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*CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS
& A HAPPY 2024!*

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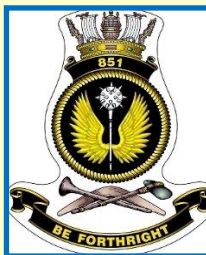
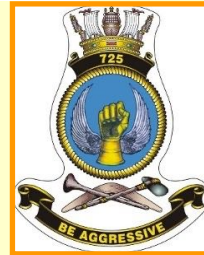
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THE EDITOR'S PIECE

Welcome to our final issue of 'Slipstream' for 2023. Where did that year go? May all our members and readers enjoy the best of company and friendship over the Christmas season, wherever you may be.

The FAA Association Federal Council Meeting held in October went smoothly and was held using Zoom. The Vice President, Phil Carey chaired the meeting and he now also holds the Acting President position. Phil will be proposing changes to the National Constitution to make provision for a president to be appointed at a time other than at the three-yearly FCM and election of office-bearers, if that situation arises. A membership seminar is planned for 2024.

There are many rewarding and satisfying aspects to being the National Secretary and Editor. In this edition you will see a selection of photographs that have just come into the public domain, showing Fleet Air Arm Sea Fury and Firefly aircraft from the 1950's and 1960's. The majority of these are high-quality colour images and one in particular shows a Firefly T.5.

Only a handful of Firefly AS.5's were modified by Fairey Australia. Firefly VX373 was converted from the anti-submarine configuration, most obviously by the addition of a second cockpit. Note that only one 20mm Hispano cannon is mounted in the wing rather than the two on the AS 5, as shown on page 28.

Another feature of my role is supporting the immediate families of recently deceased former FAA members with learning more about their relative's service history and the role that they played in the Fleet Air Arm. With access to a range of archival material both online and in public collections, it is gratifying to help those relatives understand a great deal more about life in the RAN that their forebears experienced.

The granddaughter of the late-Noel Knappstein found a collection of 'Slipstream' magazine amongst his possessions, so she made contact with me advising of his passing and with his funeral details. I was able to share some correspondence I had with Noel fifteen years ago, and I related a story he told me about being shot down in Korea in 1951. When the cutter arrived from HMS *Amethyst* to pluck him from the banks of the Han River, the cutter's cox'n barked at him to remove his muddy boots! Prior to his rescue, Noel had 'sold' his wrecked Sea Fury to an irate Korean peasant for the equivalent of one shilling and nine pence.

I was saddened when Mrs Mary Debus, wife of Commander Don Debus rang to advise of Don's passing. I was very familiar with the circumstances of the mid-air collision involving Don and his pilot, RN sub-lieutenant David Eagles. Their Firefly collided in November 1956 with another Firefly crewed by David's RN colleague Arthur Arundel and midshipman Noel Fogarty RAN. The highlights of Don Debus' naval service appear on pages 32 to 34, and I am indebted to Mary Debus and their son Peter for family details added to my research.

The anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor was 7th December so it was relevant to include a story of the prelude to that 'Day of Infamy'.

A recent incident involving a US Navy P-8 Poseidon coming off the runway at the Marine Corps Air Station -Hawaii and entering Kaneohe Bay also sparked my interest. Our son is on exchange duty with the US Pacific Air Force and he lives on the "Windward" side of Oahu only a few kilometres from the Marine air station. Kaneohe Bay is an idyllic tourist and boating location with a fragile ecosystem, so it was in the US Navy's best interests to extricate the aircraft as quickly as possible.

For those of us of an age to have served in one or more of the three RAN 'flat-top' aircraft carriers, the article on pages 6 and 7 will be of interest. *Melbourne* was fitted with a bow protrusion and bridle catcher during her 1968-69 refit. However A-4's carrying a centre-line 'buddy store' air-to-air refuelling tank necessitated ditching the bridle or risk damaging the tank with the solid steel eyes of the bridle.



By 2022 the USN had proven the EMALS electro-magnetic catapult system in USS *Gerald R Ford*, with multiple efficiency gains over the earlier steam driven systems.

Enjoy your reading and have a safe and joyous Christmas with family and friends. Our next edition will be published in March 2024.

Terry Hetherington—National Secretary / Editor.

WELCOME TO COMMODORE MATT ROYALS COMMANDER FLEET AIR ARM



Commodore Matt Royals joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1990 and graduated from the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1992. He then commenced seaman officer training at HMAS Watson and served his qualified years as Officer of the Watch and Gunnery Officer in HMAS Success.

Commencing Basic Observers Course in 1997, Matt received his wings as dux of number 40 Observers Course in 1998 and commenced Sensor Operators course on the S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopter.

In 2000, Matt commenced a loan posting to the Royal Navy and qualified as a TACCO on the Lynx Mk 3 Maritime Attack Helicopter. He also dual qualified on the Lynx Mk 8 DSP and served in Lynx flights in HM Ships Glasgow, Somerset, Edinburgh and finally York as the Flight Commander. His operational highlights of the loan were flying in Sierra Leone in support of International Military Assistance to Sierra Leone in 2001, and as Flight Observer in HMS Edinburgh for the Iraq Conflict of

Meet the new COMFAA

2003; where he flew combat missions in support of the Al Faw peninsula campaign and force protection for HMS Ocean.

Matt Royals returned to Australia in January 2004 to perform the duties of Staff Officer Policy in the Aviation Headquarters for one year prior to taking up post as the Senior Naval Officer at the School Of Air Warfare in RAAF East Sale. Three years were spent in Sale instructing ab-initio Observer and RAAF ACO students on the King Air 350 before returning to HMAS Albatross as the Commanding Officer of 805 Squadron.

After decommissioning 805 Squadron in June 2008, Matt was employed as Staff Officer Projects Aviation in the HQFAA and managed a small team to provide Navy Aviation's requirements to all aviation and aviation related Minor and Major Projects as well as future requirements.

Matt Royals completed Australian Command and Staff Course in 2010. He joined NPCMA as the Aviation Career Manager in December 2010 before taking on the position of Deputy Director Navy Aviation in Navy Strategic Command in November 2012.

In 2015 Matt completed his MH-60R conversion course prior to taking Command of 725 Squadron in December that year.

Promoted to Commodore in November 23, he undertook the role of Deputy Commander Fleet Air Arm in November 2020, now Commander Fleet Air Arm.

Matt married Sarah whilst on loan to the Royal Navy and they have three sons. He is a passionate supporter of all things Rugby (especially as a loyal lifelong Parramatta Eels supporter) and Cricket, enjoys swinging golf clubs when he can and keeps fit swimming laps.

COMFAA

UPDATE



The full text of Commodore Royals' article can be read in the December 2023 issue of 'FlyBy'. Here below is the foreword to that article.

The commodore's biography has been reproduced with the kind permission of the FAAA Webmaster.

Members of the FAAA. It is my great pleasure to address you all on assuming Command of the Fleet Air Arm as of 20 Nov 23 from CDRE Frost who is now heading to the USA to undertake Naval Attaché duties in the spotlight of AUKUS. The FAA has prospered under his leadership, and following the 75th anniversary celebrations the FAA has continued to pursue the Command Pillars of Transition, Integration and Optimisation, with the latter being the cornerstone of the past 12 months.

In 2023 the FAA introduced the Romeo Group – an intermediate group between HQ and the three MH-60R squadrons designed to support and enable the FAA's primary crewed deliverable – flights at sea in support of Outcome 1. For many of us the creation of a supporting Group that serves the three MH-60R squadrons was a natural direction, however on reflection it has been one of the largest scale changes of our collective FAA in many decades. The group will be commanded by CAPT Todd Glynn, whom many of you will know from his contribution to flying the HARS Huey, it is in its infancy, but will enable excellent outcomes for a MH-60R capability that must expand and increase its embarked presence in the years ahead.

As it has for all of Defence, and the rest of the Fleet, the Defence Strategic Review (DSR) has triggered reflection and provoked necessary questions. As a force we are poised to receive the government's direction on UAS and also what shape the surface fleet will take, the latter ultimately dictating the future operating environment for the capability we field. As it was in your day, it is in ours, and workforce is something we never take our eye off. We need you to continue to highlight the excellent career you enjoyed and the potential that exists for those you meet.

We will not be able to realise the full potential of naval aviation without the fine people willing to serve our nation and contribute to this privileged team. I will do my best to uphold the connections you have had with CDRE Frost, and rest assured I do not envision the instigation of any radical or large scale changes under my command. I require our people to be the best version of themselves both personally and professionally as this will guarantee and uphold the legacy you have created.

UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERY: THE INTRIGUING WORLD OF AIRCRAFT CARRIER 'BOW PROTRUSIONS' AND THEIR VANISHING ACT.

The American supercarrier's silhouette has not changed much over the past 50 years, but one utilitarian staple of the flight deck has gone the way of the dodo bird.

It was a common poster on the wall of boys growing up, and it probably still is today—the imposing head-on

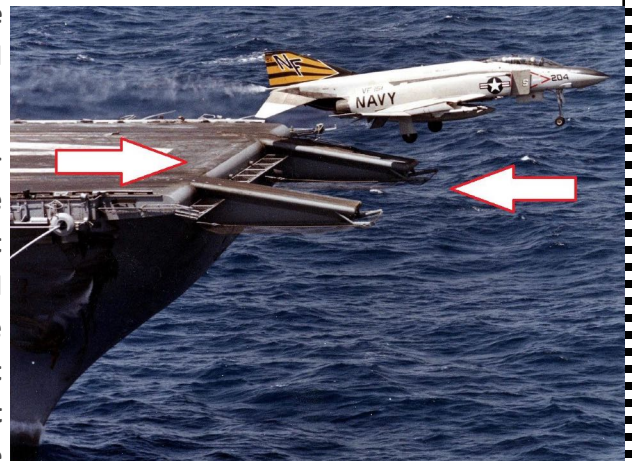


view of a fully loaded American supercarrier bristling with fighters and support aircraft. On the bow of these most complex of fighting ships, two prong-like structures stuck out over the water, ramped downward as if to give the aircraft riding along the ship's catapult tracks a few extra feet of help before leaping into the air. The strange protrusions gave these ship's an ever more menacing appearance, but over the last few decades they have disappeared from American supercarriers. So what were they and where did they go?

Enter the “bridle catch,” also

known as a “bridle arrestment sponson,” a utilitarian structure used to catch the slinging bridles that attached carrier-borne naval aircraft of yesteryear to their host ship's catapults. A bridle was a heavy-duty cable-like lanyard that attached to rearward facing hooks on either side of the aircraft, and would then run down toward the deck in a “V” to be attached to a single-point notch in the catapult's shuttle. A similar single line device was also used on some aircraft like the S-2 Tracker, it was called a pendant.

Once the “green shirts” hooked the aircraft up to the catapult and it fired, the bridle or pendant that links the shuttle to the aircraft would pull it down the catapult track at increasing speed. At the end of the deck the aircraft would depart into the air. The bridle or pendant would then be flung out into the sea, or if the carrier were so equipped, it would whip down onto the sloped bridle catcher so that it could be recovered and used again and again. In essence the



bridle catcher was a feature of economy more than anything else. The reason for angling the bridle carrier extension downward was so the bridle would not bounce up and strike the aircraft as it left the deck.

The bridle and pendant system got Navy carriers into the catapult business, but the system was more complex and time consuming than it had to be. There were always concerns over broken bridles and connection points, and the wellbeing of carrier deck crews that had to strap the big aircraft in before each launch was of an even greater concern. It was not until the early 1960s and the introduction of the E-2 Hawkeye that the bridle was replaced by the integral catapult launch-bar attached to the aircraft's nose gear.

The first launch by an E-2 using the system occurred on the 19th of December 1962. Tests were largely successful and substantial gains in safety and efficiency were realized by the new system. Going forward every new US Navy aircraft designed for carrier operations would be equipped with a similar nose gear mounted launch bar.

Over time, as older aircraft that used bridles and pendants were retired, bridle catchers would begin to disappear from America's aircraft carriers. The last carrier built with bridle catchers was the third *Nimitz* class nuclear supercarrier, the USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70), which began construction in 1975 and was officially commissioned into the fleet in 1982.



Towards the end of the millennium, American supercarriers that had bridle catchers began having them removed during major maintenance and overhaul periods. The last active US carrier to have them was the USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) which pulled into Naval Station Norfolk for inactivation with her bridle catchers still intact on November 4th, 2012.

In July 2022, the last NATO fixed-wing carrier aircraft to use a bridle, the French Super Étendards Modernise (SEM), was retired once and for all. The carrier these aircraft operated from, the *Charles De Gaulle* (R91), was never built with bridle catchers. For many years SEMs slung bridles into the sea with reckless abandon.

Today, really the only aircraft that may see the bridle once again are Brazil's handful of upgraded AF-1 Skyhawks. Their antique carrier, the surplus French *Clemenceau* class carrier *Foch*, now named *São Paulo*, is supposedly finally getting the upgrades it needs to be operational again. If this indeed comes to pass, its bridle catcher will see use once again—as the last of its kind and a monument to naval aviation's heritage.

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

ACT DIVISION



Having only just taken over as President of the ACT Division, I don't have a great deal to report personally. However, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our outgoing President, John Schonberger, for his outstanding commitment over many years in keeping our Division going. The same can also be said for our Secretary/Treasurer George Sydney, whose counsel I have already sought on a number of occasions.

The challenge for us this year, I know that other Divisions have a similar challenge, is how to get the members engaged in supporting our organised functions. There is no criticism here I hasten to add as I recognise there are a number of factors at play, i.e. busy working lives for our members actively engaged in continued support of our Nation in various Defence roles, family commitments, and last but not least getting past the 'hump' of our Nation's COVID lockdowns.

Our AGM attendees agreed on a number of potential activities that may help to address, and I know our Secretary / Treasurer is looking to implement these in the new year.

I'll leave it here as I don't want to 'waffle' for the sake of filling a page, I look forward to having a more concrete submission for the next edition.

Yours Aye,

Bruce Tunnah OAM

Bruce joined through HMAS Cerberus as a general entry ATA in March 1974 and, after completing all the necessary prerequisites, commenced SQN time with VC851 and VS816 SQN's on S-2E Grumman Trackers circa 1975. Following the H Hangar Fire just prior to Christmas 1976, Bruce went to San Diego as part of VS816 SQN on HMAS Melbourne (CVS 21) in early 1977 to bring back the replacement S-2G Tracker Aircraft.

On return to Australia, Bruce remained on Melbourne to then become part of the 816 SQN crew participating in HMAS Melbourne's deployment to the UK for the Queen's 1977 Silver Jubilee celebrations (The Spithead Review).

Bruce's career highlights include:

- ◆ Assistant Workshop Manager in the Mechanical Workshop at ASU (promoted to Petty Officer).
- ◆ Posted to SAMR circa 1986 (the forerunner of NASPO) as part of the Navy team introducing the S70B-2 into service.
- ◆ Aviation Maintenance SME, supporting Maritime HQ, for Navy's aircraft deployed to the Middle East in support of Gulf War I (Promoted to Chief Petty Officer).
- ◆ Posted to RAAF Wagga in Jan 1993 as the Navy Admin CPO at the RAAF School of Technical Training – RAAF Base WAGGA – following the closure of HMAS Nirimba in Quakers Hill.
- ◆ Posted to HS817 SQN (Sea King) mid 1995 and qualified as a Flight Senior Maintenance Sailor, taking Shark 07 to Guam in HMAS Tobruk.
- ◆ Promoted WOATA in Dec 1996, posted to Category Sponsor Duties in Canberra Jan 1997 (receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia – OAM for his role there) which included acting as the convenor of the National Working Group (CASA, Defence, Civil Industry, State Training Bodies) harmonising aviation maintenance competency standards for Australia
- ◆ Posted as OIC Cell 2 in Directorate of Sailor's Career Management, career managing the Supply, Aviation, and Submariner categories, separating from full-time service in 2003.

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

ACT DIVISION



Bruce Tunnah OAM (cont)

- ◆ Spent two and a half years as the National Project Officer for the Returned and Services League of Australia, representing the League on a number of significant Department of Veterans' Affairs Health studies, including: the F111 De-Seal/ Re-seal program, Health Study of Australian Servicemen involved in the British Atomic Tests, Health Study into the Children of Vietnam Veterans.
- ◆ Moving into a consultant role, Bruce participated the BOM in the establishment of the Australian Tsunami Warning System and, separately, establishment of Headquarters Joint Operational Command (HQJOC) near Canberra.
- ◆ Bruce went on to spend 10 years as a Sustainment Manager in the APS looking after Military Grade GPS and Deployable Satellite Communications.
- ◆ Bruce is currently employed as an Integrated Logistic Support Manager with Jacobs Australia.

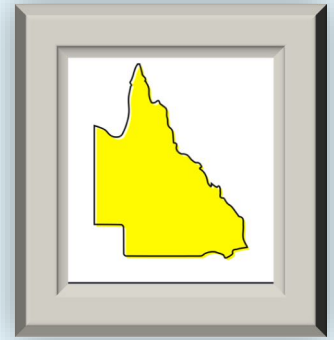
ACT DIVISION MEMBER DOUG BAIN IS RENOWNED FOR HIS SCALE-MODEL BUILDING

Doug's most recent model is of the Arafura Class OPV HMAS *Illawarra*.

He has yet to finish it as he is still to find out the details of what gun will be fitted and what RHIBs will be used.



QUEENSLAND DIVISION REPORT WITH JOHN STEWART



In mid-August we held a President's luncheon at the Function Bar restaurant out at Redlands Bay. Those who attended the day enjoyed it. A surprisingly good venue with good meals. Although my GPS led me to Shop 52 which was a McDonalds?? instead of No 52. I'll have to check it's antiquity.



Adrian, Graham, Lindsay



Who pays?????



Lindsay, Ray & Stephen



Anzac Day March with Darcy Doyle's Banner

President's luncheon held in Toowoomba mid-Oct was held in the Picnic Point restaurant. Impressive view from the parapet of the ridge, looking East to the valleys and on to Brisbane. A popular place with all the surrounding parklands and amenities with the locals. At present, very dry in the area. With bush fires further out west with the blue haze, probably caused some of the 8 cancellations. However, some good stories of life in the service and with the Army, emanated from the likes of Lloyd Bowles, Spike Campey, Stephen Huxtable.

With Ray Murrell and Scott Naughton

The View



Our Remembrance Day get together, Saturday 11th Nov at the Memorial Flagstone and plaque to the Fleet Air Arm. This was held in front of Queensland Air Museum, Caloundra with a short informal service. Museum chaplain John Gould gave the service followed by the Pres. Our gathering was also attended by a few of the museum visitors. Following on, the barbeque area was provided by the museum within the grounds to have a get together and a natter. Good area, for which we are grateful. Masters of discussion were probably Sean O'Toole joined by Graham Quick. Those that were staying, met at night for dinner, accommodated by the RSL Caloundra where Noel Dennett was Master of Ceremonies.

Group gathering



Pres addressing the group



A well fed group on sausages, onions & tomatoes. How's that for a seniors diet ?

***Rear: Scott Naughton, Stephen Huxtable, Kay O'Toole, Sean, Paul Norris and Allan Arnell.
Front: Dee Lister, Ray Murrell, Judy Arnell, Maureen Norris, Flo Henderson & Ian and John Stewart***

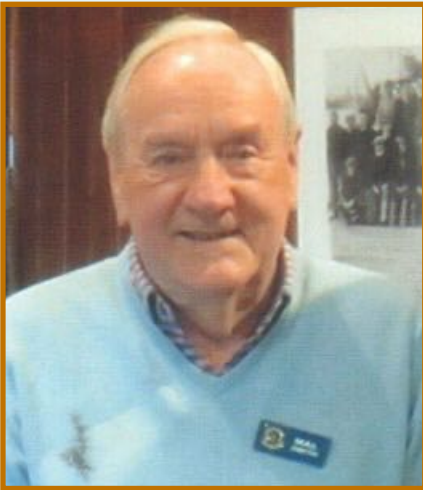


A reminder to members who haven't prepaid their memberships they are due end of Dec. The National Body wish to declare their books up to date in March '24, and it will make a lot less work for myself and other sec's for earlier payments. Those on a basis of auto debit can you please adjust ?
A Division newsletter will be forwarded with payment details.

And from the committee of Queensland, we wish all members of the Fleet Air Arm and our state associations the best and good health for Xmas and the year to follow.

Regards Sec/Treas. John Stewart

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS



News from Victorian Division with Mal Smith

GREETINGS TO ALL MEMBERS FROM THE VICTORIA DIVISION

We have just had our final meeting for the year followed by our Christmas Lunch. This was held at our usual venue, the Mission to Seafarers in Docklands. This is one of the major events on our calendar and was well attended. It was great to see several of our older members along with their families making the effort to attend, in particular Ron Christie, Rob and Marion Earle. The highlight of the day is our legendary raffle with members donating the prizes. We only hold these twice a year and they help to offset some of the costs. The committee allocates a substantial sum (along with a generous contribution from one of our members) to ensure that all those who attended were well fed and watered.

Sad news recently with the passing of Noel Knappstein,



who will be remembered by the older members. Noel was a Korean Veteran and Sea Fury pilot. I attended his funeral and his family ensured he was sent off in style. Noel had a fascinating career and was one of three pilots whose aircraft were shot down over North Korea. I won't repeat the story here but if you go to the FAAAA website his obituary makes for interesting reading. After the navy Noel had a long career with TAA. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

I have only recently been informed that another of our early pilots, Frank O'Grady (Sea Furies and Venoms) has been in sick bay for several months. This is the result of a fall which badly damaged his knee. His rehabilitation is well on the way, I called into see him recently and he was his usual cheerful self although I suspect any thoughts of a football comeback are on hold.

I have recently received a carton from George Self with some treasured memorabilia of his twelve years in the service from 1948-1960. I am in the process of sorting this out and plan to bring quite a lot to show on Anzac Day. At some stage later in the year most of this collection will be given to the FAA Museum for their archives.

For those interested, I am commencing to organise our AGM which will be held on Sunday 4th February at our usual meeting venue the Mission to Seafarers in Docklands. We do often have visitors from other Divisions attend and any member is more than welcome to join us.

Yours Aye

Mal Smith

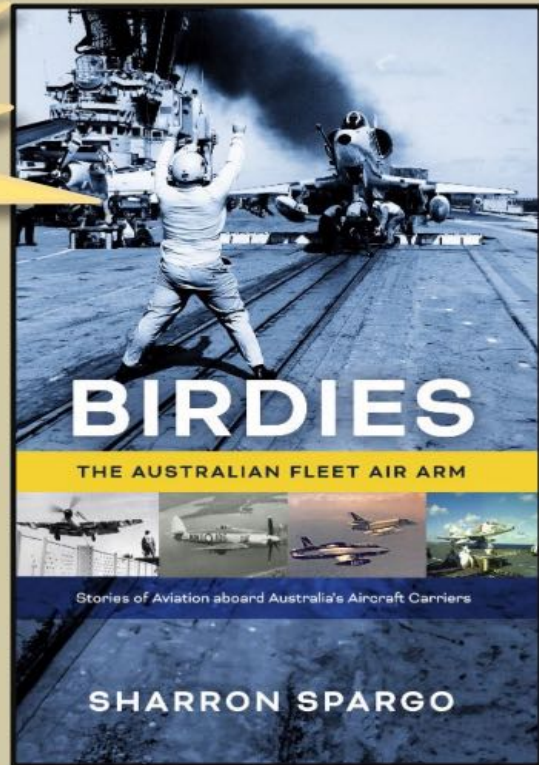
NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS

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Stop Press New Book Release

Featured Book Release: "Birdies: The Australian Fleet Air Arm"
Stories of Aviation aboard Australia's Aircraft Carriers
Author: Sharron Spargo
140mms X 216mms
298 pages
Australian History
RRP \$35.00 plus Post & Packing

[Order Your Copy Here](#)



"Quiet achievers in the most dangerous workplace in the world...

They are the 'Birdies' – the proud members of a unique fighting force unknown to the majority of Australians whose land and lives they have long protected.

Officially known as the Australian Fleet Air Arm, they have operated as an aviation component of the Royal Australian Navy since 1947.

Their "airfields" are the decks of purpose-built aircraft carriers, landing strips pitching and rolling in deep blue water, far from land.

From the early years of mostly seaborne activity the Birdies have evolved through search and rescue, anti-submarine warfare, and peacekeeping and humanitarian missions to global policing, anti-terrorism and anti-piracy.

Today's Birdies, as intrepid as ever, now operate squadrons of the most sophisticated helicopters in the world, often within multinational forces.

Researcher and author Sharron Spargo has close ties both to the veterans from those formative years and to those who are serving today. She has gathered their intensely personal accounts of front line action in the Korean and Vietnam wars, the Indonesian confrontation, the Cold War and the Gulf War; stories of a unique service that for too long has gone unheard and unacknowledged.

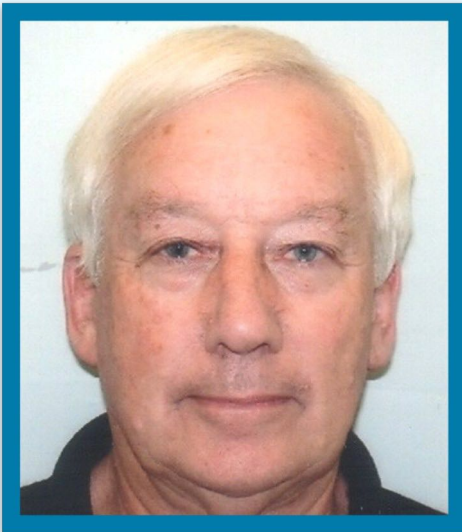
This fascinating book places these quiet achievers, the Birdies, in their rightful place in Australia's naval and aviation history." →

Sharron Spargo attained an honours degree from Murdoch University as a part-time mature aged student after spending three years recording Des Sullivan's memories of flying Lancaster bombers over Europe during World War II.

Her father was a member of the Australian Fleet Air Arm and served in the Korean War as an aircraft armourer aboard aircraft carrier HMAS *Sydney*. He later became a founding member of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia.

She and her husband also enjoy touring Australia on their Harley-Davidson, or simply finding an outback pub for a good lunch. She shares her life with "wonderful friends and family, usually over a bottle of wine and a great meal". →

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS



News from SA Division with Roger Harrison

Firstly, before I get into full swing, this Division is sending out a big cheer to all other State and Territory Divisions in this sunburnt country. Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2024 to all those Members superficially lucid.

September was a surprisingly busy month for this Division as we held our General Meeting at the Keswick Barracks on the 20th and had our usual turnout of loyal members to cut and thrust our way through a busy Agenda. Henry Young made an appearance for lunch and the GM despite the fact that he turns 100 years on the 26th of September. How does he do it I hear you shout! The meeting all signed a birthday card for Henry and presented it to him over lunch. He gave a short speech to thank everyone and gave us some idea of his birthday plans with family and friends after which he will fly to Spain and compete in a Seniors Tennis Tournament.

October saw the Zoom Federal Council Meeting go ahead as per usual and I believe successfully. This Division lent on Paul Shiels to be our nominated Delegate, and as I

understand it, managed the politics brilliantly.

November saw a group of us from Adelaide, travel to Mt Gambier for the Remembrance Day Service on the 11th as well as a Memorial Dedication for Tony Casadio KIA in Vietnam. From all reports Tony and family have a strong support base at the Mount. This Division will be supporting the local RSL and Peter Coulson's connection with Tony's old school (Marist Brothers now Tenison Woods College) for a service and presentation of Tony's replica medals to the school on the Friday lunch assembly in the Barrie Holmes Stadium.



NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS



Casadio Park is currently undergoing renovations, and it is suggested we do an informal walk around as the committee have planned a formal rededication later or in the year. Friday evening saw us join the RSL before the Ode is recited at 1800 for a catch up over dinner and a few pints.

Looking forward to catching up with the Commanders Coulson (Peter and Sandy) at the Mount as it seems ages since we all got together. Well, we did catch up with Peter Coulson but unfortunately Sandy was unwell and put in her apologies. After 5 hours there and 5 hours back to Adelaide, we all need a rest.

November is the last General Meeting for this Division and then we step into December and all the silliness that entails. The November Meeting was held outside under the spreading shade trees next to the Café. Very pleasant indeed.

Sunday the 17th of December is the Association Christmas Lunch and is planned to be held at the Windsor Hotel, Windsor Gardens. 1230 for 1300 lunch. A booking for 30 people will be made and tables laid up for that number attending. Generally, the hotel has a Christmas touch about it so possibly have to wear a silly hat to fit in. For myself I am mid-seventies and already dressing like an East German, so I will fit in.

For those Members who procrastinate about the membership fee, don't fret as you are about to be excluded from most things you generally take for free. In fact, I don't think you will even see or hear my barbed comments as we contemplate removing you off the National Membership Register. We in the SA Division often carry the procrastinator for several months before a payment for renewal is received.

The January General Meeting will be held at the Wittunga Botanic Gardens, Blackwood on Sunday the 21st of January. A notice will be sent to members with details and also hot weather restrictions. Yep! Summer is approaching.

Oh! As Wittunga is a Botanic Garden, no dogs or Stokers allowed entry.

A quick shout out to Phil Blakemore (Qld) who was under the weather as well as our Gerry Dowling who sadly took himself off the Mt Gambier trip for medical reasons. He was on the same Pilots' Course as Tony Casadio and wanted desperately to attend Tony's dedication. Hello to Tiny Warren and Leon Brown, both NSW locals. Some of us have survived the year in good shape while others have ACD - Advanced Cognitive Disfunction. Some of us are upright but facing the wrong direction.

I will ship this off to Terry for editing and to add the politically correct sense we all strive for. Note, not one slag-off about Queensland or Queenslanders. Not one.

So once again, whenever you get this copy which will possibly be in the New Year as we seem a bit out of kilter these last few months, embrace the thought that we as a Nation will pull together to get through this tough time ahead just like Navy life used to be. Ask a mate RUOK?



**Roger Harrison
Hon. Whipping Boy. SA.**



**FROM FLYING SPITFIRES TO
LANDING THE TITLE AS THE
WORLD'S OLDEST TENNIS
PLAYER IN MALLORCA**

**"Make the most of your retirement, you've worked for it and earned it, don't vegetate, it's time to enjoy life."
At the age of 100, Henry is the oldest competing tennis player in the world and he played in the 2023 ITF Masters World Individual Championships in Spain during September.**

NEWS, VIEWS AND REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE CORNER AND ACROSS THE GLOBE



THE NUCLEAR MINDSET:

AUSTRALIA'S MOST SUBSTANTIAL DEFENCE CHALLENGE

Australia's acquisition and operation of nuclear attack submarines – termed SSNs – will be a vast, complex, costly and protracted project spanning generations. Many of their crew and support personnel aren't born yet.

Every single person associated with the nuclear submarine project will be imbued from day one with a new (for Australia) concept termed the "nuclear mindset."

"That is developing a set of principles we are asking everyone to adopt," says Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead, director-general of the Australian Submarine Agency (ASA).

"This is going to be something we will need to do every hour of every day."



The mindset recognises that nuclear energy is complex and unforgiving. There must be total commitment to excellence in all associated activities including security, safeguards and accountability. Drawing on the well-established nuclear culture in the US and UK, 10 overarching principles have been developed for the Australian context.

These are a set of shared qualities and attitudes shaping how all personnel need to think, act and learn, reflecting dedication to excellence and an unwavering commitment to safety, security and safeguards of the nuclear propulsion technology, the ASA says.

NEWS, VIEWS AND REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE CORNER AND ACROSS THE GLOBE



That was followed by an announcement of the “optimal pathway” on March 14 this year. In the early 2030s, Australia will acquire three and maybe five US Virginia-class nuclear attack submarines.

These will come from the US Navy as one owner used boats, each desirably with around 20 years of remaining life.

Considering a Virginia has a nominal life-of-type of 33 years, it follows that Australia’s nukes are in the water now, though maybe not yet commissioned. Which subs are we looking at? The ASA isn’t saying. Why the 2030s for the first sub when many analysts say the need is sooner? The timetable was developed in recognition that much needs to be done at the Australian end.

“We have worked with the US and UK on what is the optimal period we would need to train up a workforce, develop an industrial base and a regulatory system that could support a boat being transferred to Australia,” Mead says. “We have determined that would be in the early 2030s.”

Well before the first Virginia arrives, design work will proceed on the SSN AUKUS, which is based on the UK’s next-generation SSN design but incorporating technology from the US, UK and Australia.



Construction of boat one for the Royal Navy will begin at Barrow, UK, around 2027. Construction of the first SSN AUKUS for Australia starts by the end of the decade at Osborne, South Australia.

In the meantime, there are numerous steps to build Australian capabilities and familiarity with nuclear subs. The ASA was stood up on July 1.

There’s a graduated program of port visits by US and British boats. That started with the visit of the USS North Carolina to HMAS Stirling, Western Australia, in August.

From 2027, there will be rotations of US and UK

boats through Stirling. At its peak, four US and one UK boat will be based in WA and conducting extended patrols.

Preparing Stirling requires substantial infrastructure work – \$1.5 billion over the next four years. This is well underway.

The government also plans to create an east coast nuclear submarine base. No location has been decided although that’s expected to be Port Kembla.

The big challenge will be standing up the nuclear workforce, including crews (some with nuclear skills), engineers and skilled tradespeople for construction, administrators, regulators and scientists plus those across numerous companies that will perform maintenance and sustainment.

This is the longstanding skills challenge Defence and defence industry is all too familiar with.

“This workforce is multi-layered and multi-dimensional,” says Mead.

“It’s not just a Navy workforce – it’s an industry workforce, it is a technical workforce. It is a workforce that has high-end post-graduate qualifications. It is also a workforce that has TAFE qualifications – these are our fabricators, welders, fitters.”

There are some positive steps. Three RAN officers recently graduated from the six-month course at the US Navy Nuclear Power School. They were the first Australians to attend this very demanding training course in its 70-year history.

Another eight will start soon, with larger numbers attending that and other training courses in the US next year.

There is the growing number of students attending Australian institutions. In the budget, the government announced \$128.5 million to support an extra 4,000 Commonwealth-supported places for students studying engineering, mathematics, chemistry and physics.

ASA itself now numbers about 420 people, with plans to reach 1,050 by 2026. Recent advertising produced 4,000 responses.

“It’s highly encouraging, there is real momentum and great enthusiasm in the Australian youth, but also in the broader workforce to be able to serve their country to be able to work with a sense of purpose, to do something special,” Mead says.

By **Max Blenkin**

November 6, 2023

THE MANDARIN

NEWS, VIEWS AND REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE CORNER AND ACROSS THE GLOBE



PRESENT IS THE PAST: AUSTRALIA'S GREAT ROTARY AVIATION RESET

It's a pity nobody from defence procurement was able to run a tape measure over the door frame of the MRH-90 Taipan helicopter before the troubled aircraft was purchased in 2005.

A simple check may well have exposed a serious problem before the \$3.7 billion contract went ahead. As a subsequent damning ANAO (Australian National Audit Office) report into the helicopter's many failings found, the cabin door was not wide enough to allow the chopper's self-defence gun to fire while troops exited the aircraft.

In layman's terms, the new Army helicopter was unable to put out suppressing fire during a 'hot' or contested landing or take-off rendering it a sitting duck, not fit for purpose – and unsuited for special operations support, a key prerequisite.

Narrow doorways were just one of a swag of unresolved problems surrounding the European-designed helicopter. Following their acquisition, the choppers proved nothing but trouble and a full-time offender on the government's notorious 'Projects of Concern' watchlist.

Matters came to a head in September in the middle of a defence exercise when a tragic crash off the east coast left four aircrew dead, the cause of which is still being investigated. However, it followed a slew of other critical problems, including engine failure, oil cooler fan failures, poor availability of spares and issues with the fast roping and rappelling device (FRRD) on the army variant.

That deadly incident spurred the Albanese Government to announce the entire Taipan fleet would be retired a year earlier than planned. In fairness, it should be noted the previous coalition government was already moving to phase out the troublesome Taipan.

US-made Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk military helicopters will now replace the Taipan, a deal worth around \$2.8 billion. Three of the 40 choppers on order have arrived and defence minister Richard Marles says he is seeking options to fast-track delivery and crew training to mitigate any capability gap.

"The first of the 40 Black Hawks that will replace the (Taipan) MRH-90 have arrived and are already

flying in Australia. We are focused on seeing their introduction to service as quickly as possible," he said.

What is the upside of 'back to Black Hawk?' For starters, the uniform branch didn't want the Taipan in the first place, preferring the tried and trusted



American chopper which had served the ADF well, including in Cambodia in 1993 hauling UN ballot boxes, and as a reliable troop lifter deployed for East Timor peacekeeping operations six years later. Memo to government – it pays to listen to your customers.

"Certainly, the feedback I have heard from the diggers is that they were never comfortable with the Taipan or the other EU rotary solutions and overwhelmingly the troops wanted a US platform – the Black Hawk and the Apache (attack helicopter)," says Guy Boekenstein, a senior associate with the Cognoscenti Group who has worked in the defence and national security sector for more than two decades including diplomatic postings to Japan and Indonesia.

In 2021, Canberra announced plans to replace the ADF's 22 European Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopters with 29 US-made Boeing AH-64E Apache attack helicopters.

By opting for a familiar brand, the Black Hawk contract adds another plank to our key US alliance. It was the right call to scrap the Taipan rather than continuing to persevere with time-consuming problem solving that would have involved design changes outside the scope of the contract and at substantial additional cost to the taxpayer.

Teething issues are inevitable in any new advanced aircraft system – their sheer complexity guarantees that.

NEWS, VIEWS AND REVIEWS FROM AROUND THE CORNER AND ACROSS THE GLOBE



PRESENT IS THE PAST: AUSTRALIA'S GREAT ROTARY AVIATION RESET

I recall in the early 70s and the savaging by so-called experts of RAAF's new 'swing wing' wonder, the cutting-edge General Dynamics F-111 strike aircraft following a spate of early mishaps. But ask any former pilot or navigator and they will get misty-eyed with nostalgia for the supersonic bomber, at 37 years, the longest-serving strike aircraft in RAAF's history. However, the Taipan contract deserves further scrutiny.



The decision to buy 46 MRH-90 Taipans was made in 2006 by former Liberal prime minister John Howard and his defence minister Brendan Nelson who hailed the deal with Eurocopter subsidiary Australian Aerospace as providing the ADF with, "the most advanced helicopter for its size in the world." In 2001, Eurocopter had won another lucrative contract to supply the Army with its Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH), another chopper that would set no world record for reliability. A sweetener of economic spin-offs likely helped sway the government ahead of Eurocopter's sole competitor – drum roll please – the US-made Black Hawk.

Eurocopter's Brisbane headquarters would become a cornerstone in the company's global supply chain, foster 400 new jobs and inject \$1.1 billion into the economy. (Some of those workers will now be re-deployed to 1st Aviation at Townsville). But alas, it

was all downhill after that. Australia is not alone, with other disgruntled European customers Norway and Sweden now axing their MRH-90 equivalent the NH-90 over performance and reliability issues. On offer from Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, is an older but tried and proven design, a revamped chopper with upgraded engines, rotors, gearbox and cockpit, a 10-tonne multirole utility helicopter that seats 12 fully equipped troops. The Black Hawk is in service with the US military its largest operator and 34 other countries.

Its makers claim the type (UH-60M) can be easily configured for a variety of specialised roles including military search and rescue, combat assault, medevac and firefighting with the addition of a specialised 'bambi bucket' which attaches to the helicopter's cargo hook.

Given the onset of a prolonged La Nina weather pattern and high bushfire risk, and an increasing trend to call on the ADF for help in natural disasters, that last feature might carry considerable appeal for the Country Fire Authority and Rural Fire Service in the bushfire prone states of Victoria and NSW.

By **Mark Dodd**
November 28, 2023
THE MANDARIN





AMERICA'S "DAY OF INFAMY" 7TH DECEMBER 1941

Why Did Japan Attack Pearl Harbor?

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, was a deadly day in the history of the United States, with thousands of military personnel and civilians losing their lives. The assault thrust the country into the Second World War, bringing substantial power to the Allies in both Europe and the Pacific Theatre. While many are aware of the attack and its consequences, the majority of non-historians have asked a complicated and multi-faceted question: why did Japan attack Pearl Harbor?

Japan wanted to become a global superpower.

When examining why exactly Japan launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, one must look back to the late 19th century and the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. As this was occurring, those under Emperor Meiji began working toward turning Japan into one of the world's foremost superpowers.

A major part of this was expanding and modernizing the country's economy and access to natural resources. Japan was a rather small nation at this time, and it didn't have access to enough resources to give it the economic and population boom it so dearly wanted. As such, plans were made to invade nations in the Indo-Pacific and other nearby regions, signalling the start of what has been called an aggressive period of expansionism.

Growing Japan's economic prospects during the early 20th century.

One of the ways Japan expanded its territory at the turn of the century was through conflict. The country's military entered into war with both China (1894-95) and Russia (1904-05) to secure food stores and other resources along the Korean Peninsula and northeastern China, better known as Manchuria.

These conquests achieved what Japan hoped it would, with the nation being recognized as a "great" power in the writing of the Treaty of Versailles following the conclusion of World War I— and it only continued from there. Japan worked to make peaceful ties with other countries in the inter-war period, securing deals for several raw materials. The most important of these came via the United States and Manchuria, with them supplying everything from petroleum and steel to grains and coal.

Japan changed direction during the Great Depression

With the Great Depression hitting the world in the 1930s, along with the rise of authoritarian regimes in Europe and growing Chinese nationalism, Japan was forced to make a shift in its policies. The result: even more aggressive expansion.

This led the country's military to invade Manchuria in September 1931, preluded by the staged Mukden Incident. Within half a year, Japan had secured control of the region and set up a puppet state, known as Manchukuo. While Western powers decried Japan's invasion, little else was done, as the majority of countries didn't want to go to war.

For the United States, in particular, the Stimson Doctrine guided decision-making during this time. While it allowed the country to speak out against the invasion, it was ineffective in that it didn't prompt the US to impose material sanctions upon Japan. At the time, many didn't see much wrong with this, given the isolationist stance held by the majority of Americans, and government officials were worried about intervening, given the ongoing strife between Chinese nationalists and Communists



AMERICA'S "DAY OF INFAMY" 7TH DECEMBER 1941

Things continued to get worse in Manchuria.

In 1933, with no sign that Japan would be leaving Manchuria anytime soon, the League of Nations condemned the invasion, to which Japan responded by withdrawing from the international organization. Following this, Japan became more aggressive in expanding its territory and power, withdrawing from naval agreements that limited the size of its navy, and doubling the size of its armed forces within the span of five years.

By October 1937, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt had become concerned enough about what was happening in Asia, as well as the ongoing **Spanish Civil War**, that he made a public statement, in which he said the "very foundations of civilization" were being "seriously threatened." He was also worried that Japan would continue its expansionist movements into both the Philippines and Hong Kong, a move that would directly threaten the United States.

Tensions only began to grow in 1937-38, following the **Nanjing Massacre**, the **bombing of the USS *Panay* (PR-5)** and the **Allison Incident**. This led the US to increase trade to China, followed by economic sanctions upon Japan, which included the banning of the export of iron ore, aircraft materials and steel.

While all this was to make Japan wary of further action, it only angered the country's government. In September 1940, it signed the **Tripartite Pact** with Germany and Italy, and a **Neutrality Pact** was signed with the Soviet Union the following year. While the latter was an ally of the US, the move meant Japan would be focusing its attention on southeast China, where American interests lay.

On top of all this, Japan signed a third pact, this time with Vichy France, which allowed its

military to move into Indochina and continue the nation's advance into southern Asia.

The United States froze all of Japan's assets.

When Japan invaded and occupied Indochina in 1941, the United States, teaming up with the Dutch and British, responded by freezing all Japanese assets. This was a major blow, economically, with the sanctions resulting in a 94 percent drop in oil. This reportedly caused Japan to begin planning an attack on the trio's colonial territories.

However, there was a major problem: any attack on these Pacific territories would cause an armed response from the US, which the Japanese knew they couldn't effectively fight. This prompted the development of the "**Southern Operation**," which would see attacks on the US at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines and on the British at Singapore.

Japan plans its attack on Pearl Harbor

While a number of officials were involved in the planning of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the person who did the most work was Adm. **Isoroku Yamamoto**, who spent months devising a way to decimate the US Pacific Fleet and strike a blow to the country's morale.

The decision was made to obliterate America's naval capacity in the Pacific in one fell swoop. By doing so, the belief was that the Japanese could take the Philippines and British Malaya by the time the US had rebuilt and build enough of a defensive barrier to prevent them from launching an effective counterattack, even months down the road.

Throughout the planning stage, Japan engaged in negotiation talks with the US, to no avail. When the latter issued a **10-point statement** about its position, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) decided it was time to strike.

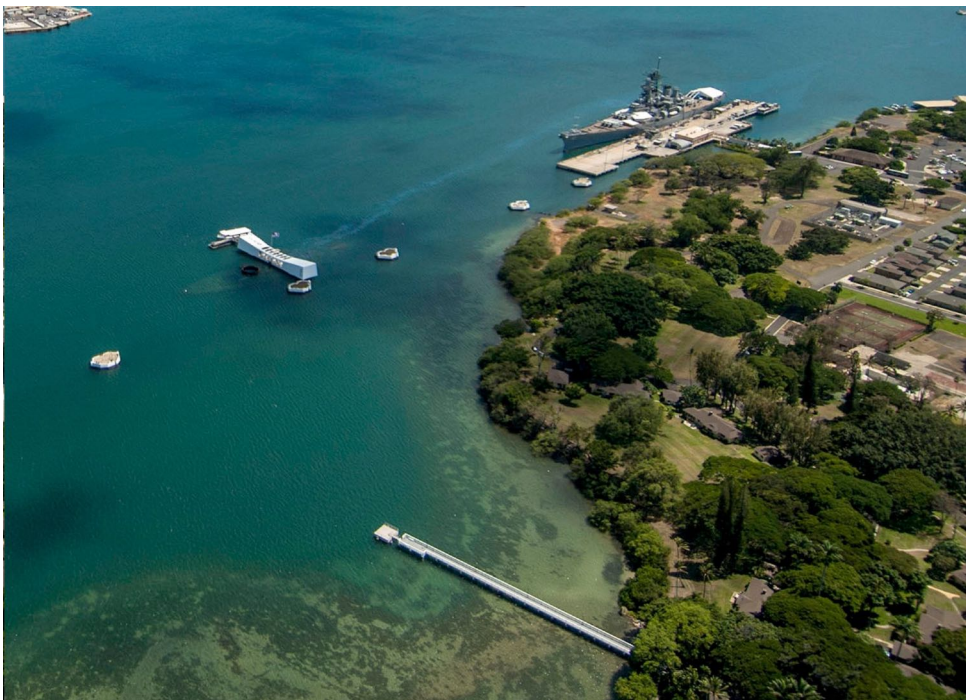


AMERICA'S "DAY OF INFAMY" 7TH DECEMBER 1941

Pearl Harbor wasn't the only place Japan attacked.

On December 7, 1941, Japan did as it had planned and launched a large attack on Pearl Harbor. The naval base wasn't believed to have been a viable target, so the United States hadn't provided it with near enough defensive measures, giving the Japanese a bit of an edge, along with the surprise nature of the strike.

What many don't realize, however, is that Pearl Harbor wasn't the only place targeted by the Japanese that day. While they may have been recorded as having occurred on December 8, given the time zone difference, strikes were launched on Guam, Malaya, Hong Kong, Singapore, Wake Island and the Philippines – all British and American territories.



The 'Arizona' Memorial and USS 'Missouri'

In the Philippines, the Japanese took out almost an entire fleet of Curtiss P-40 War-

hawks and Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses at Clark Field, prompting an immediate response from the US. Heavy combat ensued, with the Japanese ultimately securing a victory in 1942. By then, the military had also secured control of Hong Kong, the Dutch East Indies, Guam, British Malaya and Singapore.

The majority of these territories remained under Japanese control until the final year of the Second World War.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor wasn't all that damaging.

While, at first, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor looked successful, the fact of the matter was that a good portion of the US Pacific Fleet wasn't stationed at Ford Island. While eight battleships and hundreds of aircraft were bombed by bombs, the bulk of America's naval power was unscathed, including tankers, repair facilities and ammunition sites.

Most importantly, the US Navy's fleet of aircraft carriers wasn't moored at Pearl Harbor. This came back to bite the Japanese in June 1942 when three carriers – the USS *Yorktown* (CV-5), *Enterprise* (CV-6) and *Hornet* (CV-8) – helped secure a crucial win at the Battle of Midway, which many view as the pivotal turning point of the war in the Pacific Theatre.

Clare Fitzgerald is a Writer and Editor with eight years of experience in the online content sphere. Graduating with a BA from King's University College at Western University, her portfolio includes coverage of digital media, current affairs and history.

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NAVY RAISES CRASHED P-8A POSEIDON AIRCRAFT FROM OAHU'S KANEOHE BAY

A team of U.S. Navy salvage experts, Marine Corps air support teams and contractors over the weekend of 2-3 December successfully recovered a P-8A Poseidon that had been floating in a Hawaiian bay since it overshot a runway two weeks prior. "After meticulous planning and assembling specialized equipment from off island, a multidisciplinary team of military and civilian experts carefully raised the P-8A Poseidon from Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, Dec. 2," U.S. 3rd Fleet officials said in a statement issued Sunday 3rd December.

On-scene commander Rear Adm. Kevin Lenox told reporters on Monday 4th December the removal was smooth and uneventful. "The aircraft has been removed from the bay and the salvage operation is complete. So the team worked smoothly through the weekend under ideal conditions, and everything happened according to the plan," he said.

The Navy used divers to place a series of inflatable rollers under the P-8A and then raised the aircraft and slowly moved the aircraft to shore on 2nd December

On 3rd December, the Navy jacked up the aircraft, changed the tires and the plane will be washed today. "At that point the aviation maintenance team and investigation team will take control of it and will continue their investigation," Lenox said.

The salvage operation is costing about \$1.5 million, which covers "the cost of the Navy Supervisor of Salvage and Diving (SUPSALV) assets and contracted personnel from SMIT Salvage and Center Lift," Third Fleet said in a statement. "We will have more accurate figures after the salvage operation is complete but are focused on safely recovering the aircraft, protecting the environment, and doing it in a way that retains the aircraft's combat capability.

The Marine Corps airfield sits along the northeastern eastern edge of Kaneohe Bay and on the western side of the Mokapu Peninsula. Anyone driving north from Pearl Harbor and over the mountains along the H3 cross-island highway is treated to spectacular views of the air station and the peninsula's Ulupa'u Crater on Oahu's windward coast. Three Navy pilots along with a crew of two officers and four enlisted personnel with "The Skinny Dragons" of Patrol Squadron 4 were aboard the airplane when it landed at the airfield. For undetermined reasons – the Navy is investigating the cause – the Poseidon ran off the runway and splashed into the bay.



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AMERICA'S U2 DRAGON LADY SPY PLANE: ICONIC TAKES CENTER STAGE

With Tom Cruise's new film *Top Gun: Maverick* breaking records worldwide, the entire world is reminded about how dangerous pilots live. And we all get to be reminded about America's tech lead in reconnaissance aircraft. Naturally, The Lockheed U-2, nicknamed *Dragon Lady* remains America's most famous spy plane ever and its history is more intriguing than *Maverick's* life or any Ian Fleming spy novel.

As you've probably imagined by now, the *Dragon Lady* is the product of the Cold War, when the globe was divided between two spheres of influence and the two superpowers were engaged in a frightening arms race. It is worth noting that only four years after the United States dropped its first nuclear bomb, the Russians detonated their own bomb on Aug 29, 1949, at Semipalatinsk Test Site, in Kazakhstan.

However, that wasn't the only thing that frightened the Americans, considering that in 1954, Russia introduced to the world its newest bomber, Myasishchev M-4, nicknamed the *Hammer*. Naturally, these advancements forced the Americans to develop advanced surveillance systems that could help them collect sensitive information from the Soviet Union. Accordingly, in 1955, the plane envisioned by Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, finally, had its first test flight. The high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft is the product of the Cold War arms race and Americans flew it in some of the most intriguing missions. For example, in 1956, Hervey Stockman took a secret mission and flew the *Dragon Lady* from Wiesbaden, West Germany, right into the Soviet Union. Thanks to Stockman's efforts, Washington found out that Russia was not building "missiles like sausages" and was far from developing a hydrogen bomb capable of reaching the United States.



Moving forward, the United States used the high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Thanks to the *Dragon Lady*, President John F. Kennedy found out about Soviet missile installations in western Cuba, which could easily hit targets in the United States. During the next 13 days, flights over the Caribbean island would keep the folks in Washington informed about Russia's operations in *Castro's Kingdom* and thanks to President Kennedy's diplomatic efforts, the nuclear war and possible attacks on American territory have been avoided. Since then, the *Dragon Lady* was flown in various operations across the globe. It flew over China, Vietnam and Cuba during the Cold War and after the fall of the Iron Curtain, it was used for surveillance and reconnaissance during the armed conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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The Lockheed U-2 is a single-engine, single-seat, long-range aircraft that had a slender design, which made the aircraft more difficult to be seen. As for specifications, the *Dragon Lady* was powered by a turbojet engine capable of pushing the aircraft to a cruise speed of 764 kilometres/hour or 475 miles/hour. The U-2 had an experimental Pratt & Whitney J75-P-13 engine capable of producing 15,000 pounds of thrust. Furthermore, it had a flying range of more than 7,000 miles and could carry a payload of 5,000 pounds. Lastly, the Lockheed U-2 had a length of 63 feet, a height of 16.7 feet, and a wingspan of 103 feet.

U-2's "long tapered wings long —one third the weight of what was normal at the time — allowed it to fly missions covering a range of 3,000 miles and carry up to 700 pounds of the latest photo reconnaissance equipment to a staggering and unprecedented altitude of 70,000 feet," says Lockheed Martin.



After the Cold War, the U-2Rs were modified and revamped as U-2S. The National Interest points out that the new models have refined sensors, a high-performing GPS system and more powerful F118 engines, which generate a speed of over five hundred miles per hour. A decade ago, the planes were altered again under the CARE program to lower the cabin pressure and have cleaner urine collection. Naturally, these are welcomed changes for the pilots as they can enjoy a more comfortable flight.

Even a titan like the Lockheed U-2 needs to retire at some point; thus, there is an urgent need for other high-altitude tactical reconnaissance planes. Naturally, there is already the *Northrop Grumman RQ-4 Global Hawk*, and Lockheed has also designed the *TR-X*, which is a modern high-altitude, single-engined tactical reconnaissance aircraft.

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FIRST NEWLY BUILT NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBMARINE UNDER AUKUS LIKELY TO BE SOLD IN 2038, US ADMIRAL REVEALS

Australia will be sold its first new American nuclear-powered submarine in 2038, according to a senior US naval officer who has also revealed that initial sales of second-hand Virginia-class boats will likely take place in 2032 and 2035.

During a separate media event in Sydney, the visiting commander of the US Pacific fleet also assured Australians that this country will maintain full sovereignty over the American technology when it eventually comes into service here.

Speaking in Washington, the US commander of submarine forces, Vice Admiral Bill Houston, provided a provisional timeline for transferring Virginia-class submarines to Australia under the AUKUS partnership.

According to US publication Breaking Defense, Vice Admiral Houston said planned US sales of "in-service submarines" to Australia are expected in 2032 and 2035, while the 2038 sale will be a newly constructed Block VII version of the Virginia-class.

The newly constructed Block VII submarine will not carry the Virginia Payload Module, the mid-body section equipped on certain boats in the fleet that increases its missile capacity.

Under the AUKUS agreement, the United States will sell at least three, and up to five, Virginia-class submarines in the 2030s, before the United Kingdom will then jointly construct a new SSN-AUKUS submarine fleet with Australia.

Defence Minister Richard Marles has not yet commented on the new details of the proposed "optimal pathway" for nuclear-powered submarines, but earlier this

week he expressed optimism the project still enjoyed broad political support in the US.

"There is legislation which is going through the US Congress as we speak, legislation which goes to reducing the export control regime as it applies between Australia and America," Mr Marles said.

"[It is] legislation which will enable the sale of the Virginias but importantly legislation which will enable the provision of the Australian contribution to the American industrial uplift," he added.

US officials insist the annual production rate of Virginia-class submarines needs to increase from the current level of 1.2 vessels to well above 2 per year, before transfers to Australia can occur.



"It is going to be important for the US to be able to increase its rate of production in order to enable there to be the space for Virginias to be transferred to Australia," Mr Marles told reporters at the International Maritime Exposition in Sydney.

During a visit to Sydney, the commander of the US Pacific Fleet has warned of increasing Chinese military aggression in the region and talked up the importance of the AUKUS partnership for increasing joint "combat capability".

Speaking to reporters at the Indo-Pacific Sea Power conference, Admiral Samuel Paparo said "to the extent that AUKUS increases the net industrial base of the

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Admiral Samuel Paparo USN. Commander of the US Pacific Fleet

three countries, it increases the net combat capability of all three countries together". The US admiral also revealed Australian assets were targeted by the Chinese military as part of hundreds of dangerous intercepts conducted in the South China Sea during the past two years.

"They are increasingly provocative and it's deeply concerning; at times they've hazarded themselves and hazarded people in vessels and aircraft they've interacted with."

Critics of the AUKUS partnership warn it could lock Australia into a future US war with China over Taiwan, but Admiral Paparo brushed aside the concerns.

"Sovereignty is the expression of human dignity at the state level. This free will of the nation are our

first principles that on mutual respect are the first principles of our alliance. Without that it's not an alliance. It's what the other guys have," he said.

Admiral Paparo also said he had "complete faith" in the Australian government over the recent decision not to terminate a Chinese-owned company's lease of Darwin Port.

AUSTRALIA TO PUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO THE TEST TRACKING CHINESE SUBMARINES UNDER AUKUS DEAL

Australia will join the US and UK to test a new way of tracking Chinese submarines using artificial intelligence, with the news coming a fortnight after Australian naval divers were injured in an incident with a Chinese warship.

The US Navy's surveillance and attack aircraft will deploy the

technology during Pacific patrols to process large amounts of information gathered from the three nation's sonobuoys, or underwater detection devices.

The announcement follows a meeting of the countries' defence officials and forms part of the AUKUS defence agreement.

Last month, Australian naval personnel sustained minor injuries when a Chinese warship began operating its full mounted sonar despite repeated warnings divers were in the water.

Officials labelled the incident "unsafe and unprofessional" as they unveiled a raft of new AUKUS initiatives.

Defence Minister Richard Marles said the new package of technology was highly relevant to Australia's strategic circumstances.

"It [the incident] absolutely highlights the need for this arrangement and it absolutely highlights the need for speed in this arrangement and I think you can see that speed," he said.

"We've stood up the relevant agencies. We're seeing infrastructure work be commenced, our workforce being trained, the visits happening. This is moving fast."

Australia is set to receive \$3 billion worth of military training and equipment from the United States as part of the AUKUS agreement.

The deal includes training navy personnel in submarine navigation and ship control.

**ABC NEWS
NOVEMBER 2023**

**OLD PHOTOGRAPHS OFTEN COME IN
TO THE SLIPSTREAM OFFICE
ON THESE PAGES ENJOY SOME
SEA FURY AND FIREFLY MAGIC**



**SOME
SEA FURY AND FIREFLY MAGIC**



The Skyhawk Years

The A-4 Skyhawk in Australian Service

1968 – 1984

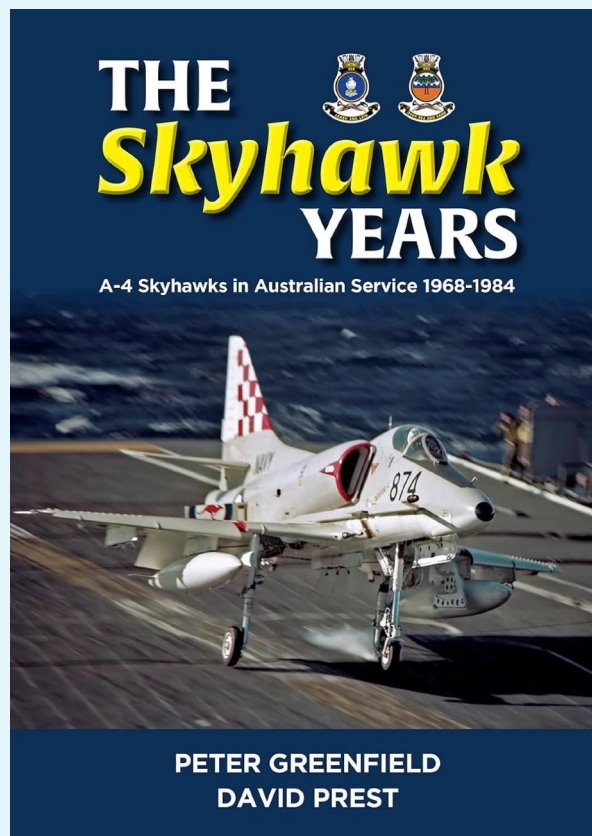
Peter Greenfield and David Prest, hardback with dustjacket, full colour, 250 x 176mm, 216 pages, Avonmore Books 2023, 9780645700411 \$49.95 NOW AVAILABLE

The magnificent Douglas A-4 Skyhawk served with the Royal Australian Navy from 1968 until 1984 with two squadrons: VF805 and VC724. VF805 was the frontline fighter unit that served aboard the aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne*, while VC724 was shore-based for training and support from Naval Air Station Nowra.

During that period the fixed wing aircraft on the *Melbourne* gave the RAN a unique capability that was central to Australian defence policy. The Skyhawk Years is a story of busy and varied deployments around Australia, South-east Asia and regularly to the multinational Rimpac exercises in Hawaii. A particular highlight was a long cruise to the UK in 1977 and participation in the Spithead Naval Review, part of the celebrations for Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee.

With first-hand stories from pilots and maintainers, the challenges of operations from the world's smallest aircraft carrier are well explained. Also told are thrilling stories of air combat manoeuvres against fighters from other countries, with the A-4 often surprising more well-credentialled adversaries.

A string of mishaps ended the embarkation of Skyhawks on the *Melbourne* in 1980, with a sad period following which saw the ultimate scrapping of RAN fixed wing aviation four years later. However, among the former pilots and maintainers many fond memories of A-4 operations remain alive.



Please Can You Help...



Steve Long is still beavering away to capture the story of the RAN's Westland Wessex helicopters, and needs far more material.

So, for the hundreds of people who haven't yet responded, please can you help out with a few paragraphs about your Wally Experiences?

What you write is up to you, but some suggested topics might be:

- Your favourite Wally, and why.
- The best/worst thing about the Wessex and why.
- Particular jobs that you did which were memorable.
- Learning your trade on the Wessex.
- Engine and gearbox changes.
- British engineering!
- Trying to keep the Wessex serviceable.
- Maintaining/flying Wessex off Sydney/Melbourne (or any other ship).
- Working in cold and draughty Albatross hangars.
- Looking for submarines.
- The accident you had, or nearly had (close shaves)
- How the Wessex compared to its predecessor/successor.
- Detachments you remember.
- Detachments you'd rather forget (but can't).
- Night engine-off landings.
- Navigation exercises you remember, or would rather forget.
- Operation Bursa maintenance.
- Operation Bursa operations.
- The mates you worked with on the Wessex.
- Anything else you'd like!

Send your input to Steve Long seavenom870@bigpond.com

**HE SURVIVED A MID-AIR COLLISION OF TWO FIREFLY AIRCRAFT IN 1956,
AND THEN HIS SHIP WAS BOMBARDED TWICE BY AN INDONESIAN SHORE BATTERY
DURING 'KONFRONTASI' TEN YEARS LATER.**

HERE IS THE STORY OF CMDR GLEX "O" DONALD GEOFFREY DEBUS

Don Debus was born in Sydney on 8th August 1938, and his family was living in Hornsby at the time of his engagement into RAN as a Recruit Naval Aircrew on 9th January 1956. On completion of recruit training, he was appointed midshipman on 30th April 1956 for further training as a Navy Observer and was posted to HMAS *Albatross* the following month.

Whilst on a training flight on 27th November 1956, Don's Firefly was involved in a mid-air collision with a second Firefly over Jervis Bay. Sub Lieutenant David Eagles RN, the pilot of Don's aircraft struggled to maintain control and they made a successful ditching to the north-east of Callala Bay. The other Firefly broke up on impact and the crew did not survive. The missing crew members were Sub-Lieutenant Arthur Arundel, Royal Navy and Midshipman Noel Francis Fogarty, Royal Australian Navy.



Firefly VX381 in Jervis Bay



SBLT David Eagles RN

Don subsequently served in 851, 817 and 725 Squadrons through until May 1957 when he was promoted Acting Sub-Lieutenant, having completed No. 3 Observer's Course. From late 1957 until mid-1958 Don embarked in HMAS *Melbourne* with 816 Squadron in Gannets, and he later saw service again in *Melbourne* with the Far East Strategic Reserve. Don's postings through to June 1963 alternated between *Albatross* and *Melbourne*, still with 816 Squadron. He was promoted lieutenant on 8th June 1960.

With the offer to accept a permanent commission, Don underwent seagoing service in the frigate HMAS *Quiberon*, gaining his bridge watchkeeping certificate in 1964. From July 1964 until August 1965 Don served in HMAS

Cerberus as the course office for Supplementary List midshipmen, amongst whose numbers included future RAN Helicopter Flight – Vietnam pilots Ray Godfrey, Jeff Dalgliesh, Michael Perrott and Victor Battese. While serving in HMAS *Cerberus*, Don met his then future wife, Third Officer Mary Harris; they were married on 2 October 1965.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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He then served for a year in HMAS *Hawk*, a 'Ton' Class mine-sweeper as the Executive Officer until August 1966. It was during that time that *Hawk* deployed to Malaysia to protect the nation during the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation - 'Konfrontasi'.

CMDR GLEX "O" DONALD GEOFFREY DEBUS RAN (rtd)

HMAS *Hawk* was one of six ex-Royal Navy *Ton* Class minesweepers acquired by the Royal Australian Navy. Her sister ships were HMA Ships *Curlew*, *Gull*, *Snipe*, *Ibis* and *Teal*. The six *Ton* Class minesweepers formed the 16th Mine Countermeasures (MCM) Squadron and provided the RAN with the means to gain and maintain proficiency in mine countermeasures.

While most patrols during these deployments were uneventful, on 13 March 1966 while patrolling off Raffles Light, *Hawk* came under fire by an Indonesian shore battery, even though she was inside Singaporean territorial waters. Eleven rounds were fired at the ship, landing within 200 yards. In this instance, *Hawk* did not retaliate. The following month, however, retaliate she did. *Hawk* was ordered to patrol in East Malaysian waters near Nanukan Island north of the median line. Embarked was a detachment of four Ghurkhas who were to man two assault boats as observation posts during night patrols. On 7 April, the Ghurkhas came under Indonesian mortar fire from Nanukan Island. The Indonesian fire ceased when *Hawk* fired some warning shots from her 40mm Bofors into the sea. The following evening, *Hawk* and the Ghurkhas again came under



Indonesian mortar fire, this time more accurate and more intense. On this occasion, *Hawk* returned fire for effect, engaging Indonesian targets with 30 rounds from her Bofors. The mortar fire quickly ceased.

With his sea service behind him, Don returned to the Fleet Air Arm and completed No.10 Anti-Submarine Helicopter OFS in 725 Squadron. Peter, their son, was born on 8 July 1966 while Don was serving in HMAS *Hawk*; Peter was five weeks old when Don returned to Australia. Catherine was born on 15 March, 1968 while Don was attached to 725 Squadron at HMAS *Albatross*.



In the second quarter of 1967 Don was back at sea in the fast troop transport HMAS *Sydney* with a detached flight of Wessex helicopters, providing anti-submarine protection to the ship whilst in South Vietnamese waters off the port of Vung Tau.

With Australian ground forces now well established in Vietnam, *Sydney* began a regular pattern of disembarking one battalion at Vung Tau and back loading another for the return passage to Australia. Although her escort had by then been reduced to a single ship, a detachment of four Wessex MK 31A helicopters from 725 Squadron was embarked in April 1967 to provide additional anti-submarine protection. The

Wessex flight returned to its base at the Naval Air Station, Nowra, in June 1967, and was in turn replaced by a similar flight, from 817 Squadron, for the five voyages between December 1967 and December 1968. The detachment was usually drawn from a component of the *Melbourne* Carrier Air Group and those who served in *Sydney* gained valuable operational experience while the flagship was in refit or undergoing modernisations.

CMDR GLEX "O" DONALD GEOFFREY DEBUS RAN (rtd)

Promoted to Lieutenant Commander in June 1968, Don had already completed No.22 Advanced Navigation Course followed by the Wessex Mark 31B OFS with 725 Squadron.

While holding the rank of lieutenant commander, Don became Staff Office (Air) within the Navy Office Directorate of Training, he commanded 817 Squadron for two years and then returned to Navy Office to a position in the Directorate of Administrative Plans.

In December 1974 Don was promoted commander and was appointed Staff Officer (Air) within the Australian Navy Representative UK's office in London. Thereafter he served in HMAS *Stalwart* as Executive Officer and HMAS *Albatross* as Commander Air, returning to Navy Office in June 1979 as the Deputy Director of Naval Aviation Policy for a period of two years.



No 1 WESSEX 31B O.F.S. (OBSERVERS and U/C's)

BACK ROW LACM'S MUSCH, TRIPPET, SMITH, CONNOLLY, REUTER, ROSS, HOLLOW, BARNES.

FRONT ROW LEUTS FIRTH, TAPPING, LCDR'S DEBUS, STOPFORD, LEUT ARTHUR, SBLT WALFORD.

Don's final position in the RAN was on the Navy Staff of the Department of Defence, Canberra. He retired from the RAN on 1 September 1983 and was transferred to RANEM. On 19 July 1987 he advised that due to being appointed Assistant Executive Director of the Australian Institute of Building, he was no longer available for RANEM Service. He was eventually promoted to Executive Director of the Institute and remained in that position until he retired, due to ill health.

Don Debus died in Dubbo NSW on 16 October 2023, and he was farewelled at a small and private funeral on 25 October 2023.



THE FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA EXTENDS OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILIES, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES ON THE RECENT PASSING OF THESE FORMER FAA MEMBERS.

MORE COMPREHENSIVE DETAILS OF THEIR LIVES MAY BE FOUND ON THE FAA ASSOCIATION WEBPAGE AT THE FOLLOWING LINK:

<https://www.faaaa.asn.au/heritage-general/obituaries-name/>

Winston Neil (Fish) FERGUSON LAMAE
Perth WA

Rod COUPLAND OAM LAAH
Huskisson NSW

Richard GREZL LCDR GLEX(O)
Sunshine Coast QLD

Noel KNAPPSTEIN LIEUT(P)
Sunbury VIC

Donald DEBUS CMDR GLEX(O)
Dubbo NSW

William RITCHIE CMDR SDEX
Perth WA

Murray HAASE LAAH
Perth WA

Brian DUTCH CMDR GLEX(P)
Adelaide SA



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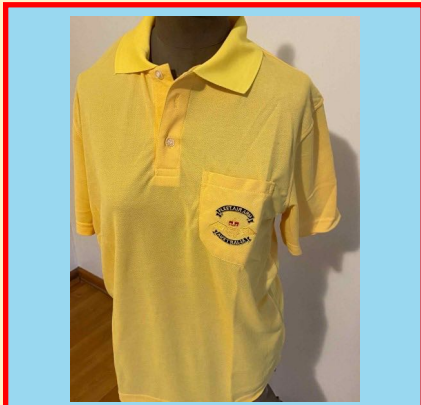
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