



Vol 51 November 2021

FlyBy

In This Edition:

One Thousand Men

Taking A Few Moments to Remember

The Billion Dollar Blunder

Why the Seasprite Project Failed

Wood For Wood

An Old Wartime Myth - True or False?

Icing On The Cake

Sixty Grand and a Little Sympathy...

Around the Traps

News and Views of Interest



EDITORIAL

This month sees the second of our 'new look' FlyBy magazines. Thank you for the positive feedback and the suggestions to improve it, which have all been taken on board.

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 the guns fell silent over Europe after four years of the bloodiest conflict in history. That moment is cherished by nations of conscience, and we are no exception. Let us remember our fallen in that war, and in all wars, with the beautiful words of a poem by young Joshua Dwyer (next page), and by pausing a minute to recall the names of FAA fallen in particular. You can see them on our Roll of Honour [here](#), and read a little about each of their hopes and dreams as people, rather than statistics.

This year brings the 80th Anniversary of the Loss of HMAS Sydney in 1941, and our involvement in the Korean conflict in 1951, also involving an HMAS Sydney. We have a little about both of those events in this magazine.

As someone with an abiding interest in Naval Aviation, I'm always surprised at just how little our history books talk of the Kaman Seasprite, which we purchased back in 1997 with high hopes and in good faith. It turned out to be the most expensive project failure in our history, but that's no reason to sweep it under the carpet. I wrote an account of the Sea Sprite story on our website a few years ago, but it has



had few readers so I include an abridged version in this issue, in the hope that lessons learned in that acquisition process are not forgotten as we reach for new submarines, helicopters and ships.

The FAAAA held its annual AGM in October, and there's a short blurb in this issue on that too. You may care to catch up on what makes this organisation tick.

Anyway, enjoy this issue. It takes time and effort so please, help out with contributions, letters or opinions!

Stay safe, as always.

Marcus Peake, Editor. ♣



This artwork by an unknown artist accompanied the poem by young Joshua Dwyer, featuring on page 3 of this edition of "FlyBy".

It is particularly fitting as Remembrance day falls in this month, which also marks the 80th Anniversary of the loss of HMAS Sydney (II) with all hands, and the 70th anniversary of HMAS Sydney (III) going to war in Korea.

CONTENTS

Editorial.....	2
One Thousand Men.....	3
70 Years Ago.....	4
The Billion Dollar Blunder.....	5
Letters To The Editor.....	12
Op Bursa Update/Death Notices.....	15
Wood For Wood.....	16
Last Month's Mystery Photo.....	18
This Month's Mystery Photo.....	19
Icing On The Cake.....	20
HMAS Sydney Commemoration.....	22
Around The Traps.....	23
Membership Payment Details.....	27

FLYBY is a periodical of the Fleet Air Arm Association. The views expressed within it are not necessarily endorsed by the Association or any of its agents. ♣

One Thousand Men

By Joshua Dwyer

One thousand men are walking, walking side by side,
singing songs from home
the spirit as their guide,
They walk toward the light milord,
they walk towards the sun,
they smoke and laugh and smile together
no foes to outrun.

These men live on forever
in the hearts of those they saved,
a nation truly grateful
for the path of peace they paved,
They march as friends and comrades
but they do not march for war,
step closer to salvation
a tranquil steady corps.

The meadows lit with golden beams,
a beacon for the brave,
the emerald grass untrampled,
a reward for what they gave,
They dream of those they left behind
and know they dream of them,
forever in those poppy fields
there walk one thousand men.



Above. Joshua Dwyer was just 15 when he wrote the poem on this page to remember those who had fallen in the Great War.

70 Years Ago THIS MONTH



Seventy years ago our new Fleet Air Arm went to war in support of UN Resolution 82, which declared North Korea's invasion of the South to be in breach of Peace.

On the last day of August 1951 *HMAS Sydney* sailed from its namesake city with its Air Group, bound for Kure, Japan. There she relived *HMS Glory* before slipping her moorings to commence her on-station patrols, which would continue until early the following year.

It was there, on **5th November 1951**, that the RAN Fleet Air Arm suffered its first wartime casualty when Lieutenant [Keith Clarkson](#) DFM RAN was killed in action whilst flying a Sea Fury over north Korea. He was an ex-RAAF pilot of great experience and was the Senior Pilot of 805 Squadron. The Squadron Diary recorded the loss as follows:

'52 Flight were first airborne and once more the Han River was the target. Troop concentrations were rocketed and strafed followed by an Armed Recce heading north from Packichan. It was during this recce that 52 Leader was hit while making a strafing run on a possible truck at BT.670155. The aircraft rolled over on its back and dived into the ground, breaking into many pieces. No sign of life or of florescent panels were seen. One aircraft returned to the ship and the remaining two carried out out Rescap over the area. Few enemy troops were seen and were strafed and some rockets put into a slit trench. Both aircraft were hit and soon had to land at Kimpo, being short on fuel.



in the Group. His loss will be felt very deeply.'

During Sydney's engagement over that hard Korean winter, two other aircrew lost their lives: Lt. [Richard Sinclair](#) and SBLt [Ron Coleman](#).

We acknowledge their sacrifice and remember them.

A number of FAAAA Korean Veterans remain with us as treasured reminders that liberty does not come cheap. Their service, performed in difficult and dangerous circumstances, remains highly valued. **Theo Bushe-Jones, Noel Knappstein, Fred Lane, Norman Lee, Jim Parsons** and **Jack Suriano** are amongst them. We thank and honour you.♣



The Billion Dollar Blunder

By Marcus Peake

If you look into Navy's historical records on the Super Seasprites you'll find very little - just a photo and a paragraph or two of vague text. There's nothing in the FAA museum either, and not a single fragment of an airframe remains on Australian soil. It's almost as if the pages of our history have been expunged of their memory.

But the Seasprite Project took eleven years and consumed over a billion dollars, so they are very much a part of our history, like it or not.

So what was the story? Why was such a diverse airframe chosen in the first place, and what were the decisions that doomed the project to be the greatest failure in our procurement history?

In January 1997 Australia's then Minister for Defence, Ian McLachlan, announced the RAN would acquire 11 Kaman SH-2G(A) Super Seasprite helicopters.

Eleven years later Senator Joel Fitzgibbon, the new Labour Government Minister for Defence, announced the Government intended to cancel the project.

The interval between the two events bequeathed the

Project two unenviable records: for the most troubled Defence acquisition process ever, and the least successful. Not a single operational aircraft was ever brought into service, despite expenditure of over one billion Australian dollars. So what went wrong?

The Super Seasprite acquisition was born of a need to acquire helicopters for the RAN's Anzac class frigates. These were due to enter service in 1996 but no dedicated aircraft had been included in the purchase.

The RAN was still taking delivery of Sikorsky S-70B-2 Seahawks for its FFGs, and there was an expectation that more airframes would be purchased for the Anzacs as well. This would avoid additional aircraft types in a small Fleet Air Arm inventory, provide commonality in training, maintenance and logistics, and would have amortised the Seahawk costs across a larger fleet.

But there was a wildcard in the pack – the Offshore Patrol Combatant (OPC), which was in early development to replace the RAN's ageing Fremantle class patrol boats. In the original design there was no intent for the OPC to carry a helicopter, but it was soon realised that organic air support would significantly enhance the vessel's surveillance and strike roles, particularly if it could deploy a weapon well beyond the ship's horizon. Accordingly, the original plan to acquire 15 OPCs was reduced to just nine, with the savings put towards the cost of a new helicopter.

The specifications for the new helicopter set ambitious targets. A primary role was to extend the OPC/Anzac's strike range. To do so it would be required to detect, classify and engage targets over the horizon, and to communicate with her via a secure data link. Further, it was to be equipped with an anti-ship missile with a range superior to a target's

own weapons, as well as torpedoes to attack submarines detected by the mother's sonar system.

The missile requirement drove much of the helicopter's sensor suite, as the RAN wanted both active and passive prosecution. This dictated a high-definition radar, together with Infra-Red sensors and a suite of Electronic Surveillance equipment.

The choice of missile was also informed by the helicopter's role. The Navy wanted to inflict crippling damage to an enemy ship, so it selected the Kongsberg Penguin Mk 2 missile – a formidable weapon boasting a 125kg warhead, an inertial nav/passive infra-red guidance and a range of some 20 nautical miles.

Ships and People

The OPC program gained extra momentum when Malaysia expressed an interest in acquiring a similar class of vessel. The advantage of a joint program was irresistible, particularly as the RMN's requirement was for 27 such vessels against Australia's nine.

But at 81.5m long and just 1350 tonnes displacement, the OPC would be too small for the 10-tonne Seahawk. A smaller helicopter in the 5-6 tonne class was required, and as no aircraft had yet been procured for the Anzac frigate it was decided the OPC would dictate the type, and the Anzacs would follow suit. This essentially killed any notion of further Seahawks, and significantly limited the field of aircraft available.

Aside from the aircraft's displacement and weapon fit, a third factor would also affect specification: the number of crew it would carry.

Naval helicopters typically carried at least a three-man crew – certainly those with complex weapon/sensor systems. The Seahawk was a good example, with a single pilot in the right-hand seat, an Observer/TACCO in the left and a SENSO at the console in the cabin. But the concept for Sea 1411 was to remove one crewmember by combining the TACCO and SENSO roles into a single station. The reasons were logical: reduction to just two people would not only save weight, but would alleviate aircrew recruiting and training pressures.

But the trade-off was a high workload for the two crew members. Under this concept the TACCO/SENSO would be responsible not only for mission planning, but the operation of the complex sensors and weapon systems. The pilot, aside from flying the helicopter, would also have to assume more of the sensor management and tactical planning.

Keeping this minimalist crew workload to an acceptable level dictated a very sophisticated mission system with a cutting-edge human-machine



Above. Images of the original 1993 OPC design are hard to come by, but the winning contender for the 2018 OPV, the Lurssen OPV80, gives a good idea of the concept. At 80-metre is the same length as the OPC design, but with a Displacement 26% greater (Image: Lurssen).

interface. The answer was an all-new digital Integrated Tactical Avionics System (ITAS), to link all the sensors and weapon systems in the aircraft and deliver information to the crew via high resolution colour multi-functional displays. For example, the TACCO might elect to display his navigation track and waypoints on one screen and then quickly overlay sensor information over the nav information, such as radar and ESM tracks. Unwanted information would be filtered out. The displays also replaced many of the aircraft's old analogue flight instruments. An all-new Automatic Flight Control System (AFCS) would also be required – in effect, an 'autopilot' that could fly the aircraft throughout most of its flight envelope, further reducing the pilot's workload.

Contenders

The ADF's Defence Material Organisation (DMO) issued its Request for Tenders in October of 1995, and by March of the following year the two contenders – Westland for the Super Lynx and Kaman for the Super Seasprite – lodged Tenders for the supply of 14 aircraft. It soon became clear that acquiring this number would exceed project costs, and so the figure was reduced and the procurement of the missile was moved to a separate Project (Sea 1414).

Kaman's Super Seasprite was fitted with two General Electric T700 powerplants (the same as the RAN's Seahawks, thus offering logistic commonality) and was about 10% cheaper. The Lynx only had two crewmembers but its suite of sensors and level of their integration was less than required by the Australians. Further, the British helicopter was too small to carry the type of missile DMO had in mind.

The Sea Sprites only interaction with ships was for test and evaluation flying. Here, one lands aboard an FFG frigate in Sydney harbour.



Super Seasprites Win

On January 1997 – a month before tenders for Malaysia’s OPV contract were due – the Australian Government announced the acquisition of 11 Kaman Super Seasprite SH-2G(A) helicopters to equip its Anzac frigates, and ‘...that further orders ...would be considered to take account of possible future needs and to support the prospective Offshore Patrol Combatant.’

To reduce costs Kaman had offered ‘re-worked’ Super Seasprites rather than new ones, and this option was also taken. These were SH-2F airframes refurbished to an as-new condition. The estimated saving was about \$25m.

So the die was cast: Defence had selected a helicopter based primarily on the following four specifications:

- they would be small enough to service the OPC, which was still in project development;
- they must be capable of a significant surface strike capability requiring complex, self-contained sensors;
- the crew would normally comprise just two people, requiring a state-of-the-art Integrated Tactical Avionics System and an Automatic Flight Control System, and
- they would be refurbished airframes, rather than new ones.

Kaman and the DMO signed the \$661.8m prime contact in June of 1997, with deliveries scheduled for 2001. The contract implied that the original US Navy type certification for the new Super Seasprite and its flight control system was acceptable to the RAN at the time. (The following year a new tri-Service certification was adopted but rather than re-negotiate the contract to the new standard a decision was made for the Project Office to manage the gap between the two. This brought certification issues which remained unresolved throughout the Project’s life).

The OPV Connection Breaks

Four months after the Kaman contract was signed the OPC program collapsed when the Malaysian Government chose Blohm-Voss to build their Offshore Patrol Vessels, rather than Transfield (Australia). Malaysia’s decision not to proceed effectively killed one of the principal reasons for selecting the Seasprite.

In retrospect is difficult to imagine why Australia had such high expectations that a joint Australia-Malaysia patrol boat program would proceed. Four years earlier Malaysia’s prime minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammed, had taken great offence when his Australian counterpart described him as ‘recalcitrant’ for not attending an APEC summit in Seattle.

Mohammed’s attitude to Australia was already ambivalent, to say the least, and the rebuke by Keating caused diplomatic friction that lasted for



years. Even without this slight it's fair to say the Malaysian government had little love for what they regarded as a 'colonialist' Australia and, with other options on the table for their OPC, was always likely to give them preference rather than a joint program with us.

The cancellation of the OPC program triggered a requirement to re-examine Project Sea 1411 and, if it couldn't be justified, to cancel it. The option to put Seahawks on the Anzac frigates was a possibility – the S70B could carry a long range anti-ship missile, just as the Seasprite could, and commonality factors with the existing fleet were a powerful incentive to take this path. But against these advantages was the ill-feeling between Sikorsky and the RAN which had developed during the Seahawk acquisition, and their affordability. Even though the Seasprite was an all-new and different aircraft type with all the risk and cost that entailed, on paper it remained much cheaper than the Sikorsky option. Defence thought the Kaman contract represented good value for money and, with sunken costs already committed, was not inclined to cancel it. In

“Defence thought the Kaman contract represented good value for money and, with sunken costs already committed, was not inclined to cancel it. In retrospect, it was a huge mistake.”

retrospect, it was a huge mistake.

It is easy to be wise in hindsight. Arguably, the relevant committee was ill-equipped to understand just how difficult it would be to develop a state of the art ITAS/AFCS for a suite of sensors never before placed in an ADF maritime helicopter – yet alone in airframes well over 20 years old – and to deliver it on time and in budget.

Progress & Problems

In the meantime, all was going reasonably well. In February 1998 Defence signed a \$79m contract with Kongsberg Gruppen (Norway) for an initial batch of Penguin missiles, followed a year later by a second \$76m contract. In March of 1998 a contract for FLIR and ESM was signed.

Work was also progressing in Kaman's plant in the USA. By June of 1999 Kaman was flight testing the new AFCS on a Super Seasprite, and the first prototype of the Australian version was on the assembly line. Delivery of the first aircraft was forecast for the end of 2000, with the final aircraft in 2002.

By March 2000 the SH-2G(A) had reportedly made 13 flights using the first iterations of ITAS and AFCS software, and flight testing was expected to continue. By then the second ITAS software build was underway with the relevant sub-contractor – Litton Guidance & Controls, a California-based company. But it was clear that schedules were beginning to slip, with the focus on Litton's performance. Delays were noted in the development of ITAS and flight simulator elements of the project, and concern was expressed in the lack of critical documentation.

In retrospect, Litton – who was the main sub-contractor for delivery of the ITAS – completely underestimated the magnitude of the task. It was then acquired by Northrop-Grumman, creating further confusion in its focus on the work. By late 2000 Litton reported it had run into difficulties and was asking for additional money to finish the ITAS work.

First Seasprites Arrive

The first Seasprites arrived in Australia in 2001 to facilitate maintenance and aircrew training, but the lack of a functional, integrated ITAS meant they were unable to do any tactical training. Months passed and the original deadline came and went without any tangible progress. In February 2002 a Senate Committee was told that persistent ITAS problems would delay service entry for at least another two years. It was also informed that Kaman had terminated Litton's contract in late 2001 and appointed two new sub-

contractors to finish the work: CSC Australia Ltd and Northrop-Grumman Integrated Technology.

By February 2002 Kaman had already been paid some 80% of the total fixed price contract, but only six aircraft had been built and these still belonged to them, albeit at its facility in Nowra. The way the acquisition contract was structured meant that DMO was required to pay as various milestones were reached, even if the aircraft were dysfunctional. It wasn't the only problem with the contract – there was no clause to penalise Kaman if it didn't deliver. There was no way for

Defence to get its



money back, or even its money's worth, except by sticking to the contract in the hope of eventual success.

There was also a conflicting sustainment contract, under which the ADF found itself paying for the maintenance of airframes which hadn't been delivered. This problem was only resolved in 2003.

Problems and Money

By then Defence was in a classic sunken-cost dilemma, where the stark choice was to cancel the contract with nothing to show for it, or to

grit its teeth and pay more to continue, even though it was fraught with risk. DMO decided on the second path.

And so the project struggled on. By then the working relationship between the key parties had soured, with acrimony a frequent event. There was also a growing lack of confidence in the process and the reliability of ITAS.

Provisional Acceptance - Of A Sort

In late 2002 the Chief of Navy refused to take Provisional Acceptance of the aircraft. But in

October the following year the then Minister for Defence, Robert Hill, announced that the RAN would provisionally accept eight of the aircraft in an "Interim Training Helicopter Configuration" to enable flight testing and operational evaluation. This would allow the newly commissioned 805 Squadron to start training by the end of 2004.

In November 2003 the first Super Seasprite deck landings occurred aboard an Anzac class frigate, followed by First of Class Flight Trials in May the following year. By late 2004 the aircraft had been granted an Australian Military Type Certification, and by May 2005 progress had been made in the ITAS by the integration of the radar, data-link system and the Penguin missile. But another bombshell was about to be dropped.

Grounded

In May 2006 Dr Brendan Nelson, the new Defence Minister, announced the Super Seasprites were to be grounded indefinitely and their type certification withdrawn due to concerns with the Automatic Flight Control System (AFCS).

Previous models of the Seasprite were fitted with an analogue Automatic Stabilisation Equipment (ASE), which stabilised the aircraft height, heading and speed to reduce the pilot's workload. It was a simplex system: that is, it did not have back-up circuits to check for spurious results and reject them (as the Seahawk does); but in Kaman's eyes ASE failures were rare and if one occurred the pilot simply override it to continue the flight manually.

But the RAN'S two-man crew configuration required a system that would reduce crew workload to a greater extent than ASE, and so a digital AFCS was specified. Critically, it had to work though the 'old' flight control configuration – that is, with mechanical linkages between the controls and the rotors; and it was still a simplex system.

The fault that grounded the Seasprites was incidents of 'hard-overs', when the AFCS spuriously drove one of its control actuators to the end of its travel.

Contrary to Kaman's view, the RAN regarded this as a critical fault that could jeopardise the safety of the aircraft in some parts of the flight envelope.

The difference between their views came back to the changes Australia had made to the design and modus operandi of the SH2G(A). The reduction to two crew members meant the pilot would already have a high workload, and, distracted by his other duties, may not be able to react in time to save the aircraft in such a failure. Further, the cramped cockpit and the wider ITAS console restricted the amount of cyclic control available to counteract the problem, particularly for pilots with larger frames.

The crash of Sea King Shark 02 at NIAS in 2005 with the loss of nine personnel meant the ADF was in no mood to compromise on safety, and so the Director General of Technical Airworthiness demanded a complete re-design of the AFCS to meet modern airworthiness standards – despite the original contract accepting, at least by implication, that the original US Navy certification was adequate. And once the airworthiness question was out of the bag other issues, such as the design of the aircraft's fuel tanks and crew seats to make them more crashworthy, were drawn in.

The consequences of imposing a more contemporary airworthiness certification was staggering – simply put, it is very difficult to achieve unless the aircraft is designed right from the drawing

board with those specifications in mind. Clearly, the 30+ year old re-engineered Seasprite was not.

A Last Reprieve

Estimates to rectify the problems – to full civilian type certification – varied considerably. Kaman estimated \$40m, whilst DMO considered \$100-200m a more realistic figure. In truth, nobody really seemed to know what it would take in terms of money or time.

While these issues were debated the aircraft remained on the ground. Dr Nelson had reportedly decided to cancel the project but to the surprise of many, the Government announced on 25 May 2007 that it had decided to continue the project, probably because of the looming general election.

By then the entire project was poison. Nobody had confidence in the aircraft, the capacity of the parties to effectively work together to fix it, or the forecasts of the cost or timeframe to do so. It seemed the dreadful process experienced thus far could only continue indefinitely.

The End of the Line

On 5 March 2008 the new Labour Government Defence Minister announced the decision to cancel the project.

It was the end of the line. Kaman gave up \$35m in unpaid billings, but kept the 11



The End of the Line. Upper left - the Ensign is lowered on 805 Squadron at its decommissioning in June of 2008, seven years after it had reformed. Above: Wrapped in plastic in the hangar; and Left, the last of the airframes start their journey back to the Kaman plant in Connecticut. Not one shred of any airframe remains on Australian soil.♣

Right. The Kiwis embraced the ex-RAN Sea Sprites, including striking a postage stamp which featured their image. They removed the troublesome AFCS and operate with a crew of three, with no problems.

airframes and infrastructure back from Australia with a deal to split the sale cost 50/50 if they could find a buyer.

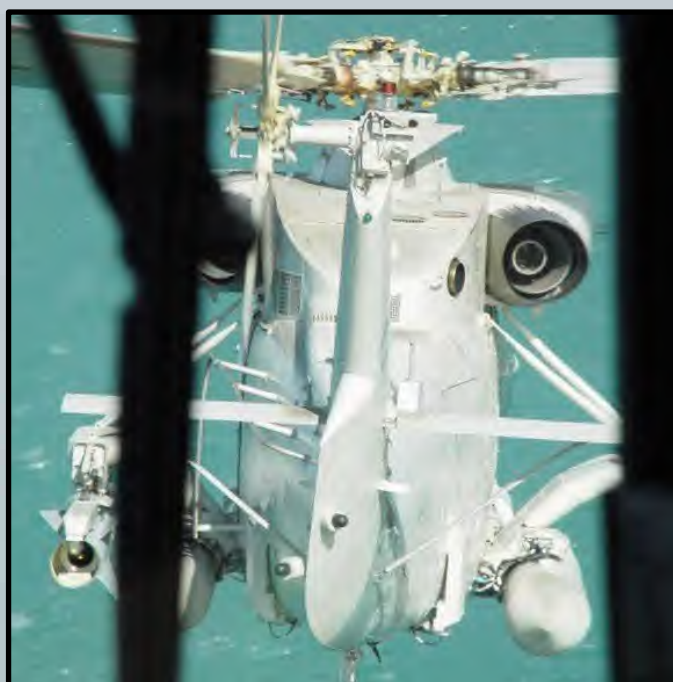
Aftermath

It is fair to say that lessons were learned from the failure of the Seasprite project, one of which informed the 'Smart Buyer' framework under which DMO operates today. It also accelerated decisions to fill the capability gap created by Sea 1411's failure, which ultimately led to the acquisition of the 24 MH-60R Seahawk Romeos now in service.

And what of the Seasprite airframes? Eight were subsequently purchased by the New Zealand government to replace their SH-2G airframes. They removed the troublesome AFCS but retained many of the sensors and weapon systems. They also retained the three-crew concept, and the aircraft are performing well.

The Penguin missiles were also sold, with some going to New Zealand. Although they could have been fitted to our existing Seahawk 70Bs, there was simply no appetite for the technical risk involved.

805 Squadron decommissioned on 26 June 2008, four months after the project's cancellation, and the last fragment of an Aussie Sea Sprite - a piece of a training airframe - was burned at the Albatross fire ground in the same year. ♣



OPV Post Script

The Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) build central to the Seasprite debacle never came to fruition, but it didn't die. It transitioned over the years to become the **Arafura Class** (pictured right), of which there will be a total of 12. It will replace the current Armidale and Cape Class Patrol Boats and is being built by German shipbuilder Lurssen in partnership with ASC and Cvmec in Australia.

Four hulls are currently under construction. The first, HMAS *Arafura*, will enter service next year and the 12th towards the end of the decade.

Displacing 1640 tonnes and with a length of 80 metres, the Arafura class boats are similar in size to the OPV that would have carried the Seasprite, but there is no dedicated helicopter in the specification. You can read a little about them [here](#). ♣



OFFICE BEARERS WANTED!

The Secretary and Treasurer of the NSW Division of the Association have both indicated they wish to hang up their hats. **Pincher Martin** and **Ron Batchelor** have each given many years of selfless and dedicated service, but feel it is time for a well-earned rest from their duties.

We are looking for two people who believe that giving a little back to the FAA community is the right thing to do. Neither of the jobs is particularly onerous, requiring a few hours of work per month to help with the administration of the Division.

You don't need to be local to Nowra as modern communications can bridge the gap easily and effectively.

So, if you are interested in helping out and joining a band of dedicated people, contact the Editor [here](#). He'll be happy to forward your details to the President of NSW Division for consideration.♣



Dear Editor,

I draw your attention to your article on page 24 of October "Fly By" that I received today.

The H.M.A.S. Sydney Commemoration event you have alluded to, is not the "Official" Commemoration, which is being held in Geraldton at the H.M.A.S Sydney Memorial site. The "Official" event and related events are being conducted by the City of Greater Geraldton along with the Naval Association W.A. And the RSL WA.

The Fleet Air Arm Association (W.A. Division) has around 25 members and partners attending and we will be laying a wreath on behalf of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia. This wreath is being paid for by the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia from national funds and is laid on behalf of **ALL** FAAA of Australia Members.

I am disappointed that given the National Executive have approved this mark of respect, that an "unofficial" service is given preferential mention in "Fly By".

The F.A.A.A. of Australia (W.A. Division) has spent much time and effort liaising with the Official organisers and I express my disappointment at the article as posted.

Mike Keogh. Treasurer, WA Division.

By Editor,

Thanks for pointing that out, Mike.

FlyBy is only as good as the input it receives and the "official" Geraldton event hadn't pinged on our radar, 3000 miles to the East - unlike the "unofficial" event whose organisers had been keeping us informed for over 18 months (see previous FlyBy magazines).

The policy of 'FlyBy' is to provide timely, accurate and relevant information to the best of our ability. Had we been informed of any detail of the arrangements during WA Division's liaison with the "official" organisers, we would have been very happy to publish them for the benefit of our readers.

Having been made aware of the event I'm pleased to say that, with the help information supplied by yourself, details of the event can now be found on page 20, and its not too late for those unaffected by border lockdowns to attend. For those considering the 'unofficial' event, there are also some details included. ♣

Dear Editor,

I am sure that we all have memories of particular events that occurred during our service and stick in our minds forever.

For me, one such event occurred during my attachment to 816 Squadron and aboard HMAS Melbourne back in 1961.

I had previously qualified as a diver and regularly called away – much to the annoyance of my section CPO - from my normal duties, to carry out various diving operations.

The particular event occurred whilst Melbourne was anchored out in Harvey Bay, Queensland and the Navy was involved in some public relations activities in the nearby city of Bundaberg, part of which was to be a display by the diving section at the local swimming pool.

I was air-lifted by the venerable Bristol Sycamore, along with my gear, from *Melbourne*, to be winched down to the deck of HMAS *Voyager*, which then proceeded to Port Bundaberg to lay alongside and be open to the public over that weekend.

Joining other divers from the ship, our display went off without a hitch and was well received by the public that attended.

On my return to *Voyager*, I assumed that my return to Melbourne was to be a reverse of the original airlift. However, the powers to be, had other ideas...

We met up with *Melbourne* – which was already underway – at sea, and my transfer back onboard was to be by a high-line transfer.

With the two vessels steaming in close parallel formation, the lines were quickly rigged, and in short order I found myself standing in a basket and midway between the two ships, precariously hanging just above the sea rushing past at about 15 knots.

Tension on the high-line is controlled by crew manning a block and tackle and pulling or slackening at the command of a P.O. who is watching the tension on the line.

At one point the two ships reduced the gap between them and before the P.O. could respond, for a few seconds, which seemed like minutes, the basket dipped to within a few feet of the water and I had visions of going for a forced swim.

Fortunately, the required response was achieved and a few minutes later I was safely back onboard *Melbourne*.

With hindsight, I think that the only reason I was included in that particular display was to have someone available to be the “Dummy” for that series of pre-planned ship’s exercises...

Anson E (Ted) Goater. ♣

Dear Editor,

The Mystery photo story in the October edition of ‘FlyBy’ about car racing on the airstrip at NAS Nowra reminded me that BTU Road was used for hill climbs up Nowra Hill during the early 1960s.

All manner of motor cars and hot rods would enter – anything from a Austin 7 to Ford Thunderbird would race under handicap. I think the Thunderbird set the record for something like 32 seconds, starting from the foot of the hill (on the Princes Highway side) up to the top of the hill. Organised by the Shoalhaven and & Kiama Auto Club if my memory serves me right.

A few photos on the next page.

Kim Dunstan, Victoria. ♣



A get together and early Xmas Barbecue is planned for **Thursday 11th November** at the Queensland Air Museum in Caloundra.

We will be holding an informal memorial service at 1100 hrs in front of our memorial plaque, continuing with a lunch after. The museum is run by volunteers several of them being ex FAA members such as Noel Dennet and Neil Ralph who will both be there.

The museum has several naval aircraft (which I spent some time working on the restoration of).

Admission price for non members is \$15.00. Sausages, onions and bread will be supplied by your committee. Bring your own drinks. We hope to see lots of you there for the meeting at around 1000 as there is a lot to discuss about the recent federal AGM

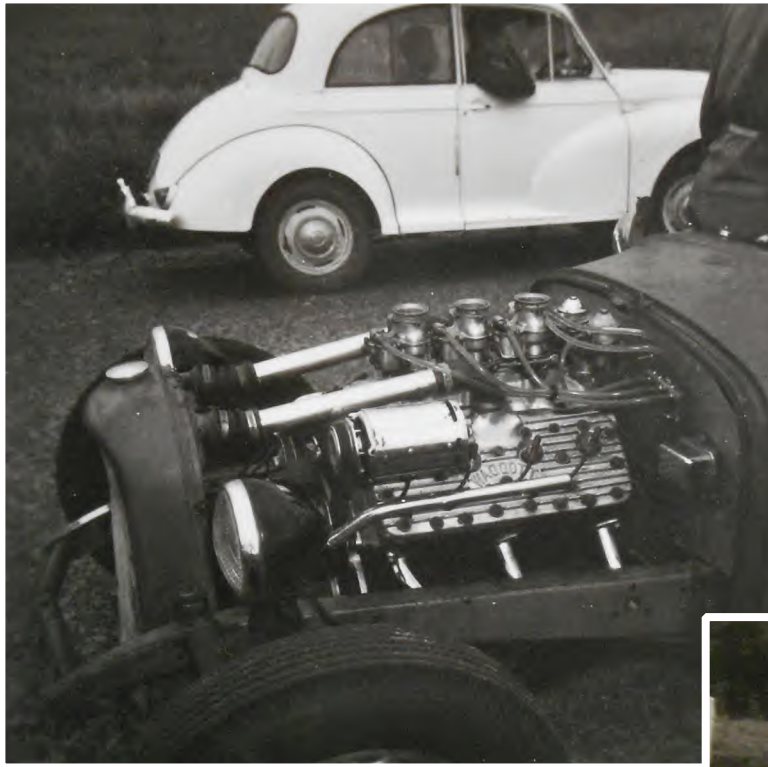
Ray Murrell. ♣



A few years ago CDRE **Brett Dowsing** organised miniature wings pins in Pilot and AvWO (Observer) formats. One of the initiatives he offered is to buy a spare set or two to ‘sponsor’ a young pilot or AvWO who is graduating at ‘wings’ standard from their respective course. The pin is presented to them as a mark of this special occasion, and to let them know there is a veteran aviator/maintainer who offers their congratulations and, if they wish, a few words of advice and encouragement in their progress towards becoming operational. See [here](#) for details.

Since starting the scheme 65 pin badges have been awarded to graduates, and they are much prized and appreciated. Many donors are now mentors to those they sponsored, and this augurs well for the proud and distinguished heritage of the FAAA transitioning and fostering newer generations.

The stock of ‘sponsor’ pins is running out, however, so please consider buying a set or two for this purpose. They are \$15.00 each and you can order them by clicking on the link above. ♣



Above Left: a 1932 Ford Roadster – they were popular with hot-rod enthusiasts, as you will notice complete with modified V8 engine.



Above Right: features a Peugeot 203 – they were capable little machines and were often used for car rallies and hill climbs – souped-up of course.



Right: shows an MG TC making its way up the Nowra Hill – the MGs were a popular touring car and the ‘dream’ motor car of most young men about town, but not spectacular performers at the hill climb. ♣

Did You Maintain/Fly the Kiowa?

To further build on our website “Heritage” library we are looking to do a feature on the little Bell 206 Kiowa.

Please contact the [Editor](#) if you can provide a story about maintaining or flying it. What you thought of it, likes/ dislikes, memorable moments, particular postings etc, or anything else that takes your fancy. ♣



Op Bursa Update

By CAPT Andrew Whittaker



As we emerge from COVID-19 lock-down in the south east of the country and state borders begin to reopen (not saying anything about WA!), we now have an opportunity to complete those presentation ceremonies that had to be postponed, for the award of the Australian Service Medal (with clasp Counter Terrorism) for [Operation Bursa](#).

Depending on state and Defence regulations with respect to travel and gatherings, the intent is for presentation ceremonies to be conducted in Nowra, Sydney and Canberra in mid-December, and in Brisbane and Melbourne in mid/late January. These will be for anyone who has been approved by the Governor General (even if your actual medal is still in "processing") and has not previously attended a ceremony. Details will be communicated by bulk email. Remain flexible and listen to the pipes!

Those who have received their medals or are in "processing" are:

- Batches 1-7 - notified (eg "received and registered" email from the Team) before 29 Jul 21 - medals received
- Batch 8 - notified between 30 Jul 21 and 30 Aug 21 (with the engraver – expected delivery mid-Nov)
- Batch 9 - notified between 1 Sep 21 and 30 Sep 21
- Batch 10 - notified between 1 Oct 21 and 1 Nov 21

In the last update, I commented on eligibility for the Australian Defence Medal (see [here](#)).

For this edition, I refer you to the Australian Operational Service Medal. The AOSM covers the following:

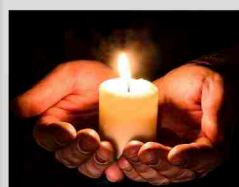
- OP Cranberry – 1 Aug 1997 to 16 Jul 2006
- OP Dirk – 1 Sep 1997 to 31 Oct 1997
- OP Stanhope – 3 Feb 1998 to 6 Mar 1998

- OP Mistral – 1 Aug 1998 to 30 Jun 2006
- OP Teebone – 8 Apr 2001 to 7 May 2001
- OP Celesta – 1 Aug 2001 to 31 Jul 2006
- OP Sutton – 25 Jan 2002 to 19 Feb 2002
- OP Gemsbok – 29 Aug 2003 to 3 Oct 2003
- OP Relex – 3 Sep 2001 to 13 Mar 2002
- OP Relex II – 14 Mar 2002 to 16 Jul 2006
- OP Resolute – 17 Jul 2006 to present

If you believe that you may have an entitlement, check out the full details of the eligibility criteria for the AOSM (and apply online [here](#)).

The OP Bursa Recognition Team will close down on 25 January 2022 and handover any remaining processing to Navy Honours and Awards. In order to get as many OP Bursa veterans processed by that time, by a dedicated ASM CT/SR team, tell your mates who may qualify to apply via our website [here](#). ♣

REST IN PEACE



Since the last edition of "FlyBy" we have been advised of the loss of **Keith Bellert, Max Stace and Geoffrey "Shorty" Parkes**.

Click [here](#) for more details. ♣

FLY NAVY STICKERS

We are considering placing an order for more 'Fly Navy' stickers, if there is sufficient interest.

Made from high-quality vinyl, these 200x60mm self-adhesive stickers will provide bright, fade resistance service for many years for your car, luggage or anywhere else you choose to stick them!

The last batch cost \$1.50 each (minimum order of five) which included postage anywhere in Oz. We'd expect similar prices this time, give or take a bit.

If you are interested in buying any, please let the Editor know [here](#). This won't commit you to purchasing at this stage but it will give him an idea of the demand, and whether it's worth pursuing. ♣



Wood For Wood



A group of Luftwaffe ground personnel manhandle the fake wheel leg and pant into place beneath a wooden dummy Junkers Ju-87 Stuka propped up on oil drums somewhere in Western Europe during the war.

The story goes that during WW2 the Germans built a fake wooden airfield in occupied Holland complete with fake wooden aircraft, vehicles and hangars in order to trick the Allies.

The RAF, having known of the project for months, patiently waited for them to finish and then dropped a single fake wooden bomb on it. But is it true?

There is no doubt that duplicity and even humour was quite common during war: for example, Operation Fortitude was the Allied deception to fool the Germans into believing the invasion would take place further north, in the Pas de Calais region rather than Normandy; and in 1965 a Skyraider delivered a toilet bowl into North Vietnam. Still, the story of the wooden bomb is worth checking out as there are also many myths about such things.

And our old friends at Vintage Wings of Canada have done just that. In a characteristically beautifully researched story they tell the stories of decoy airfields and decoy bombs, and of the book that gives credence to them. It is worth a look.

Frenchman Jean-Antoine Courable published a book on the subject which finally proved that the wooden bombs for wooden targets actually happened. To do so he relied on the evidence of a Luftwaffe pilot by the name of Werner Thiel, who later video-taped his evidence to corroborate the story as follows:

Werner Thiel: I was born on the 24th of August 1923 in Dillenburg, in the centre of Germany. I joined the Luftwaffe in 1942. After training courses in France (first in Romorantin, then Angers and later Le Mans) I was posted in October 1943 at the airfield of Werder, near Berlin. In those days I also worked at the false aerodrome of



Above: A Skyraider of VA-25 with a toilet bowl fastened to its outer wing rack, for delivery into Vietnam. Below: Another shot of the dummy Stuka shown in the main photo above. Once completed with a fake canopy and propeller it would have been difficult for photo interpreters to tell them apart from the real thing.



Sometimes the camouflage worked in the other way, as in this image where a real, operating aircraft hangar was shrouded in faux French chalets to hide the real purpose of the structure. The Allies used it after D-day for their own aircraft - in this case a B-25 bomber.

Borkheide that was equipped with a runway. We were living in a kind of container, nearby two air-raid shelters. These were in fact small bunkers where we could find refuge when the Allies bombed Berlin. At the end of October 1943, the air raid warning alarm went off. We put the lights on from the false runway and moved the decoy planes.

Courouble: How many decoy airplanes did you use?

Thiel: Maximum ten, I would say. They were made of wood and netting. A few nights before, we noticed reconnaissance missions, so we were prepared for the raid. We heard the planes coming ...

Courouble: Sorry to interrupt you once again, but how many people were in charge at this dummy airfield?

Thiel: I would say a dozen soldiers. Not more. ...Like everybody else, we were afraid of these air raids. We heard the planes flying above us but this time nothing happened. At dawn, we left our shelter with cautious steps. We dreaded time bombs. We didn't believe what we saw: they bombed us with wooden bombs! Six to ten wooden bombs laid on the ground, all with painted in white "Wood for Wood".

Courouble: What about the body of those bombs? Was it hollow?

Thiel: They were made of solid wood. One of us was carpenter and managed to use this excellent wood material to build new frames for the enlarged aerial pictures that were going to decorate our austere surroundings.

Courouble: Did you use all these bombs for that purpose?

Thiel: Yes, all of them. We were not the only guardsmen. Our colleagues were full of admiration and we exchanged some of our pictures for cigarettes or food ...

Courouble: Do you remember what you thought at that time? Did you have any idea about the use of these wooden bombs?

Thiel: We thought it was meant as a joke. Something like "Look how stupid you are. You built a dummy airfield. We saw it and it's not worth dropping a real bomb!"

(Thiel takes his glass and looks at the camera)

Thiel: I drink to the health of all pilots in the world and more particularly to the American colleagues. I would be extremely happy to meet one day the American pilot who dropped those wooden bombs. Prosit! ♣



Above. Young Leutnant Werner Thiel, left, around the time he witnessed the mock bombs dropped, with a photo of him (right) in 2010 holding a mock-up of the bombs he saw lying on the airfield at Luftkriegsschule Werder in 1943.

Below [1] Fake aircraft continued throughout the war, including of the V-1 flying bombs as in this image. [2]. It wasn't just the aircraft that were fake. Here, a mock-cow is placed on a grass airfield to give the impression that it is just a farm. [3] Fakes still have a role to play, even in these satellite times, as per this inflatable Su-27 fighter being inflated by Russian technicians (all images courtesy of Vintage Wings of Canada.)



VINTAGE WINGS of CANADA

Vintage Wings of Canada brings you extraordinarily well-researched stories of interest to anyone who has an aviation background. You can visit their site by clicking [here](#), and can subscribe to their regular free newsletters there.



LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO

Last month we asked for the name of the aircraft in the above image. We received more than a dozen replies that correctly identified it as a Martin-Baker MB-5.

Dubbed 'The Most Magnificent Might Have Been', it was the fighter that should have won the air war for Britain in the Second World War. But it was not to be.

Described by various test pilots as 'the best aircraft I've ever flown', it boasted a speed in excess of 400 mph and seemed headed for production as a front-line fighter.

The type first took to the skies in April of 1942 as the model MB-3, using a 2000-hp Napier Sabre engine and armed with no less than six 20mm cannon. It appeared to be a world-beater, but in a single moment of disaster that all changed.

Less than six weeks after its inaugural flight the prototype slammed into a tree during a dead-stick landing after an aborted take off. The pilot, **Valentine "Val" Baker** was killed.

Baker was part of the two man team who had designed and produced the aircraft. The other, was **James "Jimmy" Martin**, and their company was known simply as Martin-Baker.

Baker's death affected Martin deeply, but in the meantime development of his fighter continued.

Now fitted with a 2340 hp Rolls-Royce Griffon 83 engine and featuring a



number of other changes, the MB-3 became the MB-5. But Jimmy Martin was a perfectionist, and progressed things so slowly that by the time a serious flight test program was underway, the war had already ended.

The MB-5 enjoyed one of its most memorable moments at the Farnborough show of 1946, when it was put through its paces by Polish aerobatic and display test pilot **Jan Zurakowski** before an enthralled audience.

It was in the company of a handful of other high-performance propeller-driven fighters such as the Boeing XF8B, the Supermarine Spiteful and the Focke-Wulf TA152, but the paradigm of fighter design was about to shift radically, leaving all of

them in its wake. In their place came the Gloster Meteor, the Lockheed P80 and Messerschmitt Me262 - all powered by jet engines.

After its flying was finished and its engine removed, the sole MB-5 was kept at RAF Wattisham in the late 1940s. It would have made a superb museum piece, but with disregard for precious history so typical in the aviation industry, it was eventually scrapped and burned. The MB-5, born too late to fulfil its destiny as a superb front-line fighter, was relegated to the pages of magazines such as this one.

And what of Martin-Baker? Well, ultimately this partner's death caused Jimmy Martin to abandon aircraft design and concentrate on pilot safety. Their development of the ejection seat led them to world-wide acclaim. ♣

Below. With its sleek lines, the MB-5 had been designed not only with performance in mind, but with easy maintenance so that a mechanic with only a little training could service it. With a top speed of 460mph at 20,000 feet and a service ceiling of twice that, it was described by the test pilots who flew it as "super", and "magnificent". A particular feature was its stability as a gun-platform whilst retaining high manoeuvrability for dog-fighting - two qualities difficult to combine.

This Month's Mystery Photo



This month's Mystery Photo is of a crash. It's a little obscure, but if you are able to identify the aircraft type you'll get it! For those struggling a little bit we can tell you that it involved an ejection and the pilot(s) survived, and we have his account of what occurred. Send your answer to the webmaster [here](#), who will be happy to answer you. ♣



It's not a "Mystery Photo" question but out of interest does anyone know what the aircraft on the left is? You can see the answer and more pictures on page 23. ♣

Another reminder - we are after stories about the RAN's Kiowas. Please don't be shy...just contact the Editor [here](#). ♣

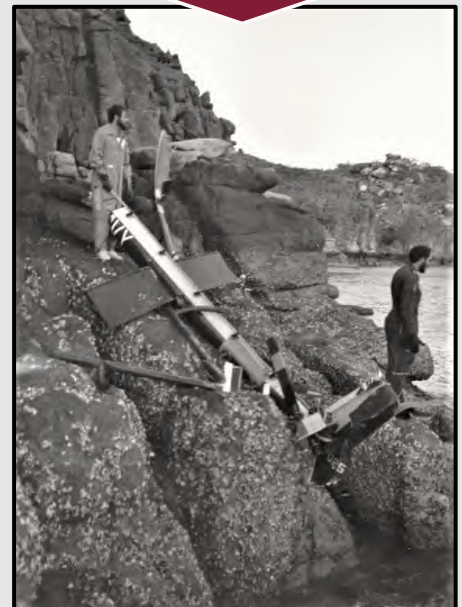
Ahoy Engineers!

Here's a general knowledge Question for our Engineering or Technical community. See if you can answer it without using the Internet.

What is "Low Background Steel"?

And for bonus points, when did it start being necessary, how was it obtained, and what's today's situation in regard to its availability?

No prizes for correct answers but give yourself a pat on the back and feel pleased that you didn't have to use Google. ♣



The Icing On The Cake

Words & drawings by Marcus Peake

After a year in Victoria's Latrobe Valley my family was desperate to shake the coal dust off their shoes, so when the opportunity arose to head up a brand-new Search and Rescue base in Townsville for the National Safety Council of Australia (NSCA), we were thrilled – even if it had come about by an unfortunate circumstance.

Earlier that year Townsville had hosted the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's bi-annual SAR conference and **John Friedrich**, the Executive Director of the NSCA, decided to send a team up there with our new Bell 212.

On the first morning we were sat at the back of the room, feeling conspicuous in our bright orange flying overalls, when all our pagers went off (no mobile phones in those days). A Robinson 22 was reported as missing off Charters Towers, about 100km to the south west. Could we help?

We scooted out of the room to beat the world record to the airport, and about 15 minutes later were airborne. What we didn't know at the time was our radio calls were being patched directly into the conference as a live-case study.

By chance a C-130 was inbound to TVL and he'd been diverted to the datum where he quickly spotted some wreckage. It was, he reported, in rugged terrain about 30nm from our present position. It was indeed the R22, which had plummeted inverted into the ground, killing the two occupants. We collected as much of them as we could before heading back to Townsville with the windows open. The total time from the initial report to our recovery operation was about two hours.

Despite the tragic outcome, CASA were thrilled. They'd been taking a lot of flak for lack of resources and when John suggested we set up a SAR base in Townsville they jumped at the chance. And so I found myself, two aircraft and three crews in place by Christmas of that year. John didn't hang around when a decision was made!

Fast forward to the afternoon of November in 1984. A cyclone was crossing the coast in the Gulf and was expected to strike the small Aboriginal settlement of Borroloola that night, and the Rescue Centre wanted to know the earliest we could be there.

Borroloola was about 1600 km to the west, so it would take us a while in transit. The met men assured us the cyclone would have moved well inland by dawn, so we figured it was a good time to arrive. And so we flew through the night, stopping at the small Mission Station of Doomagee for a refuel and feed before flogging on to our destination. In the mean-time, a relief crew was flown forward to meet us when we arrived.

Dawn had just broken as we circled the town. The weather



was surprisingly good, but we could see the dreadful aftermath of the cyclone: roofs ripped off, cars strewn around and the town full of debris. Small groups of people stared up as we circled overhead, attracted by the *Wok Wok Wok* of the rotors. One or two waved, but most just looked, as if deeply traumatised by the events of the last few hours.

The airport was a couple of clicks out of town and we landed and shut down next to a small Cessna on its back, its spindly legs sticking up into the air. A car drew up and a police constable, a young and good natured fellow, shook our hands warmly.

"So what brings you here?" he asked.

I stared at him grimly. "Search and Rescue. I've just seen the state of the town – haven't you been there yet?"

He laughed. "Mate, the town always looks like that. All the cyclone did was move the crap around a bit."

He took us to the local gaol which, as the only fit building in the place,



was to be our digs. The relief crew were keen to get started on a job, but the Station Sergeant was dubious. "There's really nothing to do," he said.

"This trip will cost CASA sixty grand!" I replied. "There must be something."

He stroked his chin and thought for a while. "Well, I suppose there is." He took me outside and pointed to a shabby building across the street with barred windows. "That's the local pub," he said, "which opens at ten. Why not buy a few slabs and visit all the little Barramundi fishing camps along the river and see if they're OK?"

"And the beer is for -?"

"Well, if you give them a case I'm sure you can bring back a few fresh Barras for our supper tonight." He ticked off numbers on his fingers. "There's three of us, and you six, and the local nurse – and the Admin guy is a good bloke too. We'll supply the beer if you bring the food."

They turned out to be hard party animals and we crawled into our cells in the early hours of the morning a lot worse for wear, a routine to be repeated in the following days.

On the third day a young police air wing pilot who had flown in from Darwin approached me. "I wonder if you'd help with a favour?" he asked.

"What's the plan?" I actually felt like catching up with some sleep.

He smiled. "I'll tell you on the way."

We loaded a few blokes into his paddy wagon and drove out to the airfield.

"My mother never wanted me to fly," he explained, "she's convinced I'll kill myself in a flying accident, so I thought I'd send her a photo of me, in that -" he pointed to the wrecked Cessna. "Just to stir her up a bit."

He took off his gun and his cap and crawled into the cockpit, and three of us grunted and heaved his considerable frame into the inverted pilot's seat. It was really hard to do, but after much effort he was there, hanging by his straps with his face gradually turning red while we took a bunch of photos for his mum.

On the fourth day we were released from tasking and flew back to Townsville for another ten hours over country as barren as a hardtack biscuit. It was a very long trip as the cumulative effects of our partying had well and truly caught up.

When we landed a few spouses were there to greet us, noting it was our first big SAR job. Carol, my wife, took one look at me and gasped. "Oh My God!" she said. "You poor bugger! You look exhausted - you must have been working your butt off."

I nodded wearily but was smart enough to keep my mouth shut. Sixty grand was sixty grand, and a little sympathy, however misguided, was just icing on the cake. ♣



Don't forget that the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia has a 'Wall of Service' on which you can have a plaque on which you can have your name and other details inscribed.

This is a wonderful way to enshrine your service to the nation, and the fact you are a member of a unique and special band of people

All the details, including the cost and how to apply for a plaque, can be found on our new website [here](#).

It's also a wonderful present for Christmas, for someone who is hard to buy for...so why not consider getting your loved one a gift that will last forever. ♣



If you are not a member of the FAAA, why not join?

[Joining Details](#)

LEST WE FORGET

HMAS SYDNEY II 80th Commemoration

Naval Association of Australia

Geraldton Memorial Event

The City of Greater Geraldton has planned a number of events in conjunction with the Naval Association and the RSL (WA).

Friday 19th November. 1000hrs. A service will be held at the [grave of the "Unknown Sailor"](#) at the Geraldton Cemetery. This will be followed by morning tea provided by the City of Greater Geraldton. (venue TBA.)

Friday 19th November. 1700 hrs. Commemorative service at the HMAS Sydney 2 Memorial. This will be followed with a Bar-B-Que for Invited guests, service personnel & veterans organized by the Naval Association and the Geraldton RSL, together with the City of Greater Geraldton.

Saturday 20th November. 1500 hrs. Orana Theatre showing of the "Sydney II: Lost & Found" performance.

Bookings are essential. Please contact events@cgg.wa.gov.au for all enquiries and to make bookings.

Note that a number of Association WA members will be driving up to Geraldton on Thursday 18th November, and that Division will be laying a wreath at the Commemorative Service on behalf of all FAAAA members.♣



80th Commemoration Sunset Service

On behalf of the City of Greater Geraldton, His Worship Mayor Shane Van Slym formally invites you to attend the 80th Commemorative Sunset Service in remembrance of the HMAS Sydney II and her 645 crew members on Friday, 19 November 2021 at 5pm

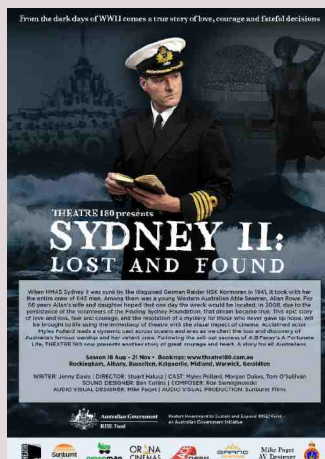
Please RSVP at events@cgg.wa.gov.au in order to receive seating at the event, which will take place at the HMAS Sydney II Memorial, Currier Ave, Geraldton.

Please inform the City if you have specific accessibility requirements, in order for us to best accommodate you.

If you are unable to attend in person, the City of Greater Geraldton will be live streaming the event on the City of Greater Geraldton YouTube channel.



Further information can be found at events@cgg.wa.gov.au | P: 08 9556 6600



On the afternoon of 19th November 1941 the light cruiser *HMAS Sydney (II)* engaged the German raider *Kormoran*. She never survived the short and brutal battle, and was lost with all hands.

There are two commemorative events which mark the 80th anniversary of this tragic action. Details left and below.

Denham Memorial Event

This event has been organised by an RAN veteran and will take place in Denham, about a five hour drive north of Geraldton.

Friday 19th November. 1000hrs. Live streaming of the Geraldton Service at various venues around Denham.

Saturday 20th November. 1500hrs. Memorial Concert in Denham.

Sunday 21st November. TTBA. March through the township for all who wish to participate, followed by a Service by the Sea. This will look towards the area where the wreck of the Sydney was discovered in 2008.

Denham is in the Shire of Shark Bay and is an area of outstanding beauty, so you may wish to spend a little time after the memorial event to explore, including visits to Monkey Mia to feed the dolphins.

You can, of course, mix the two events: for example, attend the Commemorative Service in Geraldton and then drive to Denham for the Memorial Concert etc. It's entirely up to you.

Bookings essential: contact sydney2021@checkedevents.com.au ♣

Around The Traps...



The aircraft on page 19 is one of a pair of Sea Harriers of the Royal Navy, which were visiting Albatross in about Sep '83 and had taken temporary lodging in J hangar. Photos: Courtesy of Joe Hattley via FaceBook.



Below Left: Joe Hattley, Dusty Herpes (really?); Shane Rosetta (in intake), Roscoe Warrell and Mel Devine (anyone know the others?) Email Editor [here](#). ♣



another crewman poked his head out and saw that Byrd had gone.

That remains the official version but it seems odd that the Goose pilot allowed Byrd out of his aircraft in the first place, nor had he assigned someone to keep an eye on him. It was evident too that the crew had reported the loss rather casually.

It took days for a Navy accident investigation team to identify Byrd and work out where he'd come from while the Goose continued to California. The Kratzerville farmer later found a yard-long piece of metal in his tomato field that may or may not have been part of an aircraft antenna. Was Byrd gripping it when it broke off? We'll never know, but can certainly chalk it up to maintenance beyond the call of duty. ♣

Maintenance Beyond the Call of Duty

On 21 September 1943 a farmer picking tomatoes near Kratzerville (Pennsylvania) heard the noise of an aircraft and looked up just in time to see what he thought was a mailbag falling from it. The "mailbag" was a man, however, who hit the ploughed field and bounced eight feet back into the air. To the farmer's amazement the aircraft just continued to drone westward.

The story that eventually came to light was that Carroll Rex Byrd, cross-trained as both a pilot and a radioman, was a crewman that day aboard a Grumman Goose enroute from NAS New York to CGAS San Francisco. Byrd had told the pilot he was going to fix an inoperative radio antenna and had pulled himself out of the cabin door and onto the roof to work on the aerial in flight. When he hadn't returned in 20 minutes





Navy Scraps Helicopters

Navy is to scrap its fleet of MRH-90 helicopters, replacing them with up to 12 MH-60R Seahawk Romeos worth around \$1.3bn.

The MRH-90 has been plagued with problems since its introduction in 2006, mainly around configuration and logistics issues. It would seem Navy is prepared to cut its losses and look to further rationalise.

Navy already operates 23 Seahawks and the decision to replace the MRH-90 with helicopters of the same type will bring commonality across the operational fleet. There will then be just two types in the Fleet Air Arm: The Eurocopter EC-135 trainer and the Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk.

No timeframe for the replacement was known at the time of this report.♣



RAN Seahawk Ditches

One of the RAN's Seahawk 'Romeo' helicopters has been lost after ditching in the Philippine Sea during a routine flight on 13 October. It was operating from HMAS *Brisbane*.

Unconfirmed reports suggest the aircraft was on a night approach to the ship when an unexpected light source caused the pilots' Night Vision Goggles to 'bloom', denying them all visual reference. The Seahawk struck the ocean some distance astern. The ship deployed its boats and the helicopter's crew of three was rescued with what have been described as 'minor injuries' about 20 minutes after the event.

Following the incident the remaining Romeo fleet of 23 aircraft was grounded as a precaution, pending an investigation into the cause of the accident. They are now cleared.

We will bring you more information as it becomes available.♣



Model Citizen Required

Can Anyone Help? **Peter Opsomer** is building a scale model of Skyhawk 878 (N13-154647) and asks if anyone knows if this aircraft had black walk strips on both wings during its time in service. Contact him [here](#). ♣

New Website

Have you had a look at our new website yet? It's shaping up fast as the webmaster gets his head around how to use the new software features.

Have a quick look here:

[NEW WEBSITE](#)



Why and When?

The photo left is clearly of an HS748 at Ayer's Rock (as it was then), but that's the extent of information we have.

There's a wealth of stories about the 748 coming up in Slipstream and on the new website, so if anyone can give us the background goss on the image we'd love to hear from you. What was the 748 doing there and when was it? I'm thinking that particular airstrip was closed a while back too, so any advice on why it was chosen would be interesting. Contact the Editor [here](#). ♣



Navy has started rolling out its new Maritime Multi-Pattern Uniform (MMPU) to replace the disruptive pattern uniform which has been in service for 12 years.

The new design is lighter and features the latest technology to enhance the safety and comfort of wearers. It also brings uniformity across Defence as it features the familiar design of the other Services' camms, but it retains the maritime grey tones and a few key differences unique to Navy requirements. It has been in development for several years.

Image: LSIS Shane Cameron. ♣



DVA has launched its newest communication channel to provide updated information, support and recognition to the Defence and veteran community. You can see it [here](#).

DVA TV will publish a wide variety of video content to a YouTube Channel dedicated to veterans and their families, about DVA's services and the support that is available to them.

Content on DVA TV will range from guides to accessing support, such as how to use MyService, to capturing and sharing commemorative services, showcasing individual stories of service and posting important announcements from the department.

DVA TV will provide overviews and insights into the services available to the veteran community, including support for families, mental health programs, financial assistance and claims support, transition stories and messages of hope such as the positive impact programs such as the Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Program is having on veterans' lives.

DVA welcomes your suggestions for future content. If you have an idea you'd like to see included simply contact the DVA Communications Branch [here](#).

We hope DVA TV will have a positive impact and help to empower veterans and their families to be

the best they can be.

Don't forget to [subscribe](#) to the channel to be notified of new content! ♣



Federal Council Meeting Outcomes

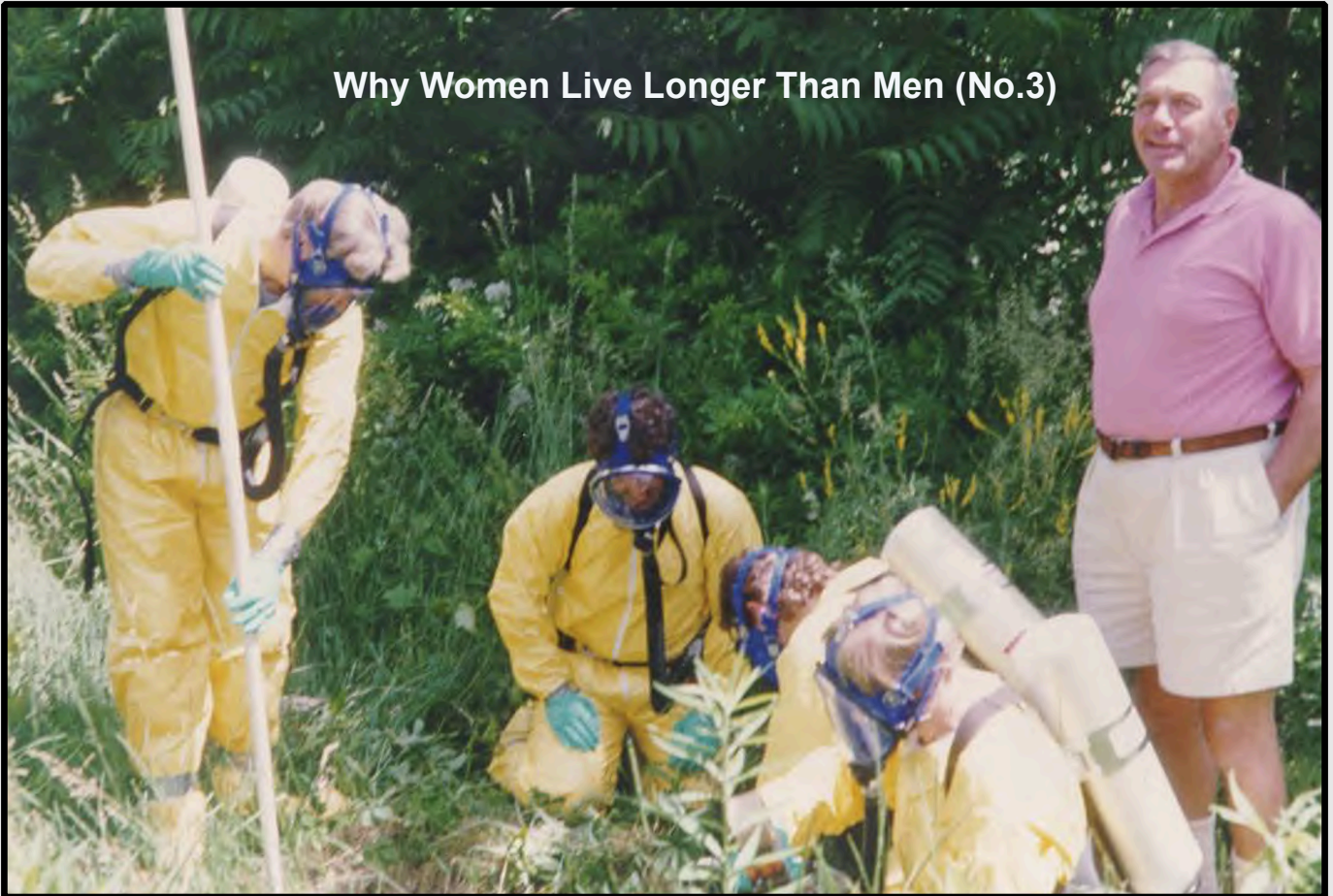
The annual FCM was held on 23 October - always a difficult juggling act with so many people attending by Zoom, so a gold star to our National President who managed it with his usual flair.

The FCM is our 'big' meeting each year, when delegates from every Division get together (literally or virtually) to go through the FAAAA's business and make any necessary changes.

The ratified Minutes will be published on our website in due course, but here are the key points arising out of the meeting:

- Reports from our office bearers were considered and accepted. This generally covered the 'day to day' business and routines of the Association;
- Our membership has increased over this year by a total of 17 people. This net gain is in contrast to previous years where we have consistently lost members, so despite this year's result, recruiting and retention remains of concern;
- The meeting noted that the number of "non-members" in our database continues to grow;
- A detailed Special Resolution proposing that Divisions pay the Slipstream Levy for ALL members on their books was passed. Previously, Divisions did not pay for Life or Honorary Members, with the cost being borne by the Federal Body;
- A detailed Motion proposing that Divisions pay the annual Capitation Fee for ALL members was passed. Previously, Divisions only paid the fee for Full and Associate members;
- Recruiting and Retention remains a major issue and a presentation on "Doing More For Our Members" was given. Several Divisions have committed to some initiatives. ♣

Why Women Live Longer Than Men (No.3)



FAAAA 2022 SUBSCRIPTIONS

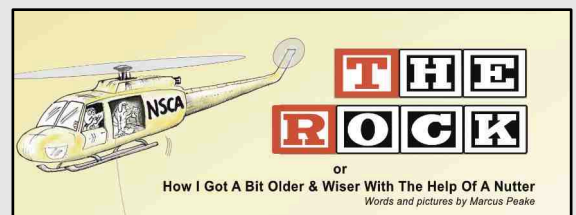
We're approaching the end of the year and member subscriptions will be due from 31 December. You can help us out by making your payment a little early to avoid the rush and to avoid you paying over the expensive Christmas period.

Payment details for existing members can be found the last page of this newsletter. If you wish to join as a new member, or are unsure of your membership status, click [here](#) and the Editor will be pleased to help.

Your subscription dollar buys you:

- Quarterly 'Slipstream' Magazines.
- Guaranteed continuance of monthly FlyBy magazines.
- The Camaraderie of a group of special people.
- Supports the FAAAA in its many activities and services to FAA members and veterans.♣

In Next Month's FlyBy:



Tas Browning, one of our long-standing Tasmanian members, wonders what the origin of "Bell Bottom" trousers was. Anyone know? You can contact him directly [here](#). ♣

Subscription Payment for Members

Did you know you can pay for future years of membership in advance (except ACT Division)? This will protect you from future price increases, and will save you from the chore of renewing each year. Simply make your payment a multiple of however many years you wish to sign up for: e.g. for a NSW Slipstream 'Softcopy' recipient, one year = \$30, two years = \$60.00 and so on.

NSW DIVISION

Amount: If you receive 'Hard Copy' Slipstream - \$40.00
If you receive Electronic Slipstream - \$30.00

Account Name: FAAAA

BSB: 637 000

Account: 7168 19 388

Reference: Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA NSW Division, PO Box 28, NOWRA 2541. Ensure you put your full name on the back!

ACT DIVISION

Amount: If you receive 'Hard Copy' Slipstream - \$36.00
If you receive Electronic Slipstream - \$24.00

Account Name: FAAAA

BSB: 032 719

Account: 374 093.

Reference: Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The President FAAAA Act Division, 41 Noarlunga Crescent, BONYTHON 2905. Ensure you put your full name on the back!

QLD DIVISION

Amount: \$40.00 per annum.
Please note subs would be appreciated no later than end Jan22.

Account Name: FAAAQld

BSB: 034 611

Account: 171 277.

Reference: Membership Number or your surname+initial.

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAA QLD Divn, 6/74 Mattocks Rd., Varsity Lakes, QLD 4227. Ensure you put your full name on the back!

If you need some advice/help

You can make a payment as per the instructions on the left, but if you need to contact your Secretary you can do so using the links below.

[NSW – Dick Martin](#)

[ACT – George Sydney](#)

[VIC – Mal Smith](#)

[SA – Jan Akeroyd](#)

[TAS – Graham Nicholas](#)

[WA – Keith Taylor](#)

[QLD – John Stewart](#)

or: Contact the Database Manager, [Paul Norris](#), who can offer advice on your membership details.

VIC DIVISION

Amount: If you receive 'Hard Copy' Slipstream - \$45.00
Associate Members - \$15.00

Account Name: FAAAA

BSB: 083 961

Account: 3108 23 774.

Reference: Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA VIC Division, PO Box 2179 RMH Post Office, PARKVILLE 3050. Ensure you put your full name on the back!

SA DIVISION

Amount: \$45.00 per annum

Account Name: FAAAA

BSB: 065 118

Account: 009 05 668.

Reference: Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA SA Division, 460/1075 Grand Junction Road, HOPE VALLEY 5090. Ensure you put your full name on the back!

TAS DIVISION

Amount: \$35.00 per annum.

Account Name: FAAAA

BSB: 037 013

Account: 133 119.

Reference: Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA TAS Division, 7 Danbury Drive, LEGANA 7277. Ensure you put your full name on the back!

WA DIVISION has declined to publish its payment details. If you have any queries please contact the Secretary, Keith Taylor.