-'o-War Steps.

Sailors leaving ships berthed alongside in Garden Island or in Woolloomooloo Bay, would walk (or bus) out of the base along Cowper Wharf Roadway and would very likely spend some recreation time at the Macquarie Hotel (known as the Rock and Roll) or the Bells Hotel (presided over by retired boxer Jimmie Carruthers) and from there might wander into town. If they had no relatives or friends to 'kip down' with, they'd probably end up at Johnnies.

Johnnies was probably at its peak when the British Pacific Fleet was based in Port Jackson in 1945 and into 1946. The BPF had half a dozen aircraft carriers and four battleships, plus hundreds of cruisers, destroyers and small craft. There were tens of thousands of sailors few of whom were Sydney natives.

The records show that on the night of January 19, 1946, 825 sailors spent the night in a Johnnies' cubicle and another 651 were dosed down on stretchers or mattresses anywhere they could be fitted in, even in the library. The showers and the wash-rooms would have been almost as hard-worked as was the cafe with its well-stressed staff.

Royal Naval House was officially opened by Lord Carrington in 1890. The total cost had been: land, nine thousand pounds; building, 14,000 pounds; and furniture, 1200 pounds. All raised by the public. It replaced several other buildings around the city that had been used – Trafalgar House and Goodenough Royal Naval House – and that had coped in the 19th century.

Goodenough was not a description. It carried the name of a Royal Navy admiral, long gone to his rest.

It might be interesting to wonder who got the benefit of the money from the sale of Johnnies when the Re-Development Authority took over The Rocks area.

During 1946 more than 100,000 servicemen sheltered in Johnnies. One estimate of more than 4.5 million bed-nights over the 80-odd years has been made. In later years. Johnnies also provided cabins for young families to stay overnight in a city whose hotels were well beyond the financial capacity of the men of the navy's Lower Deck. A small section was also set aside to provide private accommodation for the Women of the Navy, the WRANs.



The Vietnam War probably finished off Johnnies.

On the one hand young naval men were then more likely to own a motor vehicle of some type and thus were likely to range much further afield in their time on leave.

On the other hand the increasing unpopularity of the war in Vietnam, meant that some of the less controlled of the citizenry were prone to take out their righteous anger on anyone who was wearing a Service uniform in a public place.

The writer will attest to the problems of travelling in public transport while wearing a uniform during this period. Wearing Service uniform ashore soon became a hazardous act, to the undying dishonour of some of Australia's less capable thinkers.

Probably the most famous part of Johnnies was the internationally famous 'Snakepit'.

The Royal Navy's 'house' was built around a four story hollow centre. Around the inside of each floor was a wide verandah. From these verandahs one could look down to the bottom floor, the fabled Snakepit. Looking upwards from the bottom one could see the sky, or feel the rain. By day the sun came in and by night the stars were there – or the rain!

The laminex and chromed tables and chairs were strongly built, they needed to be!

In those less puritan days – well before political correctness, occupational health and safety and the many other catch phrases of today, there were many riotous happenings between Woolloomooloo and Johnnies.

The Snakepit was tiled and the furniture solid. Cleaning up of a morning was usually carried out using hoses and the whole atmosphere owed more to the hotels of the '50s than to the up-market hostelries of Sydney's CBD in the 2000s.

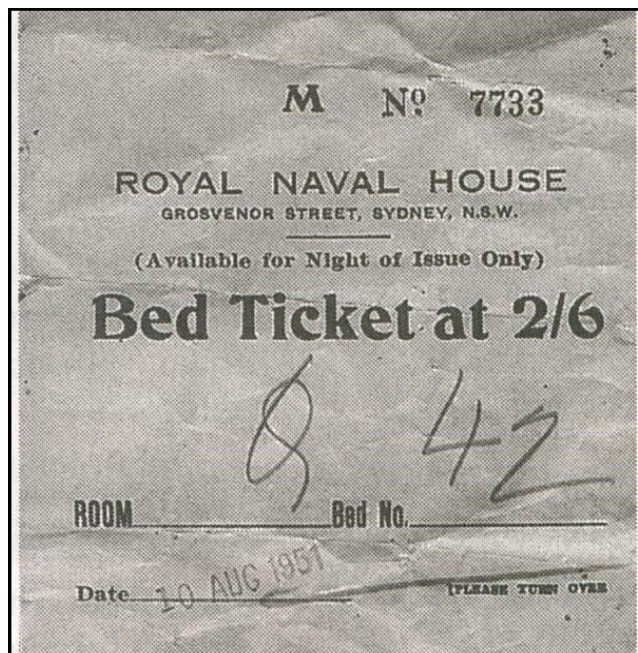
Most nights Johnnies was quiet but there were many bawdy ballads to be sung and bullshit to be heard and then to bed, because one had to be back at Garden Island or on board ship at 0730 the next day, unless you were God, also known as Petty Officers and above.

It's been a long time since I left the RAN and I have no idea where today's sailors spend their leave breaks when not in a home port. Looking at the work-load of the sadly diminished RAN of the 2000s, it's possible they don't get many such breaks – but that's a story for someone else to look into.

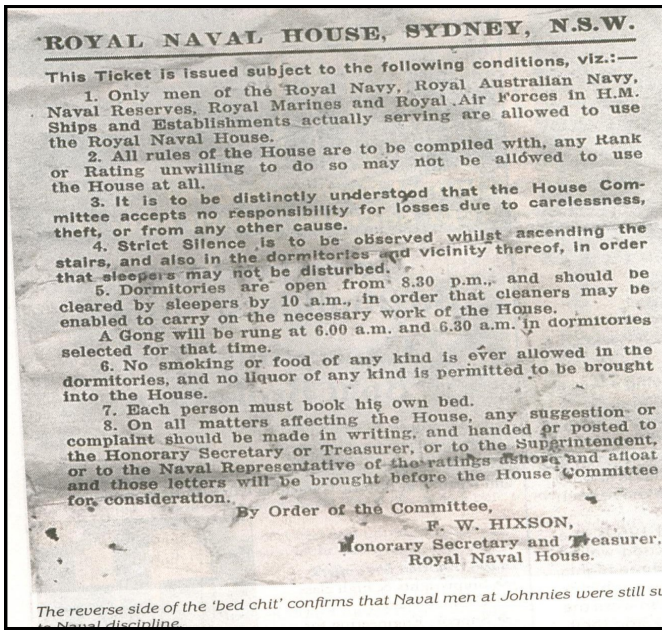
Graeme Andrews, RAN 1955-1968. RANER 1968-1975, RANR 1975-1979



Tidy and sedate in its new role - Stock exchange



Cheap accommodation and entertainment all in one



The reverse side of the 'bed chit' confirms that Naval men at Johnnies were still subject to Naval discipline

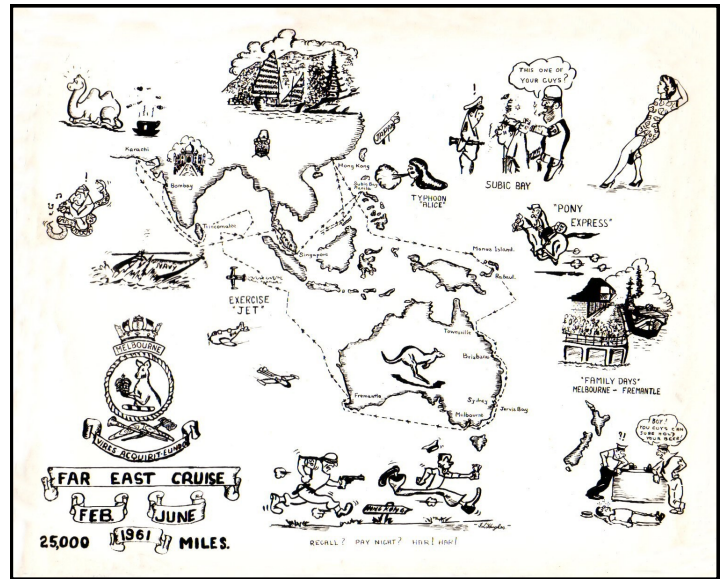
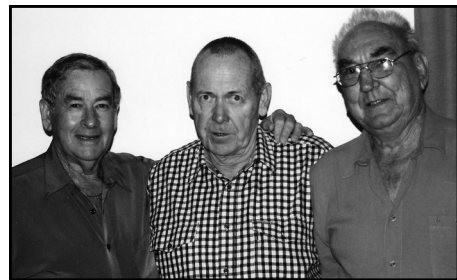


MOMENTS IN TIME

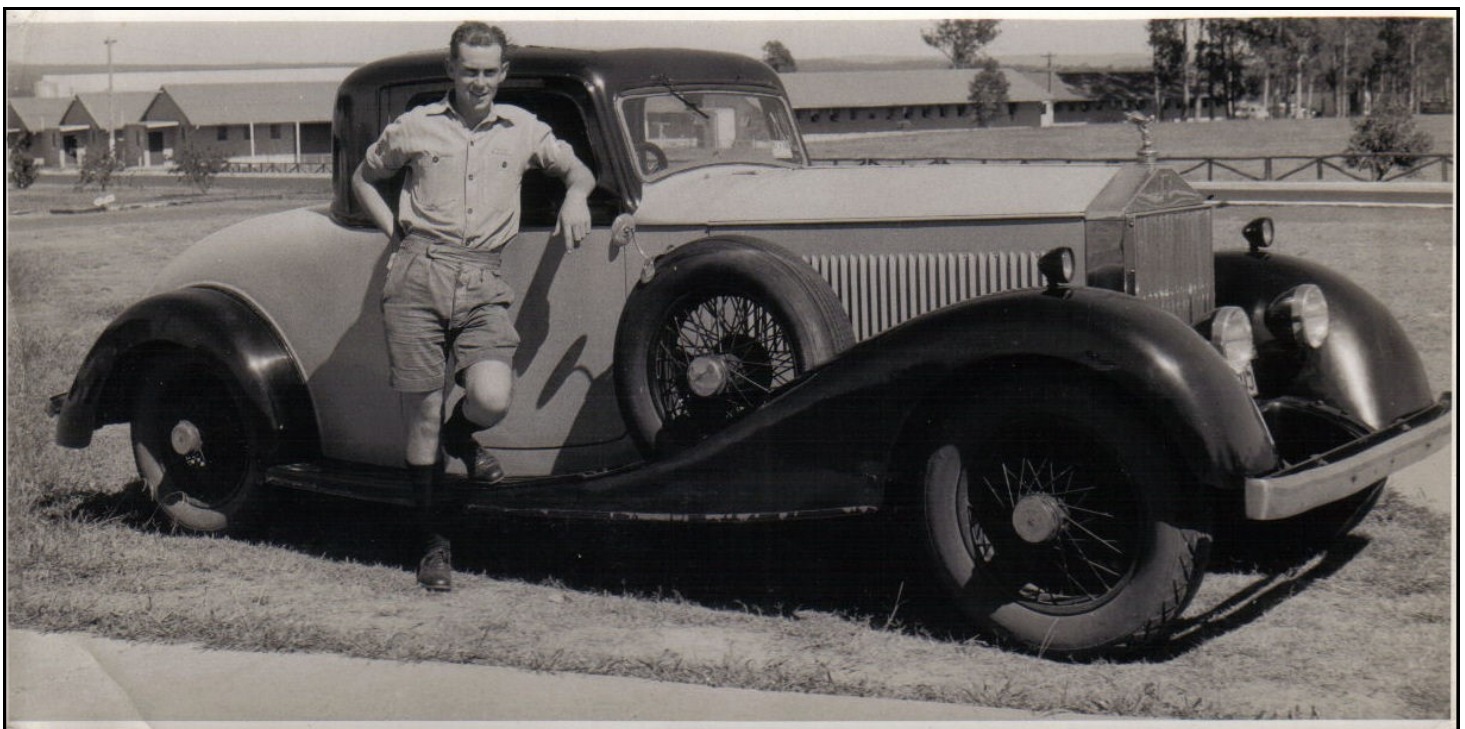


No 8 Mech Course—Ray Larson, Warren Walters, Rod Moody, Arthur Sharland, front row, Barry Lister, ?, Blue Ditcham and Brian Lown

Then and now - Barry Lister, Ray Larson and Arthur Sharland after having aged a little.



From the days of the past aboard the Air Princess "MELBOURNE" on a tropical cruise through the mystic east. Fares ranging from stoppage of leave to natives leave.



Bit flash for a sailor, Bob Willis and his 1937 "Roller"



Members of the CPO's Mess, HMAS Albatross 1950



MET Office Staff—possibly 1948—name not known (Nobby Hall ?)



MET Office Staff—1949—a couple are familiar



Is this the first of the FAA training taking place ?
Place - Maitland (Newcastle) NSW — May 1946 to September 46
Records from CPOMET Ralph Croft show this to be a MET Course under way at Maitland and the sailors were under the command of HMAS Penguin. Does anyone have any further info on this event ?

1966 Flight Crew Reunion , held recently at the Fleet Air Arm Museum

In 1966 the RAN's requirement for aircrew exceeded the Australian training capacity and thus 40 plus young Australians had the good fortune to be trained by the US Navy in Pensacola, Florida, Corpus Christi, Texas and various other US naval establishments. Generally, most of the pilots were destined to fly either helicopters or Trackers with several groups of Observers training on a variety of aircraft.

The time in-country varied from over 6 months to 18 months for most of the groups. Pensacola was extremely busy with the Vietnam commitment but the training program was virtually self-paced. The aircraft flown included the T34 Mentor, the T28 Trojan - both land and tailed - hooked varieties, the Tracker, the TH-13M (bubble Bell), the H34 (forerunner of the Wessex) and the Bug-Smasher for the Observers.

Prior to departing for the States the RAN made sure that we got brain washed though the Gunroom at Cerberus and we were all put through flight grading at the Royal Victorian Aero Club. All the Australians entered the USN program as Midshipman but an agreement was made with the USN that the equivalent rank to be worn was of Ensign and we all wore khaki.

Pre-flight training for the pilots from BATC 2 and 3 of 1966 and a couple of other latecomers included an abridge version of the USN Boot Camp (not like in the movie "An officer and a Gentleman") and some ground school. We all had been pre-designated as to who was going to fly what - helos vs Trackers, but we followed the USN flight grading program through the 25 hours on T34 Mentor and on to various training phases on the T28 Trojan, including carrier qualifying with free take-offs from the USS Lexington in the Gulf of Mexico, before we began to diversify into our respective streams.

Those on helicopters went onto to fly the bubble Bell and the H34 (equivalent piston engined Wessex) and were designated US Naval aviators with wings and promotion to Sub-Lieutenant from the basic helicopter squadrons before returning to Australia.

Those destined to fly ASW fixed wing went down to Corpus Christi in Texas to convert and train on Trackers.

So 40 years on we were able to catch up with old buddies, some we had not seen for 35 years or more. We were able to organise a gathering at HMAS Albatross - a meet and greet at the Museum, a dinner on Saturday and, on Sunday, a Service under the trees at the Wardroom (conducted by Rev Geoff Vidal) and a BBQ before we all departed.

Many came from all around Australia and overseas, Hong Kong - Florida, Scotland and England.

"Those of us who were to be Observers remained in CERBERUS after flight grading, for the Phase Two course, which meant about four weeks of advanced maths and physics. The four of us from BATC 3/66 then spent the first month of 1967 at WATSON with the Phase Three Seamen midshipmen before going on to Pensacola Florida in February - I think. We were followed later in the year by six Observers from the first BATC intake of 1967.

In Pensacola we all went through the same "preflight" course as the pilots and enjoyed similar conditions - a great deal more freedom than we would have had in Australia. On completion of that introductory phase, we joined the Basic Naval Aviation Officer School for a 20 week course on the fundamentals of navigation and associated subjects.

This was conducted at Forrest Sherman Field, part of the "mainside" complex. In this sense we were physically separated from the pilots and the limited amount of adult supervision even they received, courtesy of the "GL" Lieutenants also on pilots course.

Our flying was very much introductory - about 20 hours, mainly map reading in the Beechcraft UC-45J - the "Bugsmasher" until the fleet was grounded. They were replaced by the T-29D (a military version of the Convair Metropolitan) in which genuine navigation training was possible.

We also did two jet familiarization flights in the T1-A Seastar - the Navy version of the T-33. In this phase, we did no over-water navigation of the kind that was later to be our bread and butter.

On completion, in August 1967, the USN students all went to the next phase of navigation training - depending on the type of aircraft to which they had been assigned - the top one or two students were assigned to the A-6. Unlike the USN students we were dispatched to Norfolk Virginia, where we joined a group of USN Tracker pilots on what was a six week introduction to ASW for budding Tactical Coordinators. In retrospect, it was a good course but not exactly what we needed at that point.

From Norfolk we returned to Australia and appeared at Nowra in October 1967, still Midshipmen, a bit of a mystery to the hierarchy and awaiting Tracker OFS. The limitations of our USN training (which was not a good fit for us and which we did not complete anyway) became clear as soon as we were invited to navigate over water. The end result was a one-off navigation course at Nowra for all 10 of us in late 1968. There can't have been too many other groups of Observers who were awarded their wings (as we were) before we had completed our navigation training."

Jack McCaffrie



The Group



Marum , Farthing , Rieck and Abrahams

Farthing, Dadswell and Winterflood



Trevor Rieck and Graeme Pring

Geoff, Rosko, Vota and Jack Mc C



1966 Flight Reunion cont.



Relaxing on the 'Observation Deck'



A quiet drink, some good friends and an odd 'ditty'



Peter and partner

Dear Ed,

It is now a year since I first started trying to get our Service History Records corrected to show our sea time, with the Squadrons, on board HMAS Melbourne. To say that I have achieved absolutely nothing would be pretty close to the truth. I have however, proved that I do exist and served in the Fleet Air Arm, from 1949 -1976.

The Minister for Vet' Affairs has told me that the problem now is to establish the dates that the Squadron was on board, and, that the Department of Personal Service History Records, and the Naval Historian where working "Very Hard" to resolve the problem. Some old A4 Jockeys have done their best to assist us by providing statutory declarations with dates from their log books for our time at Sea with V F 805. John Hamilton has sorted out the dates for 1971, including our detachment to US NAS Barbers Point in Hawaii. For which we should be all grateful. Bill (Sailor Bill) Callan, The "CO" for our 1972 trip has also been very helpful with a statement.

Both of these statements have been handed to my local Fed' Joanna Gash. In turn she has passed them on to the Minister for Vet' Affairs for his reaction.

Greg, I have enclosed a copy of Bill Callans statement, with his permission, because he really comes to grips with our problem, and I am sure it will be of interest to all our members.

Regards,
Ron (Butch) Jenkins

2B Kingscote Crescent,
BONYTHON,
ACT 2905.
21 September, 2006

To Whom It May Concern,

I, William Ernest CALLAN, was Commanding Officer of VF805 Squadron from May 1972 until January, 1974, during which time VF805 embarked in HMAS Melbourne on three occasions, two in 1972 and one in 1973. With reference to the 1972 embarkations, the first was of short duration for an air defence exercise against RAAF aircraft. The Squadron embarked on 27th July 1972, and disembarked on 2nd August 1972 for the aircraft, and on the 3rd August for the Squadron personnel.

There seems to be some confusion regarding the advice given to the Minister in respect the second embarkation. On this occasion, the Squadron embarked on 15th August and disembarked on 6th December 1972, not 24th November 1972 as shown in his letter dated 16th August 2006. This embarked period was for the purpose of taking part in the RIMPAC exercise in the Hawaii area, and then South East Asia deployment for SEATO duties.

WO ATA R.C. JENKINS was an integral part of VF805 for both of these activities.

One of the ever-present problems faced with research into Fleet Air Arm personnel records is that postings, for both aircrew and ground crew, were to HMAS ALBATROSS for the squadron concerned. The squadron subsequently embarked in HMAS MELBOURNE but no further posting were issued. This has resulted in the absence of information in squadron personnel records of sea time whilst posted to a Squadron. In this case, had Naval Personnel Records approached Naval Operations, or the Aviation Directorate, for information regarding VF805's embarkation dates, and then consulted Mr JENKINS records and checked his posting to VF805 Then this matter could have been sorted out some months ago

This has been a problem for some decades, and has not been alleviated by the "new" computer system which, I have been given to believe by experienced in the system, is virtually useless. I also hold the opinion that, in view of the lack of action to remedy the situation, there is no interest in sorting out the mess. In view of the lack of search results, the repetition of excuses regarding the time delays, and the seemingly haphazard manner in which this particular case has been approached, might I suggest that the Minister take such action as required to rectify this situation.

W. E. CALLAN
LCDR RAN (Ret)

FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

The former 'Australia's Museum of Flight' was officially handed over to the Royal Australian Navy on 1st September this year, to once again become the 'Fleet Air Arm Museum'. At a short ceremony witnessed by board members of the ANAM Foundation and staff from the Naval Systems Command and the Naval Air Station, Captain Grant Ferguson RAN, the CO of HMAS Albatross, accepted the handover on behalf of the Chief of Navy from Rear Admiral Neil Ralph RAN (Rtd). The 'Fleet Air Arm Museum' is now integrated within the Naval Heritage Collection and will complement the recently opened RAN Heritage Centre at Garden Island, Sydney under the directorship of Commander Shane Moore RAN. Ultimate responsibility rests with the Commander Australian Navy Systems Command, Commodore Peter Jones RAN, who has already shown a keen personal interest in future of the 'Fleet Air Arm Museum'.

A primary aim of the Fleet Air Arm Museum will be to tell the story of the people, events and materiel that have shaped the history of Australian naval aviation and the Fleet Air Arm from the 'Sopwith' biplane carrying cruisers of WW1 to the modern-day ANZAC class frigates with their 'Seahawk' helicopters. Themed displays and exhibits within the Museum, loans to other institutions, and participation at major events and air-shows, will be the avenues by which this will be accomplished. It is intended to continue the successful promotion of visits and guided tours by school groups, service clubs, business and community organisations. Future plans will also see amalgamation of the RAN Historic Flight with the Museum.

The staff selected by Commander Moore to manage the Museum have come from a diverse and experienced ex-military and public sector background. The four Australian Public Service positions comprise myself as Manager and Senior Curator, Ian Chorlton as the Technical Curator, Ailsa Chittick as the Collections Curator, and Margot Napier as the Resources and Communications Officer. Ian is a former Royal Navy CPO airframes/engines, and a veteran of the Falklands conflict with 'Sea Harrier' and 'Buccaneer' experience. He transferred to the RAN in the mid-1990's and spent six years with 816 Squadron on 'Seahawk' helicopters. Ian's role in the Museum will be responsibility for the aircraft, engines and other large technical items.

Ailsa is a tertiary qualified museums' specialist who has worked in the Australian War Memorial and the National Film and Sound Archive. As the Collections Curator Ailsa will direct the conservation, preservation and display of our publications and log-book archives, uniforms, medals, banners, flags and the myriad other smaller collection items.

The Resources and Communications Officer, Margot Napier, holds administrative and curatorial qualifications and comes to us from a diverse public-sector career across many Federal government departments, including the National Library of Australia. Margot will manage the financial and budgetary aspects of the Museum's operations, and will co-ordinate public relations, visits, and the volunteer workforce.

My own background has been with the Fleet Air Arm since 1966, comprising 20 years full-time service and, for the past 17 years with the RAN Reserves, predominantly managing aircraft restoration teams with the Historic Flight. I have held positions at middle and senior management level with organisations such as Qantas Airways and BAE Systems in the two decades since paying-off in 1986. In mentioning the volunteer support provided to the Museum I am delighted to state that the number of volunteers is expanding, and their enthusiasm and skills are very much appreciated by all the staff. 'Windy' Geale continues as our honorary historian and he and his small archival team are rendering great support to Ian and Ailsa.

The members of technical volunteers group can be seen at the Museum almost every week day and Ian's job is made much easier by their input. Visitors to the Museum are indeed fortunate to have the services of our dedicated tour guides who provide so much with their entertaining and personal commentaries and anecdotes about life in the Fleet Air Arm, as well as their knowledgeable descriptions of the displays and exhibits.

Museum visitors will soon notice changes to the facilities and infrastructure. New advertising signage featuring the 'Brand Navy' colours and text are being prepared and will be erected at all the existing high-way locations around the Shoalhaven region. The Museum entrances will be adorned with new eye-catching signs and logos. It is proposed to conduct an official opening and airshow on 6th May 2007 and the staff and volunteers will be devoting most of their time until then in the necessary 'navalisation' of the aircraft exhibits and displays. A professional design consultancy has been engaged to assist with this project and future works will see major redevelopment of the hangar displays and galleries, and the administration areas.

The Museum's change of focus has necessitated disposal of some of the non-military aircraft currently on display. While those on loan can be readily returned to their owners, some may be offered to other institutions or put on the market through the usual Defence disposal channels. I see a need for physical and aesthetic improvements in several of the naval and military aircraft to be retained in the collection to reflect the high expectations of a world-class display to which the Fleet Air Arm Museum will aspire. Aircraft that I consider to be desirable future acquisitions to round-out the Fleet Air Arm theme of the museum include a Tiger-Moth, CT-4B and T-28C trainers; and Kiowa, Squirrel and Sea King helicopters.

Many strong and ongoing relationships have been forged by the management team of the former Australia's Museum of Flight and it is my intention to see those connections grow and expand. Naturally we are now inextricably bound to the Naval Heritage Collection and the RAN Heritage Centre and these associations extend through to the RAAF Museum, the National Maritime Museum, Museum of Victoria and the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum and Historic Flight. We have close links with many privately managed museums as well, including Temora Aviation Museum, Bankstown Aviation Museum, Queensland Air Museum and the local Historical Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS) now based in the Illawarra.

The short term challenges I see for this new Fleet Air Arm Museum and our staff are to establish our credentials locally, nationally and internationally; to develop the team of staff, volunteers and supporters; to upgrade and 'navalise' the displays and galleries; and to prepare for our official opening and airshow next year. Longer term opportunities lie with the proposed infrastructure modifications and improvements; growing the aircraft and archive collection; building our reputation as a world-class institution; expanding the public awareness of the Fleet Air Arm's proud heritage; integrating with the RAN Historic Flight; and forging stronger links with the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia and similar organisations.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide this report and I thank the Fleet Air Arm Association for their continuing support of the Museum. Visiting members of the Association are most welcome to make themselves known to me and my staff and we will look forward to talking with you about your impressions and expectations for the Museum.

TERRY HETHERINGTON

MANAGER OF THE FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

Happy birthday, Albatross, it's been 58 glorious years

Monday, 4 September 2006

A GROUP of veteran sailors gathered at HMAS Albatross on Friday, the day after its 58th birthday. They came from all corners of the country to present the new Fleet Air Arm Museum its first gift.

The men were the original aircraft handlers at the base, returning almost 60 years after their first visit. And they presented it with a commemorative shield bearing the names of all 68 original handlers. The group's history coincides with the beginnings of the Navy's Fleet Air Arm and HMAS Albatross.

A group of 'older' Aircraft handlers who recently gathered at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Albatross to present to that facility a shield that listed all the original 'handlers' in the RAN. They came from all over the Navy and grouped together for transporting and then training to RNAS SISKIN in the UK. With their training complete they then joined HMAS Sydney for her Commissioning and then travel to Australia. As you can see some very well known faces are still going strong, 16 of the originals were present at the presentation.

The shield was designed and made by John Ferguson and the lettering and artwork was done by Eddie Owen. In 1948 they were selected to train in the practical role of getting aircraft where the need to be, on and off the carrier ships. In addition they were tasked various other roles, including manning control towers and fire-fighting, among other things. In late 1948 they went to England, picking up the RAN's first aircraft aboard Australia's first carrier ship, HMAS Sydney. It included the original 816 squadron, which were then Fireflies, and 805 squadron, Sea Furies.

Arriving back in Jervis Bay the planes were offloaded and transported by road to HMAS Albatross, where Australia's chief naval airbase was being established. One of the men, John Ferguson, said gathering the details and putting together the commemorative shield had been a long but worthwhile project.

"Over the years we were all sent to various places, but always returned, we all have the strongest historical links with Albatross," he said. "And over the years we have all stayed together in one way or another. "I am very proud and humbled to have my name on that board," he said.

HMAS Albatross' Captain Grant Ferguson said it was a privilege and honour to address the men, many of whom had served with distinction in the Second World War.

"It is true that often the pilots and aircrew get much of the glory, and the men that make it happen are overlooked in history," he said. "Which is why this board is so important, so we can recognize the invaluable work of these men who made it possible to get the job done."



IMMORTALISED: The original aircraft handlers of the RAN Fleet Air Arm beside one of the Firefly aircraft they brought to HMAS Albatross almost 60 years ago. (Back) John Ferguson, Ralph Mayer and Reg Davis (Front) Kevin Bolder, Peter Burns, Mick Houston, Eric Bush, Chris McCullough and Bill Gardner.



Bill (Burgoo) Gardner, Eddie Bush and Henry Hall



Captain Grant Ferguson at the un-veiling ceremony

SATURDAY 1960 RANAS (Gliding) -

It was promising to be a hot Saturday especially at the end of runway 08. Mitch decided to get the Nymph out as the Kookaburra had been thermal lining for half an hour, piloted by Darkie. Pete (Biggles) Burke went with Mitch in the old 3 ton International truck, John Mc Pherson volunteered to run the wing.

I was busy splicing some 'weak links' ready for the launching of the Nymph. Arthur Johnson was trying to blacken the barograph cylinder, Geoff Strickland did the BFI and Nifty Nev Plunkett was to drive the launch truck and Johnny Myhill was the keen observer.

We had just developed a new way of launching the gliders. Instead of pulling straight with the truck and snapping the weak link every third gear change (with terrifying results) we would take the launch truck at an angle across the runway changing to third with enough motion and speed, then as the truck straightened to give a smooth gearless tow up to a fantastic 1200 feet. All was ready, who was to take up the Nymph? The wardroom boys arrived just in time, its my turn said Pat Vickers, that's if we can get 'Zork' out of the cockpit. A flawless launch except the pilot interested only in gaining height , not where the tow wire would fall. Nifty and Johnny will untangle it and try to prepare to launch the Kookaburra which by then was on finals. Geoff was to take Danny Daniels for his check before his first solo. Did anyone remember to bring the ballast weights?

Danny was strapped in, looking pale and drawn, the wingman raised and lowered the wings to signal the truck to Go! Go! Go! In the excitement of doing a smooth takeoff Nifty forgot to double de-clutch and missed third gear by a country mile, already across the runway, threw a sharp turn(someone will have to sweep the gravel thrown onto the runway) Danny realised the need to gain height quickly because of the bad start, eased the stick back to get the nose at the right angle, the rush of noise as the wings lifted then the 'ping' as the weak-link snapped, the one second of sheer terror before all that training put the nose down and a landing three quarter way down the runway. Lets try again.

Meanwhile the silver and red Nymph was spiralling upwards towards the base of a newly formed cumulus cloud. Did anyone turn the barograph on ? Geoff watches anxiously as Danny positioned himself for finals. Then the north easterly came in from Culburra heralding the inversion that killed the thermals and made a dangerous side wind.

The CFI called it a day, time to tow the gliders to C hangar. Doc Thompson arrived just in time to help, his little boy eager to sit in the cockpit while it was being towed to the hangar.

Garth (Polly) Perkins

PASSING OF CMDR PETER LLOYD CLARK, DFC, RANR

COMMANDER PETER LLOYD CLARK, DFC, RANR WAS BORN ON 26 APR 1947 AND SADLY PASSED AWAY ON 24 NOV 2006.

CMDR CLARK JOINED THE RAN IN 1966 TRANSFERRING TO THE RESERVES IN 1986 AFTER TWENTY YEARS FULL TIME SERVICE.

HE WAS A DECORATED VIETNAM VETERAN, A HELICOPTER PILOT AND LATER AN SKYHAWK PILOT. HE LAST HELD A POSITION AS CMDR AIR AT NAS NOWRA IN 1984-1985.

HE WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A CHARACTER AND PART OF A BREED OF YOUNG FLEET AIR ARM OFFICERS WHO RETURNED FROM ACTIVE SERVICE IN VIETNAM, BATTLE - HARDENED AND NOT AT ALL INTERESTED IN THE MINUTIAE OF BUREAUCRACY.

IN THE RECOLLECTION OF HEROES, CMDR PETER CLARK WILL BE REMEMBERED FONDLY BY THE FLEET AIR ARM. HE WAS A GALLANT OFFICER, A BRILLIANT PILOT, A NATURAL LEADER AND A GOOD FRIEND TO MANY.

A PRIVATE GATHERING WAS HELD ON 28 NOV 2006 AT THE REQUEST OF THE FAMILY.

Tim Barrett
Commodore RAN CNAG

VALE :

BOB 'BIG FRED' WATTS

A loving husband, a diligent father and a bloody good mate to a hell of a lot of people. He will be missed by a lot of us , his jovial manner always got the party going and although a big man he was a 'gentle giant' with a heart of gold. A member of the Safety Equipment branch for his service career and afterwards a club manager and general fixer saw him integrate throughout the community leaving all he associated with better for the event.. Although it was some time since I saw him we all kept in touch by means of the mate-ship developed especially so in one of the smallest branches of the Fleet Air Arm.

He had a hard time of it over the last few years, setback followed setback and recently when we heard that he may finally be on top of things we were all pleased. This turned out not to be correct and he 'passed under the bridge' for the last time on 17th October 2006.

Bye mate
"Cluey"



Social Pages - Mixed photographs from some of Divisions - People being people.



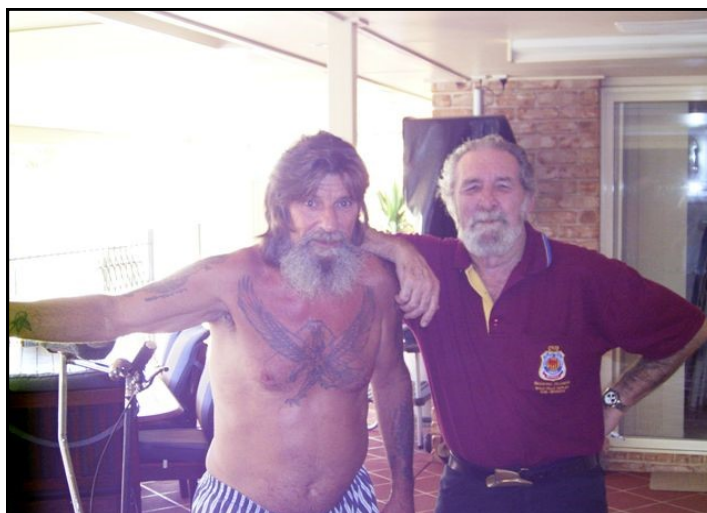
Peter Welsh; Rowena Stockwell; Winston James; Don Buscall and John Brown



Les Eddie, Clive Podd, Kevin Hawkins and their 'supervisors' at the SE Reunion at Coffs Harbour



Arthur Johnson, 'Junior' Henderson and Barry Lister getting ready for a trip down memory lane.



Now here is one to test your memory, hint the one on the left is an ex SE who changed over to the 'Regulating Branch'



Mixed company—Having a cosy BBQ on Arthur and Maxine's boat.



Don Parkinson, Baz Todd and Werner Parrus at the AWMuseum

ANZAC DAY SA



SA Banner



The wreath



John Berry laying the wreath



Last Post



Bill Bailey, Frank Larter and Rod Coupland at the 'Handlers' Presentation at the Fleet Air Arm Museum



Les McCulloch and Glen Hartig at the Museum



NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT



As yet another year comes to a close, we can count our achievements and our sorrows. The major achievements have been the resurrection of the Fleet Air Arm Museum and the White Ensign Club. The sorrows have been the loss of so many of our old comrades. I recently attended the funerals of greatly respected and liked AEO, John Selby, in Kiama and Peter Clark on the Sunshine Coast. Peter was an authentic Australian hero, but, I noted with some anger, there was no political fanfare at his funeral!

We have now confirmed that the 60th Anniversary Reunion of the Fleet Air Arm will be held on the weekend of the 25th/26th October, 2008. A "max effort" Air Day will be held on Sunday 26th and I have asked Chief of Navy to issue invitations to other navies; especially the RN and USN to take part. Make an entry in your diaries and cancel all other commitments!

My drive for members continues. At Peter Clark's funeral I was dismayed to find that many of our "old and bolds" were not members and have sent them application forms. It was the same story at the recent BATC 66 Reunion, which, incidentally, was a great success! There are real benefits from membership and numbers equate to political power when lobbying has to be done, so, please, keep on recruiting new members!

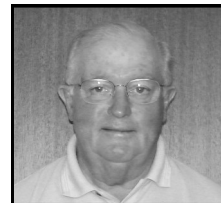
My sincere thanks to all the individuals and Divisions who have contributed to the work of the Association during the year and the compliments of the season to all!

David Farthing

Worth knowing.

Wonder why Telstra, Optus have not let this one out of the bag... wouldn't mean that they would lose profit would it? To check your Mobile phone's serial number, key in the following on your phone: STAR HASH ZERO SIX HASH as (* # 0 6 #) A 15 digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe. Should your phone get stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset so even if the thief changes the Sim card your phone will be totally useless. You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it, can't use/sell it either. If everybody did this, there would be no point in stealing mobile phones.

NATIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT



The 2006 AGM took place at the end of October in the Fleet Air Association's newly acquired and redeveloped White Ensign Club, now located adjacent to the Museum hangar.

As predicted in the previous edition of Slipstream, almost 100% of secretarial duties and tasks are still being currently carried out from one's home-based office, circumstances which may continue for some time yet.

The immediate past Slipstream post-out, like its predecessor, successfully reached nearly 100 percent of members without a hitch. Only two were returned, in each case because the members concerned had not advised change of address.

A higher than usual number of members died or fell gravely ill during the quarter, but to offset that, there has been a net increase in membership. It was gratifying to note that whilst some were new to the Association, others were 'old hands' returning to the fold.

With the Museum now officially renamed the Fleet Air Arm Association, there will be significant changes occurring during the next two years, some of which are flagged elsewhere in this journal, whilst others will be promulgated in the near future.

Tom McDonald
National Secretary

GARTH's BIKE

I paid six pounds (Australian) for the bike, it belonged to "Zork's" big brother, with its magnificent 'policeman's seat', three gears and 28 inch wheels. I would leave ten minutes after everyone else and still arrive at work on time as it was all down hill from 'H' hangar.

During work time it was available to everyone, it ran messages, it carried stores, if the "Goffer Wagon" ran out to the Canteen it went, at lunch it got me to the mess before the queue formed, even when the MAG was back it switched on the security lights, took the keys back to the guardhouse after work and then one evening it was left at the "Wet Canteen".

It took a ride to the ditching pool, climbed the parachute tower and leap into the water, where it was found drowned the following morning.

RIP



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN



I have it on good authority that this edition is the Christmas Edition and therefore I am duty bound to wish each and every member who has a pulse however strong, a very Merry Christmas with calm seas and a following wind. And yes, some of you are thinking "a following wind, must have had a dodgy Indian curry". But you know what I mean. The SA Division is behind me on this one. It's getting worse! Seriously though, do have a safe Christmas season and for those members, who are unwell, lift your spirits as we are thinking of you.

If you read through my last Slipstream article on the Federal Council AGM, you would see that I have had it done and dusted way back then. Little did I know that the bloody editor (Greg) would have the issue on our doorstep in a matter of days? Our Delegate Des Reardon survived the AGM and at our next meeting, we will drain the information from him word for word. Des, for those who don't know him, is a gentleman and a pleasure to know, so apart from the fact that he is our Vice President, stepped into President John Siebert's shoes and fitted a quick trip to Nowra to represent our Division at the Federal Council AGM in October. John was in Brisbane tormenting the Flight simulator I believe.

Des brought back good wishes from my old mate Tiny Warren who shared the Navy with me all those years ago. Have some great shots of him and Athol Lange in uniform on top of the Peak, Hong Kong, vintage 1964.

For Navy Week we attended a Garden Memorial Service on the 8th October as a Division. John Berry laid a laurel wreath on the FAAA plaque and I have included some photos of said occasion if Greg can reduce them down from their normal 10square feet format. I will always shiver when I hear a bugler play the "Last Post" as well as this Navy lad did. And as for the Catafalque Party dressed in full whites (not real whites like we wore) and fully armed, well, say no more.

Member Paul Shiels has been on the sick list recently and I believe he has won the battle. The committee and members wish you a speedy recovery Paul, and hoping to see you in the Park this January.

The Association Christmas Dinner will be held on the 9th December at the Belair Hotel near Blackwood which is miles from Mike Stubbington at Murray Bridge and Ken Adams at Kapunda, but who cares as its only 5 minutes down the road for me. Generally a very good night with plenty of food for all and a bonus, we won't get blasted by 600 watt woofers next to our ears playing some mono tone talked through song by an African American who is tone deaf. We will also pick that night to draw the Association raffle which comprises of a Christmas hamper of meat that Dinsley Cooper and Junice have organized for us. Hope you all returned your tickets in time for the draw. Stand fast the rest of Australia.

Ian Laidler has a brother working at the Port Adelaide Aviation Museum and as such, he is planning a meet down there for the

Association walk around with a possible BBQ afterwards. Same deal as Nowra regarding aircraft and getting volunteers to maintain them so I don't need to spell it out. May synchronies our gathering to be there when they do the engine run-ups. Can't remember the last time I heard a Rolls Royce Merlin run up. The Museum boasts a couple of FAA aircraft in top condition. Look forward to this one, sadly won't be until the New Year.

Hoping the new committee when elected at the March 07 AGM will plan an occasion to celebrate the Fleet Air Arm Birthday in late August. A BBQ in the Botanical Park will always be a winner and if we don't freeze our tits off or bake to a handsome lobster red then it should be a great day for the Association. More news next year from Dinsley's Fly Navy News Letter.

Received an excellent email response from my request for information on those blasted acronyms we now stick on the front of Squadrons eg.HS817. It came from Chris Sinclair who has recently retired with his wife to Port Macquarie and now living the life of Riley after 38 years before the mast. How has he managed for so long I hear you ask and still able to put pen to paper. Best ask Chris.

He asks after Karl Schierenbeck and Boo Penberthy, friends from those VC 851 days. Karl I have no idea, but Boo I have some which was sent over to me from Leon Brown NAS Nowra. It appears that Boo was the victim of contaminated fuel on the twin he was taking off in on a commercial flight in the West. A couple of fatalities with Boo receiving serious burns over most of his body. I don't know his present condition but if anyone out there does, please let me know. Speak of Leon Brown and who should show up with his lovely other half. Here for a visit, so at least I can catch up on all what's important with the Museum. As for the naming of the Museum, well I hope the knuckle draggers in the East understand that the Fleet Air Arm is Navy not Air-force.

Remembrance Day has come and gone with members having their own time to contemplate the terrors of war. Have noticed a little more activity by schools and groups on the past Australian conflicts. ANZAC Day is a classic example with the streets lined 5 deep from beginning to the end. I do not understand it but it is a buzz to be a part of.

I have been given the nod from the committee to extend an invitation to our new Senior Naval Officer for SA, Cmdr Andrew Jackman, to join the members at the January BBQ in the Botanic Gardens Park. All will be provided regarding foods and some drinks just bring a folding chair. How easy is that? Ofcourse the invite is extended to all members and their other half. Generally a great day under the Morton Bay fig trees.

Enough for now, have the Browns about to join us for a blistering afternoon on the veranda and BBQ to finish us all off. Will wish you all a Merry Christmas and a steady New Year. Keep in touch through the wonderful Slipstream magazine or your local FAAA magazines.

Quote:

"The War Office had decided to cease making any experiments with aeroplanes as the cost has proved too great. Aircraft are useless for army purposes as it was impossible for anybody moving at more than 40 miles per hour to see anything at all."

War Office Memorandum to Lieutenant J.W.Dunne and Colonel S. F. Cody. 1909

Regards

Roger Harrison. Hon. whipping boy



VICTORIA DIVISION



Attention on the flight deck!

2006 is fast cascading down the canyon and twenty-some million Australians are about to draw up a chair and commence the task of communicating with distant family and friends as the festive season looms on the horizon.

Looking back, what sort of a year has it been for us all? On the negative side, we have lost too large a number of old shipmates, while others battle the afflictions of progressive aging. Too few of the younger generations are filling in the vacant slots of membership and we still await the breaking of the national, nay global drought. On the positive side, WE are still here, there is promise in the air now that Navy have accepted responsibility for the running of the Fleet Air Arm museum and plans are being formed for a major reunion in 2008. This may well be the last round-up for many of us and therefore a good reason to make this one a 'whizz-bang' celebration of a special bond of 'birdie-dom'.

The recent AGM, held in the renovated adjoining building to the museum, the 'White Ensign Club' (compliments of John Arnold and his willing helpers), attracted an almost unprecedented attendance by members of the Victoria Division, in spite of some who were enduring debilitating afflictions. For once, there was no table-thumping or foot-stamping and proceedings flowed in an atmosphere of camaraderie and bonhomie. A presentation by museum manager, Terry Hetherington, assured us of positive short and long-term plans for the conduct of operations, a worthy team of professionals having been selected by Navy under his leadership to boost the efforts over many years by Neil Ralph, as voluntary interim caretaker, keeping the show on the road. We express our sincere gratitude to Neil for his selfless devotion and our very best wishes to the new team in their endeavours to cement the prestigious standard of 'our' museum high on the list of heritable icons.

As usual, the NSW Division, led by Greg Wise, extended their warm welcome to all at a post-AGM luncheon, volunteers from that Division attending to our every want. The prominent mounting of the wooden A4 Skyhawk model did not go unnoticed. It is always a boost to rub shoulders with a representative number of shipmates from the various Divisions and to feel again an injection of adrenalin from just belonging.

Would it not be elevating to dine to the background presentation of fine music by the RAN band, later to look out over an array of appropriate warbirds, as the distinctive hum of a passing Bristol Centaurus-powered Sea Fury, followed by the crackle of a Rolls Royce Griffon-engined Firefly, the chaff-cutter chatter of the twin Wright Cyclones of a Tracker and the distinctive

Armstrong Siddeley Double Mamba of a Gannet shattered the unnatural peace presently existing around 'Albatross'? That's what I mean when I write of a 'Whizz-bang' finale to fixed wing operations by the Fleet Air Arm. We never did have closure!

We extend a warm welcome to new members Helen Scholes, Dennis Maynard and Lyall O'Donoghue, the latter presently residing in HongKong. Mike (George) Lovell has been enticed back into the fold, which, we hope, may encourage others of that era to rejoin ship. Our own approaching AGM in February, 2007, offers members the opportunity of nominating their choice for the positions of representative Office and Committee member.

By the time this edition hits the streets, we should have had our Xmas break-up meeting and barbecue, with accompanying raffle and be looking forward to a well-attended President's luncheon at Anzac House on the 18th January, 2007, at which Warren Kemp will preside with an appropriate presentation. It is to be hoped that the membership will support this endeavour to establish a convenient and popular annual rendezvous. Also, we will have honoured George Self with the presentation of a framed 'Certificate of Appreciation', recognising his long-term activities in support of our Division, as 'official' photographer.

Annual subscriptions for Victoria Division members fall due on the 1st January, 2007, and members are urged to attend to this matter at an early date to preclude the time-consuming and relatively expensive repetitive reminders. Subscriptions, including 'Slipstream' costs, remain as for 2006. May I recommend the regular interrogation of the Association's website at www.faaaa.asn.au, faithfully maintained by Webmaster, Harley Dadswell, who is rarely accorded the votes of appreciation that he deserves for his thankless task.

John Champion has requested acknowledgement here, of the receipt of so many thoughtful expressions of regret following the recent sad loss of his wife, Enid. Enid had been a long-term, respected Associate Member of the Victoria Division and a past Senior Nursing Sister with the Royal Air Force. To all those who contacted John, please accept this as his sincere appreciation of your caring remarks at the time of his devastating loss.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the President, 'Hank' Fargher, Committee and all members of the Victoria Division, to extend to you and you and you, every good wish for the approaching festive season and a New Year which will see the evaporation of all your worries and an elevation of your quality of life.

Carry on!

Geoff Litchfield

When you get a splinter, reach for the scotch tape before resorting to tweezers or a needle. Simply put the scotch tape over the splinter, and then pull it off. Scotch tape removes most splinters painlessly and easily.

Possibly can be used for other annoying things that trouble us in day to day life as well—they make sticky tape in pretty big rolls these days.



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DIVISION



For the last time in 2006, greetings to all from here in the West, summer is not far away but little rainfall during the year; like most of the states; could mean a very dangerous period for bush fires, we hope not. Our politicians have decided to debate the viability of day-light saving again for a three year trial period, after many hours of childish time wasting argument's it will now start on December 2nd so we catch up that lost hour on all but Queensland early in December.

We have had two social gathering's since our last posting, a lunch for the wife's and partners at Fremantle's Esplanade Hotel, unfortunately the time and day didn't suit as many as we would have expected so the husbands attended to make up the numbers, but a great buffet lunch and a few drinks made for a great afternoon. Saturday the 11th November after the Remembrance day service's we held the "Battle of Taranto Luncheon" at Rosie O'Grady's and welcomed two guests Rowena Stockwell, a niece of David Davies and Don Buscall a grandson of Sub Lt Buscall DSC both from HMS Illustrious who were involved in the battle. John (Bomber) Brown was contacted by Rowena and David after an article he put in the local newspaper. regarding the planned lunch. "Bomber" gave a detailed speech on the history of the event and quite a few anecdotal stories associated with it.

We have had some well known visitors; Andy Perry and Frank & Skippy Eyck. Andy is sailing with the assistance of his son from Queensland via Fremantle down to Hobart for a wooden boat regatta. He spent some weeks here taking a break and preparing the yacht. At the time of writing Tony Bullimore (remember him?) is somewhere in the Indian Ocean (not lost just not reporting in say his race crew) we may see headlines with Andy down that way "Navy rescues Bullimore again", but we wish Andy all the best for his continuing voyage.

Frank & Skippy were in Perth for a while catching up on family and friends and were able to make it to Rosie's for a few coldies; its always good to catch up with both of them.

The WA Association will hold its Christmas Luncheon on the 10th December, at Rosie O'Grady's which should be a great afternoon.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all members of all divisions a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Keith (Squizzy) Taylor
Scribe

TASMANIAN DIVISION



News from down South.

Its this time again, late as usual but never the less here we won't mention the festive season again because I'm not sure we have had a full year since the last one. Then again something is in the wind because some Santas are in chimney tops, stores are decorated and offering never to be repeated bargain buys. So!!! The Division had its quarterly get together last Sunday (26th November) and quite a gathering it was, good to see so many attend.

Some of the clan featured grey nomads returning to the fold, Bob and Maureen Dunlop back after six months of 'everywhere man' and by their own admission a wonderful time was had looking up old mates and their families. They even relayed a message of best wishes to yours truly from 'Junior' Henderson, an old 724 Squadron mate. Rather humorous but good to hear from him anyway. He and Florence were in Tasmania earlier in the year and we had a good chin wag, wish the both of you the best too. Les Kube and Fiona have also returned to the fold after seven months and 32,000 kms on the 'Wallaby, a couple of casualties, one shredded tyre in the Northern Territory and one completely flooded van in Broome (burst water pipe). They made contact with 'Bungy' Geoff Williams in Melbourne, found 'Jock' Campbell in Sussex Inlet, John Anderson in Sydney, Gary Reid in Brisbane, Rick Casey in Geraldton, Ken Duncan in Perth, David Manton in Adelaide, Peter Penny in Nowra and of course their associated partners. Looks like his 32,000 was punctuated with plenty of 'mini' reunions and as good as it was, there is no place like 'Home'.

Now with the travelogues over let us digress a little. In more recent times a lot of emphasis has been placed on decorations and awards won (earned) by our armed forces. The 'Victoria Cross', a lot of you would remember Clifford and Wally Batchelor from Tasmania, their uncle Captain Percy Cherry won this award in France in WW1. I have spoken to both Cliff and Wally in relation to doing a story on his time in the trenches and they both agreed that it would make good reading and a newer direction for an article in Slipstream. So with all the information they have, plus a trip to France recently we will do something for the next issue. Clifford now lives in New Zealand and Wally in Launceston and both served in 'Sydney' on 816 Sqdn in Korea. Maybe not quite FAA but I am sure these two men—colleagues of the FAA must be very proud of their uncles' deeds—and rightly so.

Now we have decided 'Yes ! it must be Xmas' let us all wish each other a very happy one and a lot more to come for all of us, and please, remember the mates and their partners that have departed our ranks this last year,
All the best to you all, cheers from Matt (Jake) Jacobs



QUEENSLAND DIVISION



I've just recently been to Nowra for the Federal Council Meeting and it was pleasing to listen to Terry Hetherington speak at length about the plans for the Fleet Air Arm Museum. Sounds good, doesn't it. I'm sure there'll be a full report on the Museum in this edition of Slipstream, so I'll just say congratulations from all of us in QLD Division.

I'm glad I took some woollies-it got pretty cold by the Saturday night and stayed that way on Sunday as well as very windy-I wonder what else I expected! Ray and Alice Larson put up with me and we caught up with Arthur Sharland who is running pretty well -playing golf 3 times a week. It was good to catch up with everyone at the meeting. I hadn't seen Peter Welsh since the mid '60's and we recalled a flight together in the Mk2 Kookaburra Glider when I decided to do my 1st loop. I didn't get enough speed up so fell off the top into a hammerhead. The ASI only went to 90mph but the needle had gone 2 and a half times round the dial as I very gently eased the stick back and we climbed to a reasonable height again. The old girl was rattling a bit—we were way past the VNE—but nothing fell off, luckily. Amazingly tough machine!

Bob Willis has been in touch and I passed on Kev. Foote's address to him-Kev had written asking about Bob and the '37 Rolls with Dicky Seat, and I will attach a photo of it. The pic would have been taken c.1955. Thanks, Bob. Bob lives at Quakers Hill-a familiar name to a lot of us.

We spent nearly 3 weeks in Townsville whilst Arthur Johnson and Maxine were away in Ireland. We looked after the house and 2 dogs. Arthur had just taken delivery of a nicely restored Auster so we had to do a couple of runs in it for old times sake. It's basically the same model as the Navy ones. Ian and Florence Henderson turned up so Ian came out to the airfield with us. I'd sent them a card to say we'd be up there but they didn't get that so mental telepathy worked well. Our last trip was a bit foggy and we skirted around the edges looking for another strip. We gave it a miss after a while. Fog is not good- particularly if you find a hard bit in it! We went out to Charters Towers which we enjoyed and then to Ravenswood where we looked at the vast open-cut Gold Mine operating 24 hrs-they even smelt their own gold ingots on site. At one of the two pubs-the Imperial-the owners were very friendly and quickly had us behind the bar to get our hand in on the taps!

The large ship-"The World" - came in for a weekend, which was our only wet weekend but no one could get near it. The Press were told to keep away. Gipsy Moth 1V came in on it's Round The World run and we were lucky enough to find it and be invited onboard. The crew reckoned it was a tough boat to sail even with a crew, which says something for Sir Francis Chichester! After we'd got home, had a call from Ian to say they were in

Maroochydore and had met up with Tassie Douglas and his wife, so we met up at the Kawana Hotel for a meal. I had seen Tassie at the '98 reunion. We had a nice evening catching up.

We plan to have a Christmas Picnic at Teralba Park in Everton Park in North Brisbane on 17th December. Close to Xmas, but we hope to get a good rollup to enjoy some Xmas cheer. The weather should be good. It was like coming home to the Antarctic from Townsville. The humidity up there was 30% which was very unusual with temps around 28-30 degrees.

Our AGM has been arranged by Trevor Tite for March 18 at the Currumbin RSL and we are booked for the Spring Hill Hotel on Anzac day. We'll order off the menu this time to avoid the problem we had this year where we estimated 60 or so for catering and 92 turned up! What a day! We had morning tea with Margaret Collins while up North. Margaret is keeping busy doing voluntary work for the RSL and has her family there whilst their new house is being built.

We welcome some new members: Bruce Crawford from Gympie, Brian Williams from Currumbin, and Graham Winterflood from Kanimbla up North. Looking forward to seeing you before too long.

Pancho Walter is recovering from an op. he had at the time of the Council Meeting. Some people will do anything to get out of things! Get well quick, mate. Jock Todd is having a bit of a hard time suddenly. Hope all goes well, Jock. Warren Walters, having got a new passport (he lost his old one in China), was off to Romania on October 24. At Little Rock Airport, he was asked to show his Visa for same. OH,OH-no got! So Maria flew off and WW hired a twin cab ute to get back home. Eventually he flew to Budapest a week later then had a 400km train trip to finally meet up with the tour and his wife! I think something happened on the train trip as well-waiting for that news. He discovered there was a warning in the trip paperwork to check if visa's were needed and to arrange same. Only read the manual when in strife!

Joe Linaker is now National President of the FESR. He has had a meeting with Minister Billson referencing the PJM and also has written to a senior Malayan Official at in Canberra re same. Let's hope he gets a good result! Well done, Joe.

I have really messed up our lawns here. Sprayed them-back and front with what I thought was a selective weed killer. It was very selective and killed off the grass as well as the weeds and turns out it was Round UP under a different name. The front lawn looks like a good camouflage job-probably a team of SAS hidden out there doing exercises -and I'm digging up the back. Dee reckons I should create a veg. garden there. I'm only digging it up because I can't think of what else to do other than just look the other way! You might have guessed that a Gardener I am not! And I read the "manual" when I was in strife.

We have the ok from the QLD Air Museum to install a Remembrance Plaque for the FAA and referred same to the Federal Council. It was decided to standardise wording for such Plaques and we hope to see that in this Slipstream.

Well, I've run out of steam now so will close off by wishing everyone a great Christmas and do have a Happy new Year from all of us in QLD. Max and Norma Wilson are doing well and should be in Derby/Broome by now. Barry Lister - President

NSW DIVISION



Xmas is with us again and it only seems like weeks ago we were saying goodbye to the bearded chap after the last festive season. This last year seems to have been less forgiving when dealing with the passing of friends only making the saying "it's a good day if you see the sun come up" even more relative.

Our achievements this year have climaxed with the reopening of the White Ensign Club, a project that took us longer than we anticipated but the extra time was needed to give a final product that was worth having. The article in the previous pages covers all aspects so I will leave it there with just one more comment and that is large "BZ" to John Arnold.

It is with regret that I have to report the passing of Phil Robinson's partner, Robin Adams just several days after she assisted Phil, Ray and Pauline Burt with the catering for the Annual Dinner after the National Forum. So young and she will be missed by so many as she was such a likeable person.

You will find included in this issue your membership renewal form and a book of tickets for the annual raffle. We delayed both to this edition for plain logistic reasons. Inclusions in the magazine mean postage labels have to be printed in a completely different way as our members reside in all states and the labels are normally printed in postcodes so the least number of times we have to re-arrange the system the better as it is quite a logistics nightmare. This makes it easier for you anyway as you only need to get your cheque book out once.

The raffle this year is by popular demand a 27" LCD television for first prize, second prize is an outstanding large painting of red roses by our Honorary Member John Downton. Once again John has donated his handiwork and the Committee extends their thanks for this gift. Third prize is a sound system. Because of the logistics in delivery it will probably mean that for first and third prizes either a cheque or an arrangement will need to be made with one of the larger department store in the area near where the winner lives.

I am at present writing this from my hospital bed, I have just had a new knee fitted and it's a bit tender. Apart from that it's been like old home week up here, Len Bolden is 2 doors up and Hugh Molyneux is around the corner and we all have the same problem. Visiting hours here are 'open' and all day long there is a constant stream of associates dropping in—wouldn't want to be in here for a rest. Times like this you realize even more just how many 'mates' you have accumulated over the years that still live locally.

The Museum change over is going well and each time I go into Bob Gaele's office there seems to be more space, there have been quite a few administration and organizational types about of late and the changes are becoming noticeable. Complying the whole hangar to OH&S standards has been no small job on its own. Charges for entry have changed as well as the rules, until the opening all charges have been reduced to \$7.50 and everyone has to pay. From the 'official' opening next May there will be 'no charge' at all so please bear with this interim change.

Ray Burt has been kept pretty busy just lately, or at least his phone has. He informs me that there seems to be a lot more 'mates' feeling the wear and tear of the ageing progress. Don't hesitate to get in touch with him if you think we can be of assistance, his contact information is available on the web site.

The Navy have announced that their official opening date for the Museum and Air Day (probably a three service combined affair) will be on the 6th May next year and we will endeavour to hold a function in the 'White Ensign Club' to coincide with this. We are blessed with the best viewing platform available and that mixed with a nibble or two and a 'light refreshment' should make for a good day. The next issue of this magazine will have the final details so mark a spot on your calendar for a pleasant day out. The area can comfortably cater for 40-50 but as this may be a very big occasion we may get members to give us an idea of the numbers attending—once again next issue will do for that as well.

Thoughts regarding the next FAAA Reunion are floating in the air, it is not two years away now and before you can blink we will be down to the last twelve months. The National Executive have asked NSW to organise the event with input from the other Divisions. Now is the time to bring to the notice of your division any particular event or happening that you think would be advantageous to all. If it is possible and practical we will try to incorporate it in the schedule. The usual events will be catered for, golf, bowls and section mini reunions, with this region now becoming well to the fore in wine production we will try and include some 'tasting of the grape' as well. It will be in October 2008 and we will endeavour to get all the accommodation available to everyone as early as we can.

I and the Committee wish all the best for the festive season and hope that Santa brings all that is asked for—above all may you all be blessed with good health.

Greg Wise

Remember:

Senior Citizens are increasingly Valuable because:

We have silver in our hair. We have gold in our teeth. We have stones in our kidneys and gall bladders. We have precious metals in our replaced joints. We have road maps on our arms and legs. We have lead in our feet and

We are loaded with natural gas.

VALE :**JOHN HENRY COOKE.**

(Squadrons RAN 723, 724, 805, 808—RN 764, 781,811)

Now there is a name that conjures up the image of a tall man, immaculately groomed, of regal stature, wearing a warm and engaging smile. A loved and loving husband, father and loyal friend to most all that he rubbed shoulders with throughout his life. He was a polished aviator and rose to become a successful businessman blessed with the ability to relate to Admirals, senior politicians and lesser mortals with equal aplomb, thus winning their unanimous respect.

We are here today to celebrate the life of a charming gentleman, who first saw the light of day in the city of Wollongong, NSW - a born leader. Just short of 76 years young, he led a full and adventurous life. John was just one of Wollongong's notable products. At the peak of his career, jointly heading an aviation-aligned business, he would attract the respect of the hierarchy of Australia's major airlines, as agent for respected international aviation monoliths. John's entrepreneurial skills assured him of the sympathetic ears of senior politicians and airline management. An avid communicator, we can imagine his distress in recent times, finding it so difficult to express himself, though mentally alert. Despite that, anyone visiting him at the nursing home in Hawthorn, once recognized, would be treated to that familiar wide, toothy smile and an extended hand of greeting as though this was his best day.

John lived life to a code of high personal requirements - as Lisa recently commented, dotting the 'I's and crossing the 'T's. His family may well be justifiably proud of him, and his achievements. The attendance here, today and the number of messages of condolence received from friends around the nation demonstrate the high esteem in which this man is held.

I first met John 50 plus years ago at HMAS 'Albatross'; 'Albatross' being the land base for the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Australian Navy, located at Nowra, NSW. He had progressed through the many stages of recruit and flight training courses, both with the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force, particularly on Naval Aircrew Course 3 and RAAF Aircrew Course 8. In those days, FAA Aircrew were initially trained by the RAAF, finishing operational training with the Royal Navy at various United Kingdom bases.

Trained as a fighter pilot, John finally graduated from Seafire MK XVII aircraft to the world's fastest single-engined piston-driven Hawker Sea Fury Mk 11. Initial deck landings on HMS 'Illustrious' heralded the successful completion of Operational Flying School training with the Royal Navy. Unlike the rest of us who returned immediately to Australia, John and a number of his course mates, were posted to a Royal Navy fighter Squadron, No. 811 (Sea Furies), which, in turn, was directed to embark aboard HMS 'Warrior' for front line work-up exercises.

Subsequently, 'Warrior' was deployed to waters off the Korean and Malayan peninsulas, to eventually actively participate in armed attacks on communist terrorists during the Malayan campaign.

Eventually, he was posted to 805 Squadron back at Nowra, where our paths first crossed. In view of his operational experience, leadership qualities and manipulative expertise, he was soon selected to lead the very first RAN FAA formation aerobatic team, of which I and our dear departed mate, Don Davidson formed a trio.

John was a very professional airman and a pilot of superior manipulative skills, such that he exuded total trust as a leader in multiple aircraft manoeuvres, making it seemingly simple to follow his lead in whatever combination of aerobatic manoeuvres he planned for a number of PR air displays.

Coffs Harbour, NSW in June, 1955, saw our three Sea Fury aircraft assembled to show the flag at a local air pageant. Aware that the organizers of the air show were attempting to provide a hook-up to the Public Address system of our in-flight radio communications, John had obviously mentally pre-planned a dramatic verbal presentation for the benefit of the attending public; also to trump a similar group of personal friends involved in RAAF exercises in the area. In-flight calls hinting on our initial run-in that 'we were approaching the speed of sound and you would shortly hear the sonic boom' were designed to electrify the audience. The fact that the Sea Fury was incapable of supersonic flight was deemed to be not widely publicly known.

A final fly-past in Vic formation with John leading, his aircraft inverted, led to a more startling announcement when, after rolling his aircraft upright after sustained negative 'G', the oil-flooded engine of his aircraft ran roughly, the exhausts emitting puffs of black smoke (a normal aftermath of sustained inverted flight), which prompted John to dramatically issue a 'Mayday' call, indicating that he would be carrying out an emergency landing on the Coffs airstrip. Imagine his disappointment when, shutting down in front of an appreciative crowd, we were to learn that the Public Address system was inoperative and John's explicit and dramatic recital had been for our ears only. A born showman!

Another event when embarked in HMAS 'Sydney', following a particularly noticeable display of post-launch, breath-taking aircraft manipulation, John was later interviewed, post-flight, by the current ship's Captain, himself a wit, who stated:- "Cooke, what did you think you were doing? Taking off like that, with full power, in fully fine and fluffing off like a fart in a bath."

Indeed, he has now taken off in fully fine, peeled off from our formation and blasted off into, and above the clouds, bound for a final destination. In due course, we will all follow in his slipstream.

Fare thee well, old mate!

I have attached my contribution to the multiple eulogies presented at the ceremony, with the photo of John as highlighted on the frontispiece of the ceremonial menu.

Geoff Litchfield.

FAA Association contact details**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

President : CDRE D Farthing DSC RAN (Ret'd)
(02) 4872 3237 email : pennyfarthing1@aapt.net.au

Secretary : Mr Tom McDonald - PO Box 7115, Naval PO, Nowra 2540
(02) 4421 6719 email : thmcdnd@tpg.com.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

President : Mr Winston James - 19 Hilarion Road, Duncraig WA 6023
(08) 94477727 email : winstonj@bigpond.com.au

Secretary : Mr Peter Welsh - 26 Robinia Rise, Helena Valley WA 6056
Ph/Fax: 08 92748063 email : pwelsh@arach.net.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

President : CMDR John Siebert RANR - Box177, Mitcham ,SA. 5062
(08) 83511314 email : jsiebert@bigpond.com

Secretary : Mr Roger Harrison - 2 Gwendoline Court ,Coromandel Valley, SA 5061
(08) 82788307 email : coroman@bigpond.com

VICTORIA

President : Mr Charles Fargher - 59/61 Enfield Ave, Park Orchards, Vic 3114
(03) 98761554 email :

Secretary : Mr Geoff Litchfield - 9 Stringybark Rd, Eltham , Vic 3095
(03) 94399736 email : geoff805@optusnet.com.au

TASMANIA

President / Secretary : Mr John Nobes - 8 Elizabeth St, Somerset , Tas. 7322
(03) 64352473

Treasurer : Mr Ron Melville - 5, View Street, Ulverstone ,Tas. 7315
(03) 6425 3626 email : ronada66@dodo.com.au

QUEENSLAND

President : Mr Barry Lister - 3 Royal Close ,Regatta Pk, Wurtulla, Qld. 4575
(07) 54934386 email : blister@caloundra.net

Secretary : Mr Trevor Tite - 37 Miles St ,Caboolture ,Qld. 4510
(07) 54993809 email : trevlor@tadaust.org.au

NEW SOUTH WALES

President : Mr Greg Wise - 4 Bindaree St, Greenwell Point, NSW. 2540
(02) 44471602 email : gregwise@pacific.net.au

Secretary : Mr Mike Heneghan - 98 Suncrest Ave ,Sussex Inlet, NSW.. 2540
(02) 44412901 email : mheneghan@pacific.net.au

DISCLAIMER

Slipstream is published by the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia Incorporated. All rights reserved. Reproduction in part or whole is forbidden without the express permission of the Editor "in writing".

All care will be taken with material that is submitted for publication but no responsibility is accepted or assumed by the publisher or editorial staff for any loss or damage incurred to it. The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Association or Committee of Management.

* * *

WALL OF SERVICE**Latest plaques fitted**

NUGENT KR
O'CONNOR R
MACKENZIE GJ
PATTERSON MBE CJ
SUTCLIFFE J
CHILDS LH
LEISK JD
FELLENBERG KR
LAIRD D
HALPIN AC
BUSHE-JONES TF
MURRELL RP
TUDHOPE J
EARLE RS
CATTERMOLE RH
FENWICK KP
CAIN MR
GUMLEY JT
GARDNER WD
LORD FB
MALCOM J
CLAVEY FAJ
McDERMOTT RK
STEVENS GR
ECCLESTON AL
HICKS BJ
DEVEREUX HJ
ROBSON CC

DEWHIRST DI
ALTHAM MR
GAULT WJ
KERWITZ DJ
PRING GJ
CLIFFORD J de L
BOURKE RE
BUSH JC
GILMOUR RJ
SEIP WG
LEE GW

A LAST FAREWELL

The Association records with regret the deaths of the following members, shipmates and friends:

J. Van Gelder : 18th June 2006

John Cook : 10th September 2006

Malcom (Mal) Wilson : 11th September 2006

Laurie (Jas) Baldwin : 31st August 2006

John Selby : 3rd October 2006

John (Monty) Moncrieff : 7th October 2006

Arthur McKenzie : 25th July 2006

Bob (Big Fred) Watts : 17th October 2006

Barry Parsons : 18th October 2006

Frederick Athol Bliss : 1st September 2006

Kenneth Lidden : 25th July 2006

Colin Buchholz : 24th October 2006

Peter Clarke DFC : 24th November 2006



FLEET AIR ARM WALL of SERVICE

