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Patron: RADM N. Ralph AO, DSC, RAN Ret'd

See our website [here](#)

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per aircraft. These early variants faced reliability challenges stemming from frequent operator error and no “standard procedures” for flight, Karem said.

Amber’s successor, the GNAT-750 long-endurance tactical UAV, flew in 1989. Variants of this aircraft flew surveillance over air bases, supply caches, and troop movements in Albania, Bosnia, and Croatia.

In 1990, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. bought Leading Systems and continued developing UAVs. In January 1994, the company received an Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration contract for a medium-altitude endurance UAV based on the GNAT-750. It evolved into what would be-

The MQ-1 Predator, the remotely piloted aircraft that ushered in the era of drone warfare and permanently transformed modern combat, flew into the sunset during a March 9 retirement ceremony in the Nevada desert. Its mission has been taken over by the MQ-9 Reaper.

So indispensable was the MQ-1 to Air Force operations during its 24-year life span—during which the type amassed more than 2 million flight hours—that a Predator was flying a combat mission in the Middle East on the day of the retirement ceremony. It was a fitting swan song for an aircraft that spent more than 92 percent of its service life in combat.

“The MQ-1 has helped shape the character of warfare,” said Col. Julian C. Cheater, the commander of the 432nd Wing at Creech AFB, Nev., home to the RPA for 23 years.

James G. “Snake” Clark, a former Air Force colonel known as the “godfather” of the aircraft, described the spindly aircraft as “a glider with an Austrian-built (Rotax 214) snowmobile racing engine that races into combat slower than the SUVs on the Beltway in Washington, D.C.”

The Predator traces its lineage back to a \$40 million contract from the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency to Leading Systems Inc. for the “Amber” medium unmanned aerial vehicle.

Abraham Karem, an engineer born in Baghdad, Iraq, and raised in Israel, spent years developing early UAVs in his California garage before designing Amber, which came in at a cost of \$350,000

come known as the RQ-1.

Used experimentally in a Roving Sands exercise in 1995, the RPA was a success, and a US Army composite unit deployed the aircraft in Albania as part of Joint Task Force Provide Promise between July and November 1995.

Pentagon leaders quickly saw the aircraft’s value, and about a year later a prototype Predator deployed to Europe to fly as part of NATO Operations Deny Flight and Deliberate Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the time, the aircraft was an Army asset and was operated in theatre by soldiers using a plywood runway.

In the early days of Predator operations, the Air Force pressed to take over the mission. Air Combat Command stood up the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron at Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field, Nev., in July 1995 in anticipation of being assigned the RQ-1.

In April 1996, Defence Secretary William J. Perry made the shift official, and USAF transitioned the RQ-1 from a test platform to an operational system flown by US Atlantic Command.

USAF pilots flew the Predator remotely from Taszar, Hungary, for Operation Joint Endeavour—the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords regarding the conflict in the Balkans. At the time, the Predator “cockpit” was a converted NASCAR auto trailer fitted with computers, controls, and monitors. The aircraft transmitted colour television and infrared video surveillance.

(continued on page 3)

‘While the Predator may fly slowly, our enemies are afraid of it for good reason.’



In March of 1955 LIFE magazine ran a brief article on the Maitland Floods, with a few pictures we hadn't seen before. It's a bit of history we shouldn't forget, so here they are with original text.

FLOOD RESCUE BY HELICOPTER

But a slip mars Australian effort...

The hovering helicopter, tried by fire as a rescue vehicle on the battlefield, underwent a harrowing trial by water last week as flash floods raged though 50 Australian towns, leaving 70 dead. Circling about endlessly, Royal Australian Navy helicopters dropped down to rescue many marooned men and women.

At Maitland one of the helicopters found a double load, two men stranded atop a railway signal box, and took them aboard its grappling line. As photographers were shooting the dramatic rescue (next page), the men suddenly lost their hold on the line. Hurling through the air together, they hit high tension wires and were electrocuted. The helicopter, swooping after them, snagged its grappling line on the wires and spun into the water. The two crewmen fought clear of the wreckage and were saved, avoiding further tragedy on a merciful mission.



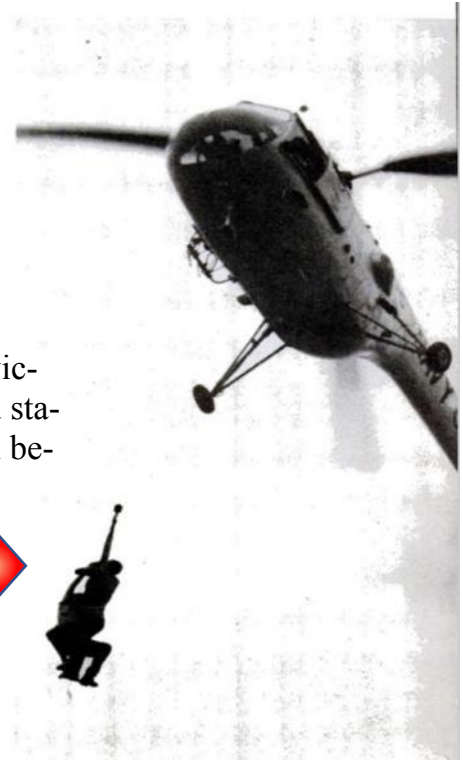
WOMAN IN MIDAIR clings to the grappling line as the helicopter swings her up from the roof of her floodbound garage in Dubbo, New South Wales. The man who is giving her a boost was picked up later.



WHIRLYBIRD OVER FLOOD flies away with its rescued victim in high tension wire and semaphore area near the railroad station at Maitland. It was near this spot that the accident shown below and on the next page took place.

STARTING UP, two men rescued from the railyard cling grimly to line as the helicopter begins climbing.

PLUNGING DOWN together after losing hold, the two men plummeted toward the wires and death.





Left. The moment the two men fell. We have various versions about what happened next, but one thing is clear: the Sycamore lost control and the pilot ditched in the raging floodwaters. ✈



PREDATOR's EULOGY
(Continued from page 1)

Predator showed real potential as an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance tool in its

early years, but the program experienced growing pains.

The aircraft flew low and slow and suffered a frightful accident rate of 43 lost per 100,000 hours, compared with two or three per 100,000 hours for manned aircraft. Inexperienced maintainers and a lack of spare parts contributed to the mishaps.

The drone flew so slowly that in Bosnia, a Serbian helicopter reportedly flew alongside a Predator and shot at it with door-mounted machine guns.

For the first five years of Predator operations, it was purely a watcher system, providing what commanders at the time called “staring” ISR. It wasn’t until 1999 that Air Force leaders began to think about using the RQ-1 to provide targeting data.

In April of that year, then-USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan called Snake Clark to inquire about this possibility and tasked him to observe Predator operations in Kosovo. They were flying 24-hour-a-day operations in search of hostile forces.

Clark reached out to the USAF’s Big Safari office at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, which modifies aircraft for special missions, such as the RC-135 Rivet Joint and EC-130H Compass Call.

After evaluating Predator, Big Safari suggested the aircraft’s sensor ball be replaced with a new unit, used by the Navy, that could not only observe with a camera but designate a target with a laser.

Just 18 hours after USAF approved Big Safari’s recommendation, the service was buying the new sensor ball, and just 38 days later an upgraded Predator was flying missions over Kosovo.

By 2000, Air Combat Command wanted not only to fit the whole fleet with laser target designators but to give the aircraft armament as well. ACC wanted Predator to be both sensor & shooter.

Because of the aircraft’s small size and relatively weak wings, Big Safari determined it could only carry the Army’s Hellfire missile—a small anti-tank weapon carried by helicopters. During a 2001 test, a Predator successfully fired a Hellfire at the Nellis Test Range in Nevada, destroying a tank. This feat occurred just 61 days after ACC’s order to arm the Predator, at a cost of \$2.9 million.

Now that it could shoot, within a year, the RQ-1 became the MQ-1 (“M” standing for “multimission” under USAF nomenclature rules).

A NEW ERA OF WARFARE

Testing the armed Predator was still underway at Edwards AFB, Calif., on Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorists struck the US. Just over two hours after the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., USAF received presidential approval to deploy the newly lethal Predator. Two days later, a C-17 landed at then-Andrews AFB, Md., with three Predators, 13 Hellfire missiles, ground control stations, ... and a rented Jeep that had to be returned to Hertz at Reagan National Airport in Washington, Clark said.

One of the three MQ-1s that then deployed to Afghanistan was tail number 3034—the first to fire a Hellfire in testing. This same Predator was also the first to fire a Hellfire in combat over Afghanistan, and it is now on display at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum in Washington.

The Predator was integral during the early years of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, becoming more effective with the addition of upgraded video capabilities, remote split operations, and improved weapons.

In 2005, 11 years after the beginning of the ACTD program, the MQ-1 officially reached initial operating capability.

Predator production ended in 2011, with delivery of the 268th aircraft. At the same time, demand for persistent ISR was skyrocketing. In 2004, the Air Force flew just five combat air patrols, which translated to 20 Predators flying 24-hour orbits over targets of interest. By 2016, though, USAF was flying 60 CAPs, while the

Army was flying its own RPAs, and still more government-owned drones were being flown by contractors. It still wasn't enough to meet commanders' voracious demand.

The Predator's operations in Afghanistan and Iraq ushered in the era of "drone warfare," with a persistent eye watching potential targets and even providing close air support for US and allied ground forces. Predators flew ISR and strike missions as part of ongoing missions in Yemen, Somalia, and Libya.

Since 2008, MQ-1s flew almost 70,000 sorties—executing almost 2,700 strikes.

MQ-1s did not just serve in combat. Predators were requested to provide reconnaissance of the storm-ravaged city after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, but the Federal Aviation Administration had no rules for allowing RPAs to operate in domestic airspace over inhabited land. Predator camera systems wound up being mounted on skyscrapers in the Katrina relief effort.

However, by 2006, Air National Guard-operated Predators were given the green light for use in disaster responses of various kinds. They flew ISR during wildfires and after hurricanes domestically and assisted international aid efforts after earthquakes hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2010.

In 2014, Predators were the first to respond to what would become a four-year-long effort (so far) against ISIS. As the fighters with that group rapidly took over parts of Iraq, Predators were dispatched to the area and told to "go north," Cheater said.

There were no rules of engagement at the time; no detailed guidance. Predators were the eyes for the US and its coalition partners as ISIS surrounded Mount Sinjar in Iraq and began trying to wipe out the Yazidi people. The response from the international community was Operation Inherent Resolve.

Since then, MQ-1s have flown in every major battle against ISIS, including the liberation of Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa, Syria. MQ-1 operations prevented ISIS from destroying dams and helped save the Yazidis.

Predators saw 17 years of constant combat in the Middle East as a mainstay of operations. From its first operational missions through early 2018, the Predator flew a total of 135,750 sorties and 2,061,864 flight hours. Of that total, 1,904,287 flight hours were in combat—92.4 percent of its flying total.

As MQ-1 operations expanded, Predator's footprint at Creech swelled considerably. Previously known as Indian Springs, an auxiliary airfield for Nellis used mainly for marshaling Red Flag forces, the surrounding area had little more than "a casino and a gas station," Clark recounted. The surrounding area was so vacant that few would notice—much less care—if a Predator crashed. Creech has since become the global hub of RPA operations.

The original cadre of just one squadron—the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron (re-designated the 11th Attack Squadron in 2016)—grew into a wing at Creech that also governed Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve MQ-1 squadrons across the country.

The unit, which Clark described as "pirates and misfits" for cobbling a capability out of small amounts of money and appropriating space, resources, and missions along the way "wrote Air Force history," Clark said.

"Those who have designed this aircraft, who have flown this aircraft, who have maintained this aircraft, who have supported it in

some way have epitomized this ability to take an idea and rapidly transform it into a vital resource," Cheater said.

FUTURE OF THE 'AWAY GAME'

The MQ-1 was an integral part of every combat operation since 1995, but USAF is already well into the MQ-9 Reaper era.

The Reaper fleet is expected to surpass the Predator fleet's peak, with a total of 346 aircraft to be flown at several bases across the service. To find the pilots to fly them, the Air Force has opened its pilot ranks to enlisted airmen, letting them train to fly the RQ-4 Global Hawk—which does not release ordnance—so more officers can take the controls of MQ-9s.

In 2015, USAF requested a large funding increase to build up its MQ-9 fleet, as well as its ranks of pilots and maintainers, to keep it healthy as the service's ISR commitments expand.

Despite the retirement ceremony, as of April USAF still had 128 MQ-1s in its fleet. Many of these have been placed in crates, with some still awaiting "demilitarization" before they are sent to a final destination, according to ACC. The Air Force doesn't anticipate the US will sell these aircraft to allied nations, and some have already been chosen for display in museums in the US and England.

The Predator's ability to have constant eyes and ready weapons over a battle field a world away from its pilot means the US is able to have an "away game" against the "world's most ruthless enemies," without putting airmen in peril, Cheater said.

"Wars are destructive," Karem noted. For the United States, the goal is "to win with the minimum casualties ... both us and them. And I think armed UAVs being able to ... look at the targets for a long time and throw a small missile, can do that better than an F-16 coming with a 2,000-pound bomb."

Although hardly an airshow crowd pleaser, with its spindly profile and low-power engine (and indeed, it never flew in air shows, as all available aircraft were dedicated to operations throughout its service life), Predator was a highly significant warplane in the changes it brought to modern warfare, Karem said. "While the Predator may fly slowly, our enemies are afraid of it for good reason," Cheater observed. "We have been able to reach long distances, to fly sorties for longer than 22 hours, to launch a precision Hellfire missile through a specific window to remove callous snipers, and as a result, our joint and coalition forces sing the praises of the mighty MQ-1."

USAF Magazine, July 2018.

By Ed. Australia is to buy six Northrop-Grumman Triton unarmed drones for surveillance, estimated to cost \$7bn. They will be based out of Edinburgh and Tindal and should all be in service by 2025. Read more [here](#). ✈

† REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of **Russell Golding, Wayne Asher and Warwick "Snow" Hall**. You can read a little more of these sad events on our Obituary pages [here](#). ✈

SEA KING DOWN

On Sunday 13 April 2003 Sea King Shark 07 suffered an uncommanded engine shut down that left the aircraft in a precarious position, and, once recovered, the maintenance crew with a logistical repair nightmare.

Read the story of Shark 07 [here](#).

Here is the story from each perspective - as told by CPO Anthony Bathe, the FSMS, and LCDR Paul Moggach, the Flight Commander.

With the help of our readers, we have managed to find out a few more of the names in our unofficial 'Mystery Photo' published in last month's edition. We still don't know 7,8 and 9.



(1) Trevor Epis; (2) Arthur Lazzaro (Lazaru?); (3) Dave Beare; (4) John Retzki; (5) Sandy Wilson; (6) Ivan Waskiw; (7) Allen Debnam (8-9) yet unknown; (10) Bill Watterson; (11) Geoff Ledger; (12) Lawrence Stubbs; (13) Brian Harries; (14) Bob Shaw and (15) Bill Shurey. ✈

Last Mystery Photo



Mystery Photo No.43 (above) was kindly provided by Kim Dunstan. It was taken from the deck of *HMAS Melbourne*. We asked readers to provide the name of the warship in the background; the name and purpose of the smaller vessel in the foreground; where and when the photo was taken, and what *Melbourne* was doing there.

The image was in *HMAS Melbourne's* Report of Proceedings for July 1977, when she was exercising in the North Sea as part of her Queen's Jubilee visit to the UK. The larger vessel is *HMAS Brisbane*, which is taking evasive action around the Soviet AGI 'Ekholot' that is darting around *Melbourne's* stern. The incident occurred in the North Sea off Norway.



A close-up of 'Ekholot' is shown above. Note the many aerials and the spooks on the flying bridge! You can see a larger picture of it on our website [here](#).

Update on ASM(CT)



Readers will remember that a push has been in place for the last year or so to recognise aircrew who were engaged in **Operation Bursa**. This recognition would be in the form of an Active Service Medal (Counter Terrorism) which is currently awarded to SAS and Army aircrew assigned to that Operation, but not to the Navy folk who were previously a part of it.

We are now heavily in the bureaucracy phase but are seeing progress albeit with the creation of more admin along the way. Defence Honours

and Awards (DH&A) have developed a policy strategy and passed it for review.

The positives of this is that it does pursue the inclusion of the other capability providers outside of the Army Tactical Assault Group and apparently, we have the CDF/COSC support for this. Similarly, the other major positives were that the aspiration is to have the necessary amendments to Gazettal S50 signed off by Governor General in Dec18/Jan19 - before or aligned to a new Australian Operational Service Medal; and this policy was due for testing by 1Aug 18.

On the negative side, the draft policy was somewhat disjointed and appeared to address issues additional to what we are seeking; and it is still seen as SOCAUST's remit to be the only consultative element for DH&A. As such, the issue of understanding that the capability was more than that provided by the TAG, that our readiness requirements contribute to the 60 days of continuous commitment and that posting to the unit automatically committed one to the CT role as dictated by the specialist training and associated dangers.

CDRE Brett Dowsing, who is doing Stirling work to keep this matter going, represented the above concerns back to Navy Medals and is hopeful they will be amended.

We've missed the opportunity to use the outgoing Chief of Navy aggressively on this, but the incoming CDF's support was evident when the matter was initiated a year or so ago, so hopefully that will continue. ✈

New Mystery Photo – No. 44



Mystery Photo number 44 is a bit harder than the last one! It was kindly forwarded by Ian Henderson (Jnr), and shows an aircraft carrier secured alongside in an Australian port. In the foreground are some people that discerning readers might recognise.

The questions are: What's the name of the Carrier? Where was it, and when? What were the names of the officer in the centre of the picture, and the woman next to him; what was the occasion, and for a big brownie point, hazard a guess of the name of the guy with his back to the camera!

You can see a larger version of the picture [here](#), which also has a link for you to submit your answer if you think you'd like to have a go. ✈

Flying in the HP42 in a bygone era...



Do you ever feel you were born in the wrong era? Flying the airlines in the thirties was certainly a lot more fun than it is now. It was more leisurely and had more class.

If people had serious money in the 1930s and travelled internationally, they may well have flown on one of these large (130 foot wingspan) Handley Page biplane aircraft, which were the mainstay of British Imperial Airways at the time. They carried 26 passengers in first class only, in three different compartments. The first-class saloon, the bar and cocktail area, and the smoking section.

These machines were ubiquitous, extremely safe (no passenger in a HP-42 was ever killed in 10 years of international and domestic operations from 1930 until 1940), very comfortable in seating, leg room and service, hot meals were served on bone china with silver cutlery, free liquor flowed, and overnight stays were in the very best hotels. There was no rush, no waiting in lines and everyone was well dressed.

Flying along at a few thousand feet, one could see every interesting feature passing below (down to the quality of the

washing on the backyard clothes lines).

At 95 to 100 mph one also had time to look at the passing panorama. It took four days to a week (depending on headwinds and weather) to fly from London to Cape Town, South Africa by only flying about four hours a day, staying at the best hotels in Europe, Cairo, Khartoum and the Victoria Falls.

All stops to India also made for an interesting choice of destinations.

Designed in 1928 to an Imperial Airways specification, only eight machines were built: four HP42s and four HP45s, and each were given a name beginning with the letter "H". The HP42s were used on the European routes and was powered by four Bristol Jupiter engines developing 490hp each. The HP45s had the more powerful supercharged engines of 555hp each, which allowed greater passenger capacity but reduced baggage and range.

The first flight was in G-AAGX (later to be named Hannibal) with Squadron Leader Thomas England at the controls. Its certificate of airworthiness was granted in May of 1931, with



HP-42 "Hannibal" over London, 1932. This aircraft was lost over the Gulf of Oman in March 1940, after its service with Imperial Airways.

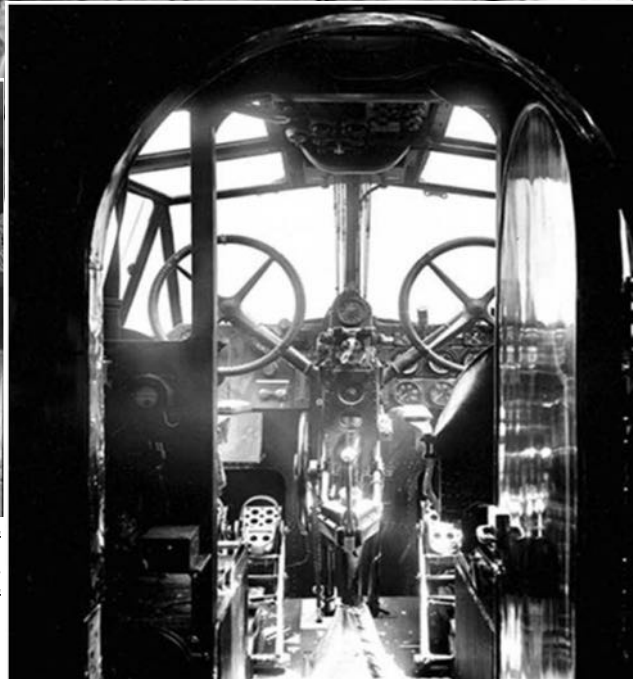
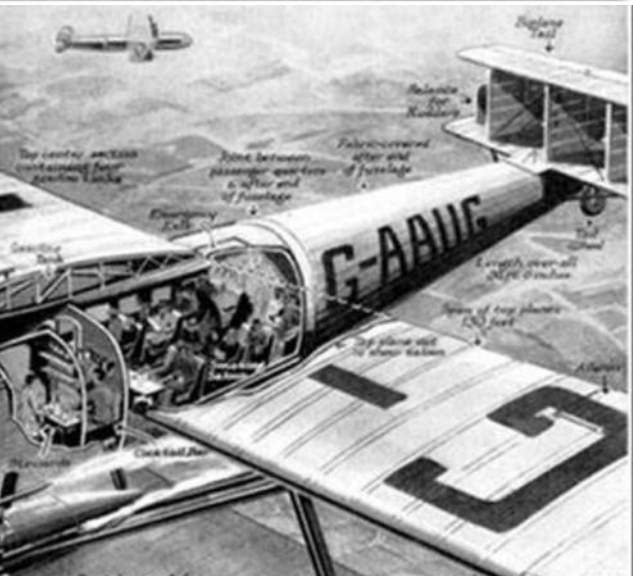
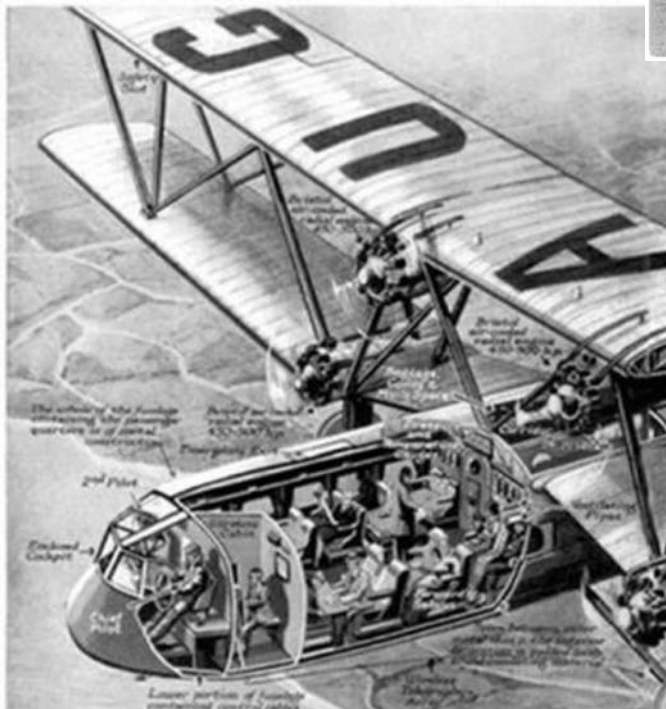
What Was Imperial Airways?

Imperial Airways was the early British commercial long-range air transport company, operating from 1924 to 1939 and serving parts of Europe but principally the British Empire routes to South Africa, India and the Far East, including Malaya, Hong Kong & Australia. There were local partnership companies; Qantas (Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd) in Australia, and TEAL (Tasman Empire Airways Ltd) in New Zealand.

Imperial Airways was merged into the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) in 1939, which in turn merged with the British European Airways Corporation in 1974 to form British Airways.

the first flight with fare-paying passengers (to Paris) just a month later. When they were withdrawn from Imperial Airways at the beginning of WW2 they had recorded almost a decade without any major accidents, although one aircraft was subsequently destroyed whilst in RAF service with the loss of eight lives. ✈

[Read more here](#)



Clockwise from top left. A refueling stop in Khartoum [2] An HP42 crew at an unknown locality. [3] A cutaway of the HP42 showing the three passenger spaces. It was regarded as a marvel of its time. [4] The flight deck...little of sophistication by modern standards! [5] A view of the lounge, with a steward pouring coffee on the finest china.

The Health Column



Keep Your Heart Healthy



The term *cardiovascular disease* covers all diseases and conditions of the heart and blood vessels such as heart disease, stroke, vascular disease and hypertension. Cardiovascular disease remains Australia's biggest killer,

mostly because of the deaths it causes among older people accounting for 54% of all male deaths and 59% of all female deaths in our country.

Hardening of the arteries means there is not enough blood flowing through the blood vessels. As a result, the heart muscle does not receive enough oxygen to provide the power to pump blood through your body, and you experience pain (causing angina or heart attack). In the brain, a lack of oxygen results in a stroke. More seriously, a blood clot can form over a patch of atherosclerosis on an artery (thrombosis). This complete blockage of the artery can cause a range of consequences from sudden death to a small heart attack.

IT'S A FACT

Heart disease can be prevented! Do you know your blood pressure, your cholesterol level and your diabetes status? Each measurement can indicate whether you are at risk of heart disease. *Please visit your GP and get informed now.*

Risk factors are behaviours, characteristics and conditions that are likely to increase the possibility of disease occurring. Having risk factors for cardiovascular disease increases your chance of developing heart disease. The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. Your doctor can assess your likelihood of developing cardiovascular disease by considering your risk factors.

Factors that are preventable	Factors you can't change
High cholesterol levels in blood	A family history of heart disease
High blood pressure	Gender and age
Smoking	Type 1 diabetes
Obesity and excess weight	
Inactivity	
Poor diet	
Diabetes	

There are some risk factors that you cannot change, such as your age or gender; but many others can be modified to reduce the likelihood of cardiovascular disease. The seven major preventable risk factors for cardiovascular disease can be reduced or avoided through lifestyle changes or medical treatment.

You can do something about each of the risk factors to lessen your chances of heart disease. Even if you have a family history of heart disease, you can gain many advantages if you work at making changes to your lifestyle, particularly by limiting your fat intake, stopping smoking and having a healthy, active life.



A reminder of the reunions coming up:

Vietnam Veteran's Reunion, Old Bar, NSW

When: 17-21 August 2018

Where: Old Bar, NSW

Cost: Depends on the events you choose to attend.

Contact: John Macartney (02) 6557 4165

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

2018 General FAAA Reunion

When: Thursday 25 - Sunday 27 October 2018

Where: Nowra Locality

Cost: Depends on the events you choose to attend.

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

HISTORY IN PHOTOGRAPHS

The webmaster (who is also editor of this magazine) is constantly looking at ways of improving the website. In the last three years it has moved on from a simple 'blog' to become an accurate historical reference, with '[Heritage](#)' articles on a wide range of FAA subjects, and '[Snippets of History](#)' articles on other items of interest. You can find these libraries by clicking on the links above.

It's a known fact that people don't like reading slabs of text, however, so we are now generating 'History in Photographs' pages which are attached to some of our articles. If you don't want to read about the early history, you can peruse the photographs – they currently cover the period 1913 through to 1957. See the first of them [here](#), and follow the blue buttons!

To expand this work we need more photos, but NOT of aircraft flying or ships steaming. We want 'interest' shots of people doing things, like working on aircraft or how they lived their lives ashore or aboard. Images of events on ships, like crossing the line ceremonies, Christmas away from home. Runs ashore. Shots of messdecks or galleys, cooks at work in our carriers; work in hangar spaces or particular procedures to aircraft. An example is on the next page.

These may not have seemed of great interest at the time, but they are history now. Some of these events/procedures will never be seen again on modern ships, so please share them with us! Contact the webmaster [here](#).



Above. 4C port messdeck, HMAS Melbourne 1956.

Attention RAN HFV Members!!

If you served on the RAN HFV and are entitled to wear the recently awarded Unit Citation for Gallantry, you should recently have received an invitation from VADM Mike Noonan AO RAN, the new Chief of Navy, to attend the investing ceremony.

The event will be in the ANZAC HALL of the Australian War Memorial on Saturday 18 August 2018, commencing at 1430.

You need to reply to this invitation by 03 August so time is very short. Responses should be sent here, or you can ring (02) 6265 4359.

If you have NOT received an invitation and believe you should have done, phone the above number immediately.

Wall of Service Update

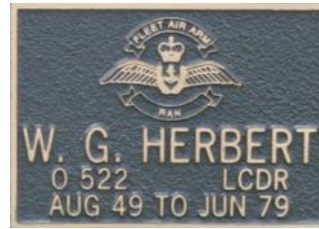
Order No. 39 was submitted to the Foundry on 9 July, so should be ready in a month or so. It contained the following names:

Cook, C.J;	Edgecombe, G.S;
Huntriss, W.D;	Young S.L;
Duffey, K;	Dennison, D;
Tennant, D;	Meers, W;
Beaven, L.C;	McTernan, G;
Walker, N;	Dunlop M.W
+ one other.	

What Is The Wall of Service?

The **Wall of Service** is exactly that: a wall erected outside of the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Nowra, onto which 'plaques' are fixed. Each plaque has been purchased by an individual, giving their name and other details. It's a wonderful way to record your service and is a lasting memory for yourself and your descendants.

This is not a memorial wall – you don't have to be dead to be on it! Rather, it records in perpetuity your service to the Fleet Air Arm, the Navy and the Nation.



A plaque like this would cost over \$370 if purchased privately from a Foundry. Because we order them in bulk you can have your name placed on the Wall for just \$190 – or \$240 if you are not a FAAA member (but you get one year of free membership to the Association). You can place your order [here](#). ✈

Who Needs Water?



The *USS Constitution* (Old Ironsides), as a combat vessel, carried 48,600 gallons of fresh water for her crew of 475 officers and men. This was sufficient to last six months of sustained operations at sea. She carried no evaporators (i.e. fresh water distillers).

However, let it be noted that according to her ship's log, "On July 27, 1798, the *Constitution* sailed from Boston with a full complement of 475 officers and men, 48,600 gallons of fresh water, 7,400 cannon shot, 11,600 pounds of black powder and 79,400 gallons of rum."

Her mission: "To destroy and harass English shipping."

Making Jamaica on 6 October, she took on 826 pounds of flour and 68,300 gallons of rum.

Then she headed for the Azores, arriving there 12 November. She provisioned with 550 pounds of beef and 64,300 gallons of Portuguese wine.

On 18 November, she set sail for England. In the ensuing days she defeated five British men-of-war and captured and scuttled 12 English merchant ships, salvaging only the rum aboard each.

By 26 January, her powder and shot were exhausted. Nevertheless, although unarmed she made a night raid up the Firth of Clyde in Scotland. Her landing party captured a whisky distillery and transferred 40,000 gallons of single malt Scotch aboard by dawn. Then she headed home.

The *USS Constitution* arrived in Boston on 20 February 1799, with no cannon shot, no food, no powder, no rum, no wine, no whisky, and 38,600 gallons of water. ✈

The Sea Fury Pilot in Korea

Fred T. Lane and Gerry Lane

It is difficult for those who were engaged in action, and saw friends die, to make an objective evaluation of their own efforts. It is also easier to second-guess strategy than to make it. It has been said that our strategy in Korea was flawed, a kind of exchange of coolies and ox carts for aircrew and aircraft. Were RAN Sea Furies used to best advantage in Korea? First of all, let us explore what some others say, then let a Sea Fury pilot who was a very junior acting sub-lieutenant at the time reminisce a little.

Library Content

Compared with American coverage, it seems surprising that there is so little RAN and RN Fleet Air Arm Korean material in likely resource centres. For instance, in May 1989, in one of the best media libraries in the world, the Time-Life library in New York, there were about 50 books in the Korean section. A search for key words, in contents and index pages, suggested likely references in only three of the 23 books that appeared to address air combat in any form.

One book, discussing the early days, made a very brief reference to the "logistic burdens" of the USA with foreign forces in Korea. Another, speaking about the same period, complained of the strafing of friendly troops by "Australian and US Air Forces."

Cagle and Manson discussed naval aspects of the entire Korean War and they acknowledged the fast response of the U.K, Australian and New Zealand governments in placing firm offers of naval aid. They gave a good brief account of the first naval air strikes in Korea, by HMS *Triumph's* Seafires and Fireflies against Haeju, and USS Valley Forge's Panthers and Skyraiders against Pyongyang, on 3 July 1950. They also commented on the Grand National that destroyed or damaged nine "Happy Valley" aircraft in her forward deck park after a follow-up strike that afternoon, and they criticised the absence of a Close Air Support infrastructure in the early days. However, other than a brief mention of Sydney contributing to an October 1951 East Coast Wonsan operation, they fail to explore any other RAN aircraft action and their coverage of the much longer RN effort is equally slim.

In June 1989, the University of New South Wales library listed about 26 books in the Korean War category. Seventeen of these focused on politics, causes or other non-combat issues. Bartlett, in an Australian War Memorial publication, probably gave RAN Sea Furies the widest cover. However, some of his minor details, about the sale of a crashed RAN Sea Fury to a Korean farmer and Typhoon Ruth's damage to aircraft on the flight deck seem a little different, for instance, from some personal recollections.

However, unlike contemporaries Cagle and Manson and latterly MacDonald, Bartlett failed to analyse important strategic and tactical issues, such as the US Air Force Operation Strangle strategy, under which we operated, and the evolution of Close Air Support.

These may be classified, in general, as errors of omission. Were there also errors of commission? Most historians are probably familiar with the Barclay note, giving credit to the "Fifth US Air Force", then in a footnote, "Royal Naval and South African Air Force planes" for important Close Air Support of the Commonwealth Division between 31 October and 26 November 1951. There was no operational RN carrier within 1,000 miles at that time. According to one fairly reliable source, at least one of these sorties was flown from HMAS Sydney on 7 November, when a rare 100% target coverage was achieved, according to the Olympic Mosquito.

Firkins devoted about three of his 279 pages to HMAS Sydney and her squadrons in Korea (compared with 29 for the World War II Coastwatchers). His Korean reporting seems accurate enough, but it reads like a laundry list and again fails to evaluate the results. On the other hand, a 1953 fictional work by another author is an emotional rendering, but not at all strong on fact.

Journal articles may be similarly biased. If the Australian effort is mentioned at all, it might tag along as a kind of minor afterthought. For example, describing Sydney's Task Force, TF 77, in October 1951, one author listed seven American carriers and two battleships by name, then added, "as well as various support ships and destroyers along with British and American carriers."

Informal examinations of many other libraries and resources, in Australia and the USA, tend to confirm these observations. Therefore it is difficult to reflect what others say about the RAN Sea Fury in Korea, because there is so little informed discussion about the important aspects.

Based on an admittedly tiny sample, we may tentatively conclude that: (a) at least some influential resource centres have a poor coverage of the Korean War; (b) compared with USN, USAF and land combat, Australian naval air combat in the Korean War may be poorly reported, in both volume and content; (c) perhaps too many of the very few relevant books and articles carry too many errors of omission, commission and emphasis; and (d) few, if any, readily available works comment on the strategy, tactics and outcome of this unique RAN Fleet Air Arm effort.

Operations

From the probably biased position of a very junior participant, let us explore some aspects of flying the RAN Sea Fury in Korea.

Sydney was commanded by Captain D.H. Harries in Korea and no admiral was carried, by USN request. Sydney relieved HMS *Glory* in September 1951 and the latter, in turn, relieved Sydney some time after 26 January 1952.

The Sydney Carrier Air Group was commanded by Lieutenant Commander (later Vice Admiral Sir) Mike Fell, RN, who flew a Sea Fury. There were three squadrons: 805 (Lieutenant Commander Jim Bowles, RAN) and 808 (Lieutenant Commander "Apples" Appleby, RN) nominally had 12 Sea Furies each and 817 (Lieutenant Commander Richard Lunberg, RN) had 12 Fireflies. Maintenance was centralised, so pilots flew whatever Sea Fury was spotted, regardless of squadron.



HMAS Sydney's Flight Deck circa 1950/51, showing the 'through deck'. The relative size of the Sea Furies (forward) and Fireflies (aft) give an indication of just how narrow the deck was, and how little room there would have been for stowing aircraft on the deck during flying operations. Image: Allen Porter.

Sydney had 10 wires and three barriers and all fixed-wing launches were by her single hydraulic catapult. The Commander(Air), Operations Officer, Flight Deck Officer and Landing Signals Officers were all RN. Also on board was an Australian Carrier-Borne Army Liaison Officer section. A borrowed RN Dragonfly or USN HOS3 helicopter was carried for plane guard and rescue.

Sydney's air callsign was "Shine", a corruption of "Shoeshine", followed by 51, 52 Division, etc. Choppers were "Angels" and rescue flying boats were "Dumbos". On about 11 October 1951, Sydney achieved a light fleet carrier record of 89 sorties in one day, off Wonsan on the East Coast.

The major strategy was the US Fifth Air Force's Operation Strangle, where "100 per cent of carrier effort and 70 per cent of Air Force operations were devoted to the attack on lines of communications."

The Sea Fury's major roles in Korea were: (a) armed reconnaissance; (b) CAP, CONCAP, TARCAP/Naval Gunfire Support (NGS); (c) strike; (d) army co-operation; and (e) photo-reconnaissance. The Sea Furies typically operated in divisions of four or six during armed reconnaissance, strike and army co-operation, a single or a pair for CAP and a single for TARCAP/NGS. There was no deliberate night flying. About twice every 10 to 21 day patrol, a Sea Fury would land at

Kimpo due to battle damage, extended RESCAP, fuel shortage or similar problem. It is possible that the author top-scored with 71 operational sorties, but no-one took much notice of such data.

Sydney lost three pilots in Korea, all from 805 Squadron. The first was the Senior Pilot, Lieutenant **Keith Clarkson**, on 5 November. He seemed to get hit in the dive attacking an ox cart during an armed reconnaissance. He pulled out late, flick-rolled and crashed. It was probably a flak-trap because another aircraft was hit by two 20mm rounds while orbiting the position 3,000 feet up 10 minutes later.

Sub-Lieutenant **Dick Sinclair** picked up a round in his oil cooler on 7 December, west of Chinnampo. He headed for the coast but caught fire. He bailed out over the sea but used a Messerschmitt 109 technique, to trim forward, release the straps and kick the stick. He hit the fin. The third was Sub Lieutenant **Ron Coleman**, who simply disappeared in cloud during one of our last CAP sorties on 2 January.

The only aircrew wounded was Lieutenant (later Captain) Peter Goldrick of 808 Squadron, who picked up a .303 round in his right arm. He was lucky in that the bullet slowed as it passed through the lead shot of a message carrier mounted on the starboard cockpit wall and he was skillful in that he brought his plane back safely with an injured right arm. Morale was not improved, however, when one of the first Navy Office responses was a signal that stopped his flying pay.

Our Aircraft

The Sea Fury FBII was a fighter-bomber, about 615 of which were built by Hawker, in the tradition of the Hurricane and Tempest. The wing span was 38 feet 5 inches and it weighed about 10,000 pounds dry. It had a Bristol Centaurus Mark 18 twin-row, 18-cylinder sleeve-valve radial engine of 2,480 horse power that drove a big five-bladed propeller. Its maximum load was two 1,000- or 500-pound bombs, or 16 two-tier, 3-inch rocket pods. A successor in the RAN, the A4G Skyhawk, had a 27.5 feet span and weighed 11,300-pounds dry, but it could deliver about 12,000- pounds of ordnance – or about the equivalent of a Sea Fury's full bomb load plus the Sea Fury itself.

Contemporary USN aircraft in Korea were the AD Skyraider and the F4U Corsair. RAAP 77 Squadron flew P51 Mustangs, then Gloster Meteors. Way up high, in the contrail area, the MIG-15s, Sabres, B29s and even Meteors for a mercifully brief period, conducted their own little war. There are quite untrue claims that the Sea Fury recorded "many kills" of "Soviet MIG-15 fighters."

In Korea, our Sea Furies typically carried 200 gallons of usable internal fuel, two 45-gallon drop tanks, twelve 3-inch rockets with 60- pound heads in two tiers and four 20mm Hispano cannon with about 125 rounds per gun. Unlike the USN, USAF



and RAAP, the RAN never carried napalm. Sortie time was about two hours, but this could vary from about an hour (for a rare bomb strike) to three hours.

The Sea Fury cruised at about 240 knots. It was a delight to fly, with plenty of reserve power. It had excellent balanced controls and excellent visibility. It was conditionally rugged in that it could accept a lot of punishment in all but one area, the oil system.

Armed Reconnaissance

About half a junior pilot's Sea Fury sorties were armed Reconnaissance and the major operational area was "Wales", a west coast area north of the Han River to the Chinnampo Estuary and inland to the Sariwon Waterways. The strategic aim was to stop all enemy land and water movement.

An interest was taken in the area north of Chinnampo to the Yalu, but Pyongyang and the 105mm and 88mm radar predicted AA batteries that studded the coast up towards China tended to be avoided. Operations were conducted on the east coast from time to time. Soldiers, ox carts, junks and sampans were the most frequent armed reconnaissance targets but they were always difficult to find. The major opposition was well camouflaged light AA.

Rockets were typically fired from a 15- or 30-degree dive and released at about 1,200 yards slant range. A rocket motor would fail to fire every fifth or sixth sortie, due mainly to the electrical firing pigtail falling out. Some rockets would hang up until land on. Then topsides concentration might intensify somewhat, as loose live ordnance bounced up the flight deck at 80 knots or so.

The quad 20mm cannon, with a mixed belt of ball, HE and incendiary/tracer, was a magnificent weapon. On the way back to the ship on 20 January, some rifle-toting soldiers were seen to enter a railway water tower structure, near the Haeju Gorge. It must have been a fuel or ammunition storage building as well, because after one pass with the last of the division's 20mm, it started to burn brightly. Unfortunately, the fire attracted some 808 Squadron pilots just coming on task. They followed up, but holed the water tank and put the fire out.

Weapon delivery accuracy improved considerably from even the good results achieved during work-up, but sometimes to the detriment of target damage. For instance, during one simultaneous line abreast strafing dive, four Sea Furies put four equidistant neat holes, each less than two metres in diameter, in the 20-metre long roof of a barracks structure. Less accurate fire might have brought down the roof.

Two very nasty areas, from a lowly sub-lieutenant's point of view, were a little lighthouse opposite Chinnampo, and the Haeju Gorge that ran into the Hari River Estuary. A very accurate machine gunner operated in or near the lighthouse. One day, 17 December 1951, the primary author was quietly minding his own business as a slothful number four, doing a bit of

unauthorised low flying over a beautiful glassy sea in the middle of the estuary, when he suddenly picked up two .303 rounds from the lighthouse area, at least a mile and a half away. The hits severed his elevator trimmer cables, so that it was a "both hands on the stick" deck landing.

The Haeju Gorge was a flak trap that once claimed the aircraft the CO was flying. He got hit badly, so he headed for the estuary and bailed out a kilometre or so off the coast. Much later on, the primary author's aircraft, 106, was looking the clear winner of the sweep for most operational sorties. The CO's personal bird was running second. There was no malice intended, but the CO took 106 down the Haeju Gorge. It was badly shot up, with one round blowing up the starboard aileron like a football. It got him home, though, and 106 went on to win the sweep.

CAP, CONCAP, TARCAP and RESCAP

About a third of a junior Sea Fury pilot's sorties were CAP (Combat Air Patrol) or CONCAP (Convoy CAP) and about a sixth were TARCAP (Target CAP/Naval Gunfire Support) or dedicated RESCAP (Rescue CAP). No Sydney fleet defence CAP ever saw an enemy aircraft.

Enemy MIGs were seen from time to time, but well clear of our fleet CAP stations. For instance, about 8 December the primary author was quietly wrestling with a TARCAP problem over the Chinnampo Estuary when he was suddenly surrounded by silvery forms flashing by. They were drop tanks, jettisoned by aircraft 30,000 feet up. The ripple of smoke from the Sabres' point fives versus the *puff puff puff* of the MIGs' big 37mm could be clearly seen against their white contrails. One silver MIG came hightailing down to bug out north on the deck but he was much too fast and too far away to intercept.

The utility of TARCAP was directly proportional to the size of the guns. Destroyers with 4-inch guns were woefully inaccurate, with zones of 150 yards or more. The 3-inch frigates were awful. On the other hand, a shoot with a 16-inch battleship was awesome. Nine times out of 10, the first ranging shot would be a "target", even at 15 miles or more range. "Fire for effect" simply demolished the average target with the first broadside. Every now and then a Convoy CAP would be flown for the Fleet Train or other ships. It was probably more to make them feel wanted and to give their Aircraft Direction Officers a bit of practice than to protect them from any real threat.

About the Author

Fred Lane is the last surviving member of No.1 pilots course of December 1947. Having completed basic flying training in Australia he undertook advanced training in the UK before embarking in HMAS Sydney in early 1951. He served in Korea, and later became an LSO, QFI (A1) and served twice as CO of 805 Squadron. He is probably the only person to have served as a pilot on all three carriers and to fly all three RAN fighters while embarked. He went on to pursue a career in academia, earning a BA, MA and PhD in Clinical Psychology. He currently lives in Sydney, NSW.





On short finals to land, this Sea Fury is probably returning from a mission as it has external fuel tanks but no ordnance.

The air war stopped for RESCAP and all available aircraft supported downed aircrew. On 23 October a USAF B29 pilot who had bailed out over the sea just north of the Chinnampo Estuary was spotted by a Sydney Sea Fury. A Sydney Firefly delivered a G-Dropper dinghy and the pilot was eventually picked up from the middle of a minefield by a boat from HMAS *Murchison*.

When Sub-Lieutenant **MacMillan** put his Firefly down back of the Chaeryongang Waterways on 26 October, a classic RESCAP was flown with RAN Sea Furies, Fireflies, RAAP and other aircraft. In the face of enemy ground fire, a "double cross" strafing pattern was established for *Sydney's* helicopter pick up. The RAN escort and helicopter landed safely south of the front line, but with all aircraft indicating less than zero fuel.

Strike

Once a month or so, the Sea Furies would load up with 500-pound bombs and deliver them to places like East Coast Hungam on 20 November, or West Coast Onjin Peninsula on 18 January. They were reported to be effective, according to people like "Leopard", an SAS-type person who allegedly ran agents inside the "Wales" area, but Sea Fury pilots rarely saw any spectacular target reaction.

Army Co-operation

As mentioned earlier, Cagle and Manson rightly criticise the Close Air Support mess in the first few months of the war. *Triumph* and the US Marines had CAS experience, but the USAF, USN, RAAP, US Army and Korean Army evidently had no common CAS communications, doctrine or desire. We trained hard in the concept and it did not seem to matter whether it was a soldier, marine, airman or sailor who directed the cab-rank, so long as he had a good radio and knew how to identify targets and select ammunition. Our CBGLO was a valued member of our Air Department team.

Ourselves

Like the "Firebox" drivers, the Sea Fury pilots came from three main sources: (a) Second World War veteran ex-RN, ex-RNZN, ex-RAN College and other pilots who were now RAN; (b) loan RN officers, most of whom had war experience; and (c) seven bright-eyed, bushy tailed young RAAP-trained, RN-converted short service acting sub-lieutenants whose major exposure to danger had been standing between a thirsty CO and an open bar.

The young sub-lieutenants were graduates of the first two or three courses of the RAN pilot training system that started in December 1947. They trained with the RAAP at Point Cook in Tiger Moths and Wirraways, then with the RN in Seafires (or Fireflies for the ASW people). The first author had 188 hours on type, with a log book total of 578 hours, and 83 deck landings, before his first operational sortie. It would have been unlikely for any to have been accused of being teetotal or shy at a cocktail party.

A lot of people put a lot of effort into the only action RAN fixed-wing aircraft squadrons ever saw and 805 Squadron was the only RAN unit to experience fatal Korean War casualties.

There seems to be little informed discussion about the employment of our Sea Furies in Korea. Original sources may exist, but it should be remembered that most were written or edited by RN officers, perhaps with an unconscious bias that might not coincide with Australian best interests. For instance, intriguing questions about the command structure and petty inter-service rivalries seem never to have been addressed.

Was the decision not to use napalm correct? Was the USAF strategy flawed? Should RAN aircraft have paid more attention to "strategic" targets, such as the hydro-electric or irrigation systems? Were CAP and ASW sorties wasted? Was the decision to use 3-inch rockets on the Sea Furies correct? Did Sea Furies inflict any significant damage at all? Were Sea Furies the best aircraft for the job? Was NGS with ships of destroyer size or smaller worth the effort? Was the loss of three pilots worth the outcome?

It seems a pity that the answers to these questions and many others are not discussed in the manner of contemporary USN squadrons. Their detailed histories are readily available in a multitude of books and journal articles in likely resource centres.

Therefore, not only should the history of the RAN Sea Furies in Korea be written, but it may be argued that it should be written, with little delay, by a wide variety of people from a number of different perspectives. Every year, there are fewer and fewer eye-witnesses who might challenge existing, perhaps hidden, records and opinions.

By Ed. This This Essay was the text of a presentation given by Fred Lane to the inaugural Naval History Seminar at the Australian War Memorial in 1989. It is reproduced with the kind permission of the Authors of "Reflections on The Royal Australian Navy" by T.R. Frame, J.V.P. Goldrick and P.D. Jones. Kangaroo Press pp 275-284. You can see the full story of the RAN FAA's involvement in the Korean War [here](#), which I'm pleased to say has gone at least a little way to fulfil Fred's proposition in his final paragraph above. The Firefly Pilot's essay by Norman Lee will be published in the next edition of 'FlyBy'. ✈

Letters To The Editor

Ode to Taff

Prior to his recent death I visited Taff Hughes in north Nowra to get a record of his service because he was not just an early RAN Fleet Air Arm member. He also served with the RN Fleet Air Arm (RNFAA) which, as the airborne element of the British Pacific Fleet (BPF), commenced operation at (now) HMAS Albatross late in 1944 - several years before the RAN operated a Fleet Air Arm.

The RAN Air Station was commissioned as HMS Nabbington on 2 January 1945 and was capable of accommodating over 90 (occasionally up to 120) aircraft and 2000 personnel. Jervis Bay airfield was commissioned as HMS Nabswick on 28 April 1945 and also supported RN FAA aircraft operations. Both of the airfields had been previously operated by the RAAF and upgrading was needed for the RN aircraft (Firefly, Seafire Corsair, Avenger and Hellcat squadrons) which made up the Air Groups of the Royal Navy's aircraft Carriers. These along with the ships and aircraft of United States Navy were heavily involved with the final stages of the war in the Pacific. The RN's aircraft were at Nowra generally while their parent ships were alongside in Sydney.

Taff's ship in the BPF was HMS Formidable and his unit, which flew Grumman Avengers, was RN 848 Squadron. When I mentioned to Taff the very high toll of death and injury experienced by the RN FAA during the operations of BPF, he quietly explained that he was "only an Avenger's gunner" And he spoke no more about it. I do not know when Taff first arrived in the local area during his Royal Navy service. He was a member of a Grumman Avenger's crew but he made little of his extraordinary service.

The casualty figures from British Pacific Fleet (BPF) are very hard to pin down. I went through David Hobbs' History of the BPF in an attempt to provide an a figure that can be accounted. These are unlikely to be 100 % accurate but at least they are close and from the probably the most reliable source available to me. Another author - Will Iredale in *Kamikaze Hunters* - gives a higher figure for aircrew killed (105).

- In the attack on the Sumatran Oilfields in January 1945 BPF lost 41 aircraft and 30 aircrew killed or missing. A number were executed.
- In the Pacific working with the USN March to mid-August 1945 the BPF lost an estimated 269 aircraft, 55 aircrew, 44 ships company killed and 83 wounded.
- At least 5 aircrew were killed conducting flying training and continuation in Australia. Several of these at Nowra

Taff was born 2 May 1925, and served in the RN from 16 June 1943 to 6 June 1946. He returned to UK when NAS Nowra decommissioned on 15 November 1945. His First day of service in RAN was 24 May 1948. He said he saw and responded to an ad in one of the British newspapers about the RAN Fleet Air Arm. He said things were fairly grim in UK at that time.

His award of DSM was dated 28 October 1952. And another thing he told me in his self-diminishing way was he only went to Korea when somebody else "declined to go" at the last minute. So he got a 'pier head jump'. He had not planned to go.

(Name withheld on request). By Ed. You can read a little more about Taff's extraordinary life [here](#), and if you are an FAAAA member you can leave a comment on that page, if you wish. ✈

Sycamore Group

Firstly, great work in compiling and publishing such varied stories on the FAA. Hope your holiday was enjoyable, certainly an interesting destination.

I may have a little information on the photo below you recently included in FlyBy Edition No.11. on page 2.



I believe the photo was taken on the 27th September, 1956 aboard the carrier Sydney, not Melbourne. Note the "broken" white centre line on the flight deck (in the picture left), a characteristic of Sydney's deck.

The Bristol Sycamore in question was a MK51, RAN Serial XD654 coded 901 at the time.

This Sycamore was the "only" aircraft embarked on Sydney for a trip to South East Asia lasting approximately fourteen weeks.

Some of this time Sydney would spend in the company of the carrier Melbourne to participate in the SEATO exercise "ALBATROSS" which was conducted in September and October, 1956 in the South China Sea.

Sydney's main role during this exercise was to act as a spare flight deck should any of Melbourne's aircraft suffer difficulties and require a clear deck to land-on.

HMAS Sydney with crash barrier extended during exercise "ALBATROSS" South China Sea - October 1956.

As for the characters in the photo I can only be sure of one. The pilot was my late father, then Lieutenant Arthur Payne, aged 31.

With rotor blades spinning and an air-cooled engine his facial expression suggests this was not the most opportune time for a photo shoot.

The three gentlemen dressed in whites were apparently from the press. The one in the centre a French journalist and flanking him two journalists from Australia's ABC.

They were being flown to the carrier Melbourne to observe flight activities on Melbourne's flight deck during the exercise. Melbourne must have been in close proximity to Sydney as the flight by the Sycamore from the Sydney to Melbourne and return was 10 minutes.

As for the shirtless gentleman kneeling I have no idea as to his identity other than he may have been trying to stay cool under the rotor wash and was obviously the only one willing to get his hands dirty.

One aspect that stands out to me is the footwear worn by those on deck in the photo. Apparently OH&S wasn't a high priority in the 1950's.

Now a disclaimer. As I was only eighteen months old when these photos were taken my memory of the actual events is somewhat hazy. I've based my information on my father's log books and hopefully, "facts", I've gleaned from the internet. Unfortunately my computer skills are probably described as rudimentary, at best!

I do however take my hat off to those who take the time, effort and patience to place these pieces of history online.

I'm more than happy to stand corrected on any of the information contained within.

Hope you find this of some interest. Kind Regards,

Michael Payne. ✈

Hawker Seahawks on Melbourne 1



Regarding the When we brought Melbourne to Australia we had cargo other than the aircraft of 808, 816 and 817 in the hangar. The aircraft pictured was for delivery to another party, my ageing and faulty memory tells me it was headed for Woomera for some use in the Atomic testing facility.

Regards, Bill Vallack Lieut(O) Long retired.

By Ed. Thanks Bill. The only 'extra' aircraft we are aware of on that voyage was an Avro 707 (see photo below) and a Gloucester Meteor. Our understanding was that the Avro was bound for



The Avro 707 – a one third size testbed for the Vulcan Bomber – being loaded aboard HMAS Melbourne in 1956.

Woomera, but ADF Serials reports that when it arrived in Sydney in May of 1956 (in a new livery of silver with black anti-dazzle panels) it was transported to Melbourne where it was operated by ARDU until 1963. You can see a bit more of that story [here](#), including what its final fate was. ✈

Hawker Seahawks on Melbourne 2

Here are the photos of the RN Sea Hawks on Melbourne. I was an aircraft Handler, and the only person I recognise in the pictures is Neville (Chopper) Russell, the PO directing the aircraft onto the catapult. I think the pictures were taken in 1957 or 1958, but I can't be sure, I was also on other trips in 1956 and 1961.



If you are on Facebook you should be able to see on the HMAS Melbourne II site many photos of RAN aircraft on Melbourne including an RN Sky Raider and USN Trackers...the quality of these is much the same as the Sea Hawk pictures above.

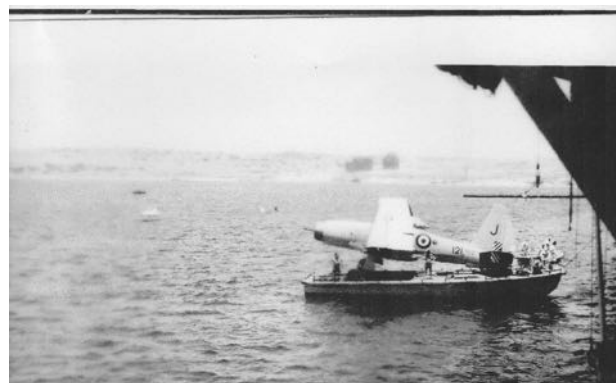
Cheers, Peter Keys ✈

By Ed. Thanks Peter. The photograph you provided were not of the Hawker Seahawks doing DLs during Melbourne's initial Flying Off Trials in the UK in early '56.

They were taken in May of 1958, when Melbourne was engaged in exercises with HMS Bulwark near Singapore. Her ROP reports that during the month cross-deck operations were conducted with USS Phillipine Sea and HMS Bulwark. Four Hawker Seahawks were embarked: you can see the 'B' on the tail.

Hawker Seahawks on Melbourne 3

Re your photo in your monthly newsletter I believe it was on Vengeance. On our way to England in 1955 we stopped off in Singapore and Malta to pick up R.N. aircraft to take back to England for them.



Youngest Service Arm Celebrates A Birthday

By A STAFF CORRESPONDENT

NAVAL airmen at H.M.A.S. Albatross, the big Fleet Air Arm base at Nowra, yesterday celebrated the sixth birthday of the Australian Navy's air force.

Shortly after a birthday parade at the end of one of the 6,000ft concrete runways, 817 Squadron of Fireflies flew off to join two other squadrons in the aircraft carrier H.M.A.S. Sydney, lying off Nowra.

The Sydney is off again on manoeuvres. In a few days, she will reach Harvey Bay, Queensland, for a month's intensive training, then steam north again to Manus Island.

H.M.A.S. Albatross is the shore base for the Navy's carrier.

Since 1948 the Albatross has grown in size, number of aircraft, and personnel to become one of the largest air stations in the British Commonwealth.

In yesterday's bright sunshine, squadron personnel who had not yet joined the carrier assembled for a birthday message from the station's commanding officer, Captain R. Rhoades.

Pilots in their flying suits and Mae Wests lined up in front of the station's aircraft, including Vampire trainers, Sea Furies, Fireflies, Dakotas, and even the outmoded Wirraways stood behind them.

Captain Rhoades, who came to Nowra as its first executive officer in August six years ago, told the men: "There were no roads, or footpaths, when we took over this station in 1948. Hangars and huts were derelict, rusty, and depressing.

Six Years' Work

"Since then we have built four new hangars, two magnificent concrete runways, and made comfortable living quarters.

"We have built up this Fleet Air Arm station to a strength of 60 front-line aircraft with all our six squadrons here."

The expansion of H.M.A.S. Albatross, and the introduction of 2,000 Navy men, has transformed nearby Nowra into a prosperous garrison town.

Because of the difficulty of finding accommodation for the wives and families who wanted to join their menfolk, the Navy built 150 prefabricated houses as well as converting 15 buildings into 45 flats and 20 Nissen huts into cottages.

The men on the station call it the "marriage patch." The Post Office has named it Nowra Hill.

Amenities have grown with the station. The "ditching pond," where pilots practise dinghy drill in case they have to come down into the water has been enlarged into a swimming pool.

A modern hospital, costing £20,000, with its own operating

theatre, was completed recently.

In its infancy, the R.A.N. Fleet Air Arm relied to a great extent on British personnel, loaned from the Royal Navy.

To-day all the Fleet Air Arm's pilots are Australian. However, there is interchange of specialist officers, so that Australia will be up to date in latest scientific and flying development.

Albatross maintenance men are proud of their flying records, and claim that seven out of eight aircraft are always serviceable.

Typifying the friendly rivalry between the Navy's flying men and the Royal Australian Air Force, the Commander Air, Commander R. H. Hain, told me: "We have more serviceable front-line aircraft here than in the whole of the R.A.A.F."

line aircraft here than in the whole of the R.A.A.F.

A few days ago Nowra station aircraft made a record number of

350 landings in one day, more than the total aircraft movements at Sydney's busy Mascot terminal.

At present the Fleet Air Arm's operational aircraft are Seafury single-seater fighters, and Firefly two-seat aircraft for anti-submarine and reconnaissance work — both piston engined machines.

Yesterday, however, the scream of jet engines on the station signified the gradual changeover to jets.

Pilots are already carrying out conversion courses on three Vampire trainers. Later this year the first squadron, 808, will go to England to convert to Sea Venoms, the ocean-going versions of the de Havilland Vampire.

Powerful Gannet twin-engined jets will replace the Fireflies by the end of next year. With a four-and-half hour flying range, these jets will be among the longest flying jet aircraft for operational use.

By 1956 the Fleet Air Arm will be flying operationally on kerosene. Piston-engined aircraft will be used only for training.

HMAS Albatross celebrates 72nd Birthday on 28 August 2018.

Article from SMH Saturday 28 August 1954

One photo shows aircraft on the dock at Singapore waiting to be loaded another is a Sea hawk on deck of *Vengeance* and the other was aircraft being ferried out to *Vengeance* in Malta.

Cheers, Ray Murrell

By Ed. Thanks Ray. Vengeance did indeed pick up some RN aircraft in Singers and Malta to help the Poms. She did so during her passage to the UK in '55 to deliver a crew for the soon-to-be-completed HMAS Melbourne, and to herself return (briefly) to RN service. (She was on loan from the RN whilst Melbourne was being built). The aircraft to which you refer were never operated by Vengeance, so the situation was different to the one described in last month's FlyBy. ✨

Message to Handlers – Section Reunion

To All Handlers and AVN who took over Handlers duties.

At the FAAAA Reunion taking place at Nowra commencing Friday 26th October and continuing on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th October there will be a **section Reunion for Ex Handlers and Ex AVN's** who duties were handling (aircraft that is!).

Alex Stevens has kindly arranged with the Bomaderry RSL to expect us there on **Saturday morning 10am** until whenever we grow tired of our tales and whatever.

Hoping to see you there and should any other branch exBirdie wish to attend please do so as usual we welcome everyone exBirdies especially,

Glen Hartrig, the Expostie

PS. Do not forget to let our mates who do not receive this email to get there as well.

By Ed. Don't forget to fill out the General Reunion registration form if you haven't already. See page 9 for more details. ✨