



# SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

## Childhood Memories - Britain WW2

from Hazel Shrubbs (nee Ramplin), Wollongbar, North Coast NSW

On the 1st September 1939, I awoke and prepared my school bag when mother changed it for a canvas bag and pinned my name on a label attaching it to my jumper. She told me I was going on a train journey with other school children. I was eight years old and bewildered by this change of events.

We travelled from our local Acton, West London station to the city Paddington Main Line station. Mother said goodbye and I stepped into a carriage along with hundreds of children. Between 1 and 4 September 1939 over 600,000 London schoolchildren were among the one and a



Evacuees boarding a train

half million people evacuated. It was named 'Operation Pied Piper'. My train arrived at Bovey Tracey, Devonshire late in the afternoon and I was directed to a waiting bus, which took us to Hennock village. I walked into the large hall where all the children were sitting on the floor. We were told our name

would be called out and we were to go with our foster parents, who were there looking for their first choice. A lady took me to her village home in Teign Valley and I attended the Hennock School.

At 11.15am on Sunday 3rd September 1939 the Prime Minister went on radio and announced "this country is at war".

One day I was walking home from school with another evacuee when we were stopped by a row of village children waving sticks and barring our path. A quick decision was made and we raced through the hedges and fields followed by the villagers shouting 'we don't want Londoners here'.

The local people must have seen the trouble as we ran into the main street, because it never happened again. I enjoyed the countryside after city life and joined other children after school running around the many vegetable allotments with butterfly nets catching white cabbage moths and putting them into a jam jar, for which we were paid one penny. Evenings were quiet except for the radio playing Vera Lyn singing nostalgia songs such as 'We'll meet again', adding to my loneliness for my parents. Nothing was told to me about



Pre-evacuation party at Acton Town Hall.  
Hazel forward left in white dress with tartan sash, brother Raymond in front of Hazel



the war in progress and I had no communication with my family.

I was then moved to Dawlish, a nearby seaside town on the coast where my brother was evacuated. I started another school which was overcrowded with the huge influx of evacuees, and taught by young inexperienced teachers taking the place of staff called up on active service. Soon after, at 14yrs, my brother returned home and joined the Home Guard then eventually the army, where he took part in the Arnhem battle in Holland. My older sister joined the WAFS serving in India and peacekeeping in Singapore. Our father had served in the RAF during WW1 as a 2E Fitter in Britain and France.

After about two years away, I was able to return to my home in Acton and commence Primary school. Air Raid shelters had been built around the school and a large canteen was supplying hot midday meals. One day I looked at my rice pudding and was horrified to see a caterpillar sitting there. I called to the supervisor who laughed and said “eat it up, don’t you know there is meat rationing!” When the sirens sounded we would run into the shelters, sit on benches and were told to sing songs to drown out the noise of bombs and guns. Walking home there were underground shelters in various parks to run into, which I never did as they were unlit and I never could tell who was in there.

My parents had an Anderson shelter built in the back garden; corrugated iron over a large concrete pit



**Sisters in Anderson Shelter in our back garden at Acton**

with a small opening with a black curtain. Heavy rain often flooded the floor. My parents slept on a mattress and father had built a ladder reaching above to a platform for my mattress. After many nights of father’s cigarette smoke, he pleased us by attaching a pipe through the ceiling for a chimney, with a cowl over the top to stop the rain. Hitler changed daylight raids to night raids. One night father looked out and shouted for us to get outside. I found myself standing in a blaze of light. Incendiaries were descending like Christmas lights upside down. We scooped up garden soil to extinguish the fizzing lights which the planes had dropped across the towns to be followed by the bombers.

Food rationing was harsh. I recall mother cooking horse meat and whale meat, which father declined. We bred chickens and grew many vegetables, often trading with neighbours for sugar and butter. I would often join a huge queue for one banana and then back to queue for one orange. I remember tins of powdered egg with the American flag wrapped around; it was a colourful and cheerful sight. Father was constantly listening to the radio for the news on the merchant navy, which he told me were delivering vital food and equipment.

I walked with a school friend across the Thames Westminster Bridge one sunny day. I noticed a lot of dots in the distance which became larger and a formation of huge planes flying very low over the water approached overhead. I looked up into the face of the leader in a brown leather cap and waived to him calling out “welcome home boys”. He gave no response to my welcome and my eyes followed my hand to the wing on which was a cross. I only knew the Swastika sign, but it suddenly dawned on me they were Germans. We quickly ran off the bridge as the ack-ack guns started to fire. I found out later they were Heinkel 111’s and the airman I smiled to was the bomb aimer and they had flown very low to avoid the radar.

In 1944 the “Buzz Bombs” or “Doodlebugs” arrived at all hours. After the siren was heard I would see the black object with its buzzing engine then an ominous silence as the engine cut out on its fall. Later the Rocket arrived with its silent approach giving no warning. A house was hit in the next street behind our back garden. I rode my bike around town after the raids to inspect the damage.



I left high school in 1946 and in 1947 emigrated with my family to New-Zealand. A year later I moved to Sydney where I met my husband. Bill had served in the RAAF for six years and had been stationed for a time in Darwin as 2E fitter in 452 Spitfire Squadron. We shared many memories and together took an interest in researching our RAAF history. Bill organised a memorial at Evans Head Airfield, North Coast NSW, and wrote his memoirs about those days, when it was a vital town in the war years.



## Kittyhawk Trophy Presentation

*from Al Lyons*

**A**t a Williamtown hangar presentation on Wednesday 11th December 2019, the annual Kittyhawk Trophy was awarded to No 2 Operational Conversion Unit. The Air Force Association sponsored trophy is presented to the most efficient RAAF fighter unit as determined by the Officer Commanding No 81 Wing.

In previous years, competition for the trophy was restricted to operational fighter squadrons. For the first time, in 2019, it was widened to include 2OCU in recognition of that unit's central role in the development and efficiency of the fighter force. The Commanding Officer 2 OCU, Wing Commander Scott 'Woody' Woodland, was presented with the trophy by the incoming OC 81 Wing, Group Captain John Haly DSC CSC.

Officers and Airmen from the fighter units with representatives of the Fighter Squadrons Branch were treated on the day to a fly-in of a P-40 Kittyhawk, a memorable backdrop to the presentation. Pictured in front of the Kittyhawk and holding the trophy are Wing Commander Woodland and the President of the Fighter Squadrons Branch, Mike Lavercombe, who spoke of the significance and history of the trophy.



## Defence Force Assistance for the Bush Fires

*from John Clarkson*

*On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020, John wrote to the editors of the Brisbane Courier Mail and "The New Daily" to correct a misconception about Defence support to the bushfire efforts.*

**T**he following has been doing the rounds and deserves further dissemination in light of the current deplorable reporting by the media and the lack of knowledge by most of the community. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has been working with Emergency Management Australia to assist with fire fighting efforts since directed by the Minister on November 8. The ADF is providing, and has provided the following support:

- From November 17 to December 15, Army provided logistical support for 250 fire fighters at the RFS staging ground in the Northern Rivers Region.
- From November 12, the Lismore Depot of the 41st Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment, has been available to provide logistical support to fire fighters from outside the region.
- New South Wales RFS have multiple large aerial tankers and spotter aircraft at RAAF Base Richmond.
- Since November 29, HMAS Albatross has helped with water refuelling and retardant loading of aircraft from the Nowra Naval Air Station.



- From November 8 to December 22, Air Force is providing airlift support to move large groups of fire fighters and their equipment.
- From November 26 to December 23, Army is providing NSW RFS with ground logistic support for the movement of vehicles, stores and equipment in the Casino and Hawkesbury areas.
- From December 3 to January 26, Army is providing support at Marrangaroo Training Area to NSW RFS helicopter assets and personnel.
- From December 3-16, Army is providing logistics support at Marrangaroo Training Area to NSW Rural Fire Service assets and personnel.
- 41st Battalion, Royal NSW Regiment, will support RFS Casino flight line with loading of fire retardant at Casino airport.
- On December 10, a Royal Australian Navy helicopter provided support to NSW RFS to fly day and night missions from Naval Air Station.
- Defence is hosting refuelling assets. This support is on an as-required basis.
- A Royal Australian Air Force 737 Boeing business jet transported ACT Rural Fire Service fire fighters from Canberra to North Coast on November 8.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C-130J Hercules aircraft transported fire fighters and their equipment from Adelaide to North Coast on November 9.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C-130J Hercules aircraft transported fire fighters and their equipment from Hobart to North Coast on November 10.
- A Royal Australian Air Force KC-30A multi-role tanker transport aircraft transported 150 fire fighters on November 14.
- Two Royal Australian Air Force KC-30A multi-role tanker transport aircraft transported 258 fire fighters and their personal equipment on November 15.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C-17A Globemaster aircraft transported 165 fire fighters and their equipment, using two flights, from Melbourne to Coffs Harbour on November 17.
- The same aircraft then transported an additional 130 fire fighters and their equipment from Coffs Harbour to Melbourne on November 18.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C-17A Globemaster aircraft transported 130 fire fighters from Melbourne to RAAF Base Richmond on November 19.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C-130J Hercules aircraft transported 140 fire fighters and their equipment from Melbourne to Coffs Harbour on November 20.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C-130J Hercules aircraft transported 167 fire fighters and their equipment from Coffs Harbour to Melbourne on November 21.
- On November 18, 21 and 22, Army supported Queensland Fire and Emergency Services helicopter operations at Borneo Barracks, near Toowoomba. This support is now complete.
- From November 11-13, Singleton Army Barracks provided accommodation and catering support to about 200 fire fighters from the Victorian Country Fire Authority.
- From November 12-14, two MRH-90 Taipan helicopters from the Royal Australian Navy and two S-70 Black Hawk helicopters from the Australian Army provided movements for Rural Fire Service strike teams.
- From November 12-13, the Royal Australian Navy provided two MH-60R Seahawk helicopters to fly night missions from Sydney and Coffs Harbour to facilitate the operation of Rural Fire Service air observers.
- Two EC135 helicopters from the Royal Australian Navy and two S-70 Black Hawk helicopters from the Australian Army flew in support of New South Wales Rural Fire Service impact assessments on November 14. This support is now complete.
- From November 12-16, RAAF Base Williamtown provided refuelling and water re-supply support to a large aerial tanker from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service.
- From November 13-23, RAAF Base Richmond provided accommodation and catering support for varying numbers of between 150 and 300 fire fighters.



- From November 18-19, the Army’s Borneo Barracks near Toowoomba established a helicopter-landing site, overnight parking and refuelling capability for fire fighting and support to civilian rotary-wing aircraft.
- On November 21, a New South Wales Rural Fire Service large aerial tanker was refuelled at RAAF Base Edinburgh after a mission was completed in South Australia.
- On November 26, RAAF Base Gingin provided 18,900 litres of water to two water bombers fighting a fire in the vicinity of Yanchep.
- On December 3-4, HMAS Albatross provided catering and accommodation for RFS NSW at Naval Air Station Nowra.

This support has been provided in a co-ordinated fashion in conjunction with the State Governments. <https://news.defence.gov.au/national/defence-continues-bushfire-support?fbclid=IwAR2SPsJo8AAItyJHdwDk4tcVrInkHs28OH7Qc5May-e9AZ-7nbICCHU-61U>

I hope this information is helpful to clarify the amazing support which has been given and continues to be given by the Australian Defence Forces.

*Editor's Note: In addition to the assistance detailed above, the latest edition of Air Force News (available on the AFA Web site) includes a couple of articles describing how Air Force units and members have contributed to the fire-fighting efforts around the country.*



## 22 Feb 44 – RAAF Pilot Made the Ultimate Sacrifice

*This material is compiled from sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and Peter Dunn. The History and Heritage Branch–Air Force is not responsible for pre-1921 items. Whilst every effort is made to confirm the accuracy of the entries, any discrepancies are solely the responsibility of the originator. As I am not a member of History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, all Air Force history or heritage queries should be directed, in the first instance, to [airforce.history@defence.gov.au](mailto:airforce.history@defence.gov.au)*

*Warrant Officer David Coles compiles a daily 2020 Diary item featuring ADF Aircraft. These entries will be included for the remainder of this year. Warrant Officer Coles is happy to take submissions at [david.coles1@defence.gov.au](mailto:david.coles1@defence.gov.au)*

On this day, Flying Officer Robert Tuff, an RAAF pilot flying Typhoons with the RAF’s No 263 Squadron, was on a shipping reconnaissance operation west of the Channel Islands when he heard his CO, Squadron Leader Warnes, state via R/T that he was going to ditch his aircraft in a position roughly eight miles north west of Guernsey. Warnes’ aircraft immediately sank. Flying Officer Tuff and other pilots orbited the spot and Tuff was heard to say twice that he had seen Warnes in the water; Tuff then stated that he thought Warnes was injured and that he was going to bail out to help him.



Flight Lieutenant Racine, the deputy leader, forbade Tuff to do this, but Tuff repeated that he was going to bail out. No more was seen or heard of him by the other aircraft but at 1210 hours a Typhoon was seen to dive vertically into the area which was being orbited. Despite Air/Sea rescue by aircraft of every type and by launches, nothing more was seen or heard of Flying Officer Tuff or Squadron Leader Warnes. The Squadron circumstantial report stated that “it seems certain that FO Tuff did in fact bail out in order to try and help his Commanding Officer. The weather was bitterly cold, and freezing at sea level, with a moderate north east wind which made the sea rather rough.” Flying Officer Tuff was later Mentioned in Dispatches which was promulgated in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on 22 June 1944.





## The World Doesn't Realize The Extent Of The Tunnel Threat

By Hanan Greenwood

International experts on urban warfare warn that modern militaries need to prepare more seriously for underground combat, which they say will be a major and unavoidable component of any future war. “The next war will be urban, dirty, underground,” predicts John Spencer, chair of Urban Warfare Studies and co-director of the Urban Warfare Project at the Modern War Institute at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

“We have advanced technology so much that I can strike anybody, anywhere, at any time,” Spencer told *Israel Hayom*, adding however that such advanced capabilities come with a disadvantage: “Combat has been driven underground, allowing the enemy to hide.”

Earlier this month, experts in various aspects of underground warfare gathered in Israel at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya for a conference titled, “Subterranean Challenges in War and Peace,” a joint initiative by the IDC, West Point and the US Embassy in Israel. Experts on warfare and technology, as well as historians and geologists, convened to exchange ideas, with the goal of upgrading military doctrine on underground warfare. Spencer, a retired infantry major, served in the



View of a Hezbollah tunnel from Lebanon to Israel, July 7, 2019

U.S. Army for 25 years. His tours of duty included Iraq. For the past six years, he has headed West Point’s urban warfare program, training future officers in a field that he believes is becoming the biggest challenge to militaries worldwide. “Some people would argue that there has been a long history of urban warfare, since ancient times,” he said. “I argue that that’s not true. Militaries have always fought *for* cities, but not *in* cities. They tried to avoid fighting in cities at all costs.”

By contrast, he said, “In the last five to 10 years, every conflict has been in a city. You can’t give me a reason why a future conflict won’t be in a city.” This is even more true of developed countries, said



Israeli soldier near a tunnel between Lebanon and Israel, near Metula, on Dec. 24, 2018

Spencer. “Over 50 percent of the world’s population lives in urban areas. But if you take a developed country, Europe, the United States, you’re at 80-90 percent,” said Spencer. Spencer has spent considerable time studying Israel’s counter-terror tactics, including during Israel Defense Forces operations in the Gaza Strip, and believes sufficient attention is not being paid to the lessons emerging from those operations.

“There is a little bit of information available about the lessons learned from Gaza, from ‘Operation Protective Edge.’ I don’t know if it’s resonating



with all militaries,” he said.

According to Spencer, militaries usually try to avoid underground warfare. The typical approach, he said, is “bypass it, hope it won’t happen.” But Israel, he said, does not have that luxury. Despite the enormous rise in the number of battles fought in urban settings and the fact that urban warfare here to stay, Spencer said that the world isn’t devoting enough attention to the matter. “How wide a view do you take of urban warfare? There’s no course at West Point on urban warfare. We try to incorporate urban ‘lessons,’ and that’s where lessons from ‘Protective Edge’ might be incorporated, but not at the scale I think is necessary,” he said. That is why, Spencer says, the conference—and the international working group on underground warfare—are so important. “There’s nobody we could turn to more important than the Israeli military, the Israeli people, to understand how to fight tunnel warfare, from the strategic down to the tactical level. As an urban warfare expert, that’s the most important thing to me. We have a problem training for urban warfare. Underground warfare? Forget it. But the Israeli military has lived with it every day of their lives for a long time. We’re bringing people together so we can start setting up these lessons and sharing information.”

**Q: Would you like U.S. officers or future officers to come here to Israel to study? To come see the tunnels, to see the work of our army?**

**A:** “Yes, and I’d like to see attention raised to the problem ... to show that this is a bigger problem than people might think. Of course, Israeli people know it’s a problem.”

According to Spencer, the world is largely unaware of the scope of the problem tunnels in urban settings present.

“There were 45 tunnel bombs exploded from 2014-2015 in Syria and Iraq. I was last in Iraq in 2008, and there was nothing. There was ‘underground,’ but not being used as a method of warfare as it is now,” he said. “If I were in Iraq today, the threat from underground is twenty-fold what it was when I was there. It’s incredible,” he added. “On all my tours in Iraq, I never looked down. You go to Iraq, Syria [today], you’d better be looking down, because that’s a significant threat.”

**Q: Do the terrorist organizations talk to each other? Does Hamas talk to Hezbollah?**

**A:** “Absolutely. That diffusion of information, how to do these things, went straight from Israel into Syria. We saw an explosion in tunnels. The passing of information is one of the urban problems—these terrorist organizations start passing [information about] what works to each other.”

Conference host Dr. Daphne Richmond-Barak, an internationally known researcher specializing in tunnel warfare who this year published a book on the subject, titled “Underground Warfare,” agrees with Spencer. “You can never feel safe. You can never feel secure in any kind of geographical perimeter, because in the end ... it can pop up at any time. [The enemy] can pop up behind you or next to you or on you,” she said. “When you go for the high tech, you have to prepare for the low tech,” said Richmond-Barak. “It doesn’t mean it’s going to be an existential threat to you, but if you don’t prepare for it, it will take you by surprise. In the Israeli context, it’s also explosive balloons and kites. That’s low tech, and it’s also a disruption. It’s a consequence to military superiority.”

The tunnel issue, she said, is a global one.

“We in Israel think that the tunnel issue is an Israeli issue. But the conference demonstrates that this is *not* an Israeli issue. It’s



**U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley visits a tunnel built by Hamas on the border of Israel with the Gaza Strip, June 8, 2017**



everywhere-in Mali, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Syria. It could come to Europe, as well,” she said. This is why, she argued, it is so vital to bring global attention to the issue of underground warfare as a global threat. Moreover, Richemond-Barak thinks that Israel can learn from other countries, too, citing a new underground warfare doctrine published in November by the U.S. military as something Israel should study. “This is the first time something so comprehensive-and not classified-has been published about preparation, training, etc. Israel also recently put out a maneuver doctrine that the U.S. can learn from, as well,” she said. Richemond-Barak sees underground warfare as a “great equalizer.” Fighting in tunnels “neutralizes the asymmetry between belligerents in a military conflict,” she said, which is why it is necessary for militaries to combine their existing knowledge of urban warfare with an underground warfare doctrine and use the two together against the enemy.

Spencer added that there is a vast underground network in every city in the world that enemy forces will inevitably use for one purpose or another. In light of that fact, he said, it’s “ridiculous” how little information is available on underground warfare.

“The current doctrines say the underground is ‘high risk’-avoid it at all costs. That is not the world we live in.”



## C-130 Dropping Retardant On Bushfire Near Mount Macedon, Vic.

31 Jan 83

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Three specially-trained six-man crews from No 36 Squadron were used to crew a C-130H Hercules transport during summer bushfire patrols in Victoria. After specialised training for Operation *Quench* during mid-January, the aircraft was placed on weekly standby to operate from bases at Hamilton, Mangalore and East Sale in support of the Victorian Forestry Commission.



C-130 dropping retardant on bushfire near Mount Macedon, Vic

On this day it went into action, dropping fire retardant into the path of a bushfire in the Grampians mountain range in the State’s west, slowing the blaze and enabling ground teams to move in. The task required manoeuvring a heavily-laden transport barely 30 metres above the trees at 130 knots in smoky conditions, with 3,000 US gallons of retardant delivered during each sortie. The aircraft was backed up by ground teams from No 486 Squadron, and RAAF and Army personnel who refuelled and reloaded the aircraft, enabling 70 tonnes of retardant to be dropped.





## Gunnies Tales

*from Gary Jeffery (Bunya)*

During the initial Hornet course (F/A-18A) for armourers in the US at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pax River (east coast), we were attached to NAS Lemoore (west coast) from May 84 to Nov 84 and then returned to Pax River from Nov 84 to May 85. Whilst at NAS Lemoore we had a trip to Las Vegas and the three of us (Gunnies) were attached to NAS Fallon in Nevada to observe a US Marine bombing camp.

On arrival, myself and Ken were invited into their bar, to be given an initiation drink by fellow gunnies. It consisted of a shot of Tequila, a shot of Jack Daniels and a shot of Tabasco sauce. One had to skull it; it was very tough for me to drink as I only drink beer.

A couple of days later we went out to a bombing range 30 miles away, with a platoon of Marines who were firing mortars for aircraft to bomb. They were firing smoke mortars north to south, with aircraft flying east to west. Later in the day the aircraft changed direction to south to north. At this point we were invited to fire the mortars, and as Ken



L-R: Peter Kiss (Armo) Ken Vincent (Cpl Gunnie, RIP) and Gary Jeffery (Sgt Gunnie)

dropped a round and it was fired, a Hornet flew over. We looked at each other and at the marines, who said if we hit the aircraft, it was our fault.

After lunch, the officer in charge of Marines said to all of us that there would be a delay in our activity as some A-4 Skyhawks were coming through to drop some 500lb bombs. Our Armo, Pete Kiss, asked the Lieutenant where the target was, and he pointed at a old tank. The Boss then says 'that's only 500 yards away!' The Lieutenant pulls out the Marine Bible (rules) and replied 'standing troops in field - 510 yards and it's 520 yards to the target, so we are ok'. My boss sat in the vehicle; we had steel helmets and flak jackets on and could clearly hear shrapnel flying over!

After this adventure, we drove from NAS Lemoore to NAS Pax River (west coast to east coast) in seven days with a couple of days in St Louis to see the Hornet aircraft manufacturing plant. We arrived at Pax River to have some great times with great aircrew and two gentlemen, Ron Haack and Col White.



## Lest We Forget

*from George Mansford*

For our youth- A time to reflect- A time to learn- A time to stand tall.

At the beginning of World One, a very young Australia was still struggling for identity with an old world which possessed a long and rich history, culture, traditions and influence. Europe still yawned when there was mention of that remote and far distant continent of no significance.

Yet, despite being isolated from the old world, (apart from slow steamers and sailing ships plus a newly laid under-sea cable,) our nation was maturing and growing tall at a rapid rate. The harsh



isolation of the outback and the cruel tantrums of mother nature became a good breeding ground for toughness and strong resilience. There was an accepted and established code of mateship, independence, egalitarianism and an unwritten law of a “fair go for all.” All of which had been conceived with the arrival of the First Fleet, and nurtured mid the pain of the lash, clanking chains, the Eureka Stockade, the Great Depression and other trials until this very day.

Such characteristics became the signature of our nation. Long held dreams became alive in every region; from crowded cities to towns, big and small; on dirt tracks in the outback via swagman, horse, dray and puffing train. These powerful strengths breathed life and confidence into the crowded cities, country towns, shearing sheds, drover’s camps, goldfields, farms and beyond the loneliest of barked huts with dirt floors and dim flickering lanterns.

In 1914, after an uninvited God of War knocked on our nation’s door, the qualities I have mentioned and more were carried to Gallipoli and beyond in every kitbag and haversack of those men and women who had stepped forward to serve. These assets remain a very powerful weapon in our armoury which can be used to master the unknown challenges that will face us.

The qualities of the ANZAC, bred from generations before them are there in our history books to read, understand and pursue. Page after page of proud deeds tells of their courage, love of country, and the price they paid willingly so that you, me, and future generations can enjoy such a precious way of life. To ensure such freedom, you must continue to emulate their example. Above all, never falter. You must maintain self- discipline and endure when all seems lost. If you fail; learn from your mistakes, get up and try again. The ANZACS did.

You have been gifted with a freedom forged in times of peace and war with blood, sweat and tears. The ANZAC legacy is so precious and must be protected at any cost. Carry the torch high and in time, pass it on to those who will take your place. Always stand tall, and shout with loud voice for the world to hear “I am, you are, we are Australian.”

## **Strong Genes in a Country Town**

*Inspired by an old soldier, Richard Barry from Narrabri and his fellow citizens from all those yesterdays’*

When you awake to see a new dawn so clear  
Picture our many heroes who once lived here  
A small sleepy town blessed with love, laughter and fun  
Youth with so many wild dreams to pursue in years to come  
Then came the news of an angry God of Mars  
Poisoning peace with hate and misery in an old world afar

Listen and you will hear the sound of bugles and drum beats  
Cheering crowds and the rhythmic tramp of marching feet  
Mid a sea of waving flags, see kin and sweethearts holding back tears  
As the column leaves to fight a war for months or even years  
Imagine special dreams now stored in lonely cupboards next to empty beds  
Footballs, racquets and bats swapped for rifles with bullets of lead

Long bitter years passed by, and many black dresses to be seen  
Empty chairs where loved ones had once been  
Yet always the hope and faith that peace would reign  
Then soon or late, long absent smiling faces would be seen again  
A terrible price to protect a precious free way of life  
An unpayable bill of misery and strife



Since such angry times, white doves returned to roost once more  
The District still well known for its hospitality and an open door  
The old school has been expanded again and again  
Tears of grief have dried while proud memories remain  
In our space age, regional pride with an ever-burning flame is the same  
Fresh flowers guarding the town's stone tribute etched with names

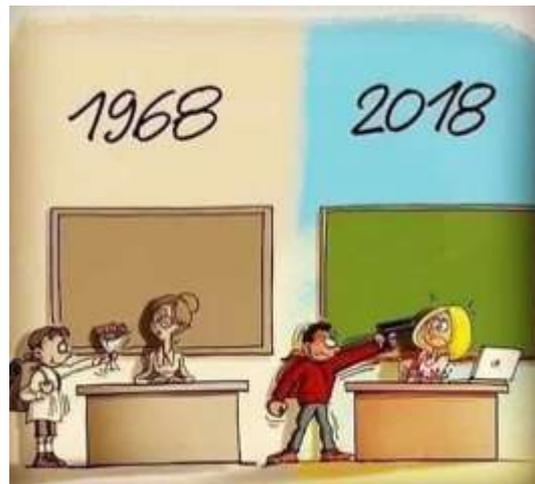
We can best honour the fallen who gave all, for us to stay free  
If we remain alert to greed, ignorance, apathy and disunity  
To understand our past and learn the lessons from what has been  
To carry the torch and teach those yet to be born what freedom means  
The flame will be yours to keep, to pass to those who will know what to do  
Go now; live a life to make past and future generations proud of you

George Mansford © October 2019

NOTE: *The above could be your town, your district, your school, no matter where. But rest assured the spirits of the ANZACS and those who followed them are with you, and very much alive. Keep it so.*



### Then and Now



### Training Aircraft

*from Peter Ring*

By the late 1960s, the Australian produced CAC Winjeel was coming to the end of its useful life and a project was stood up to identify a new training aircraft for the Defence Force. This project included the SIAI-Marchetti SF.260, Beech A23 Musketeer, AESL Airtourer 150, and what was considered at the time to be the front runner, The Beagle Bulldog.



**IScottish Aviation Bulldog**

The Bulldog, which made its first flight on 19 May 1969, was originally designed by the Beagle Aircraft Company, but before the first production version was completed, Scottish Aviation bought out Beagle, and it was under this banner that the first order of 78



aircraft was built for the Swedish Air Force. The largest customer was the Royal Air Force, which placed an order for 130 Bulldogs in 1972, entering service as the Bulldog T.1 being used as a basic trainer. The aircraft was also used by the Royal Navy for Elementary Flying Training. The RAF sold off its remaining Bulldog trainers in 2001 as general aviation light aircraft for a very low price. They were replaced by the Grob Tutor.



RAAF CT-4

Australia eventually discarded the Bulldog in favour of the NZAI CT-4 Airtrainer.



## 25 Feb 41 - Formation of WAAAF Announced

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The Minister for Air, John McEwen, issued a press statement on this day announcing the immediate enrolment of female wireless and teleprinter operators to fill RAAF ground staff vacancies. Proposals to raise a Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) had been before the War Cabinet since July 1940, but not until 4 February 1941 was approval given; the Advisory War Council agreed with the decision the next day. McEwen’s announcement made clear that the women were wanted only ‘until they could be replaced by qualified men’, and - because legal doubts existed over whether women could be enlisted under the Air Force Act - they were at first enrolled only as auxiliaries for renewable periods of 12 months. Nonetheless, the other Services quickly followed the RAAF in establishing women’s Services for general war duty. The WAAAF grew to reach a strength of 18,664 in October 1944.



More here: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/547356?c=people> and a March 2001 Air Force News article is here: <http://www.defence.gov.au/news/raafnews/editions/4404/story10.htm>





## Preso's Prattle March 2020

*from Ron Glew, State President, NSW Division*

I hope all our members and their families are safe and being very cautious during the current COVID-19 pandemic and due to this situation, several events have had to be addressed by your committee. All our ceremonies for the foreseeable future have been cancelled, including the RAAF Birthday Ceremony to be held on the 31st of March, and the Bomber Command Ceremony on 31st May, both at the Sydney Cenotaph. Our AGM due in June will now be subjected to a different format and the assembly mooted for Wests venue, New Lambton is cancelled and our Secretary will provide further information as it becomes clearer so that members may participate widely in the shortened AGM format for this year. We have taken this decision to protect our members and the State Councillors to avoid possible exposure to the virus.

Everyone should be aware by now that the Sydney, and most other Anzac Day marches, has been cancelled, as has the Sydney Dawn Service which will not be open to the public this year. As a further fallout of the health scare, those initiatives I have been advancing with other ESOs have ground to a halt and will, unfortunately, not be reinvigorated until the problem has passed. Very frustrating as we were gathering considerable traction on the Crisis Centre model and the continuing lack of responsive support for our veterans and families in need is extremely frustrating to me personally.

During this period your State Council will meet via video conferencing; those council members that attend Defence Plaza Sydney office will be working from home and there will obviously be disruption in contacting these members. The general office number of (02) 9393 3485 has been diverted to myself; please feel free to call me and I will get the details and redirect the query to the appropriate committee member for their action.

On the National front, the Board has set up a Joint Board Strategic Group (JBSG) with a member from each Division participating, being facilitated by Jim Campbell, LTCOL (Ret'd) who should have been in the RAAF, as he's smarter than a Brownie...top bloke too! The JBSG has been tasked with setting the way forward for the AFA and has considerable delegation and flexibility to chart our Association's future. Once reasonable progress is achieved, members will be briefed accordingly for their input. Keep safe and protect your loved ones, Glewie.



## The Good Old Days!

*from Bob Weight*

Things got done a little bit different back when! After a couple of years at 481 SQN, I was posted to Canberra in January 1977 as an ENGINST - the engineers all occupied C Block (now demolished). I was in the office of a WGCDR ENGAERO (who shall remain nameless) who was ex-SENGO at 77 SQN when I was PLTOFF at 481 SQN. He happened to be one of those ENG types who also had pilot qualifications and was flying Mirages at the time.

Anyway I was in his office in Canberra chatting when he made some comment about instrument types (me), so I made comment about engineers who were not quite up to pilot standard and pilots who were not quite up to engineer standards so they could not decide which one to be! As he came out of his chair I turned and ran for the door of his office, but not fast enough and his boot got me in the backside just as AIRCDRE Tony Dietz (RIP) walked in the door. The WGCDR simply said "just keeping the boggy in line Sir!", to which AIRCDRE Dietz replied, "has to be done – well done!".

The WGCDR of course went on to become an Air Vice Marshal, but perhaps more important, now has a lot to do with RAAFA Publications and Wings...





## Be Connected: IT Literacy and Social Connection for Seniors

*from Naomi Blundell, on behalf of COMMUNITYSUPPORTNSWACT@dva.gov.au*

**B**e Connected offers a simple, affordable and flexible program for groups to provide computer training with a focus on people over 50. If your organisation has members who struggle with technology then this is for you. The model allows groups to join their network, train mentors, and provides free training modules to guide learning sessions. Once you have joined the network, there is also a grant program of activation grants of up to \$2,000 to get networks started with purchase of items like printers, laptops and venue hire. It's simple to join and apply for. For more information go to: <https://www.beconnectednetwork.org.au/> or call 1300 795 897.



If you simply want to find online learning resources to get started with computer basics ranging from how to turn a computer on to online shopping and hobbies, visit their website for topics and training locations: <https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/>



## Snow

*from Peter Schmechtig (aka 'The Captain')*

**I**t had been snowing all night. So at ...

- 8:00** I made a snowman.
- 8:10** A feminist passed by and asked me why I didn't make a snow woman.
- 8:15** So, I made a snow woman.
- 8:17** My feminist neighbour complained about the snow woman's voluptuous chest saying it objectified snow women everywhere.
- 8:20** The gay couple living nearby threw a hissy fit and moaned it could have been two snowmen instead.
- 8:22** The transgender person asked why I didn't just make one snow person with detachable parts.
- 8:25** The vegans at the end of the lane complained about the carrot nose, as veggies are food and not to decorate snow figures with.
- 8:28** I am being called a racist because the snow couple is white.
- 8:31** The Muslim gent across the road demands the snow woman wear a burqa.
- 8:40** The police arrive saying someone has been offended.
- 8:42** The feminist neighbour complained again that the broomstick of the snow woman needs to be removed because it depicted women in a domestic role.
- 8:43** The Government equalities officer arrived and threatened me with eviction.
- 8:45** TV news crew from the BBC shows up. I am asked if I know the difference between snowmen and snow-women? I reply, "Snowballs?" and am called a sexist.
- 9:00** I'm on the news as a suspected terrorist, racist, homophobic sensibility offender bent on stirring up trouble during difficult weather.
- 9:10** I am asked if I have any accomplices. My children are taken by social services.
- 9:29** Far left protesters offended by everything are marching down the street demanding that I be beheaded.

**Moral:** There is no moral to this story. It's just the world in which we live today and it's going to get worse.





## 23 Nov 42 - First Night Interception Over Australian Territory

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Wing Commander Richard ('Dick') Cresswell, the 22-year-old Commanding Officer of No 77 Squadron, was scrambled from the unit's base at Livingstone, NT, at 0327 on this day to mount patrol over Darwin against incoming Japanese raiders. Shortly after 0500 he saw clearly silhouetted against the moon three Mitsubishi G4M 'Betty' bombers in formation heading south at 23,500 feet, and moved to engage them.

On his first attacking pass he raked all three aircraft with a four-second burst from his P40E Kittyhawk's six guns. The bombers immediately turned to port, except the outside Betty which fell behind. Singling out this aircraft, Cresswell made two more passes which left it blazing fiercely and losing height. Shortly afterwards the Betty exploded and fell to earth in two parts. Cresswell's 'kill' was the first time that an enemy aircraft had been shot down over Australian soil at night.



## The Challenges of Space Age Democracy

*from George Mansford*

In seeking the future, we must learn from the past. In doing so we should not forget a shameful record of ignoring lessons including fire, flood, drought and war. Add to the list, the recent neglect of education which is part of the foundation of our nation. With constant changes in curriculum and erosion of social behavior, we cannot expect our dedicated teaching fraternity to perform miracles. These are but a few of the challenges we must meet in our time of office, Down Under.

Within our Nation is another rapidly emerging threat. It includes fragmentation, disunity and restlessness combined with questionable leadership at varying levels. It is not a new problem and readily seen in history books which record such events and their consequences to nations and empires. Most politicians do not understand that our silent majority has common dreams of the future. Such visions relate to prosperity, happiness, unity and security supported within traditional family structure. Our people want to have a clear understanding of purpose. They want to be reassured with sound leadership of where we are going and that our way of life is not in jeopardy from the antics of a growing army of radicals who have demonstrated time and time again their intent to destroy our way of life.

Among its needs, a healthy democratic society depends on trust, sound social standards, individual and collective discipline and unity. Today, noisy and aggressive radicals are increasingly becoming more defiant of the established rules which our society lives by. They flaunt the law. They have no respect for other points of view, while abuse and violence are their trademarks. ***It's either their way or watch out.*** Unbelievably we pander to them, provide support and after they break the rules, rarely do they



receive even the mildest of reprimands. They thrive on such weaknesses, and constant appeasement by our authorities simply adds fuel to already volatile social circumstances. If there was ever a need to flex muscles to counter such threats, it is now, and can only be achieved by politicians with the moral courage to stand tall and rouse the nation’s silent majority into loud voice and action.

All of us must understand that the Australian Spirit, which is our most powerful weapon, is never to be exploited for political gains or diluted to meet trends and questionable intent of a mindless few. Our public duty is about protecting what we have and enhancing it for future generations to emulate; not surrender or watch it being slowly destroyed.

### A Busy Street

I was watching from a distance as the storm swept past  
 An angry sea of placards waving in a crowded street of strife  
 Noisy chants of small minds reaching out to kill a way of life  
 Which long ago, our kin with toil and tears had made to last

I read their slogans and heard the battle cry, yet could not understand  
 Some claimed injustice by slyly distorting history of our beloved land  
 Such hate and intent to destroy a way of life, inherited by me and you  
 Many screamed old ways must go, yet no hint of what they would do  
 Strange flags fluttering yet not one national flag to be seen  
 It seemed they did not know where they were going or had been  
 Mid din and waving signs it wasn’t clear what they were demanding  
 There was no debate for they were in charge and commanding  
 Law abiding citizens heading for work, frowned as they struggled by  
 Hampered by officially tolerated mob rule, many innocents wondered why

I dream of when the street was full of smiles, giddays and more  
 Of marching bands and cheering crowds with national flags galore  
 All as one with many options before deciding what they must do  
 (Long before tongues were slashed to ensure just one point of view)  
 Respect for our laws, self-discipline and knowing wrong from right  
 For all to safely walk the street, be it day or night  
 Students carrying books of past proud deeds and lessons learnt to be read  
 To walk tall, and when wrong; true heart to admit what was done or said  
 A smile for the policeman on patrol, upholding law and protecting all  
 These are some of the rules to ponder and for all to make the call

The day is ending and by midnight the street will rest  
 Weary and scarred as it catches breath for what will be another test  
 A new dawn will see our street yawn and once more surge to life  
 The question is; will we make it one of peace, or allow turmoil and strife?

George Mansford © January 2020



### The lighter side...

*from Howard Campbell*

Did you hear about the old Digger who went to his GP for his annual licence medical checkup? The GP told him he could only drive within a 15km radius of his home. Soooo, he bought a mobile home!

There was a party with a long table laden with food and a long queue. At the end was a smaller table with a large bowl of drink, and no queue... There was no punch line.



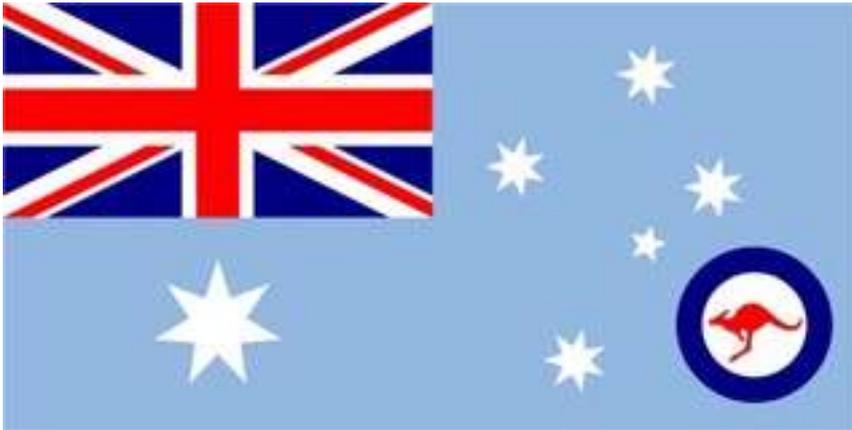


## 23 Nov 81 - New RAAF Ensign First Displayed

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On this day, the first example of a new Ensign featuring the RAAF’s ‘leaping kangaroo’ roundel in place of the RAF cockade went on display in the office of the Chief of the Air Staff, finally completing the process of evolving a distinctive flag for the RAAF.



In 1922 the Australian Air Council had decided that the RAAF would use the ensign of the Royal Air Force ‘without difference’, and this arrangement continued until 1949 when a new flag which incorporated the Southern Cross was approved by King George VI. Attempts were made during the RAAF’s golden

jubilee (1971) to have the roundel of the RAF replaced by the kangaroo roundel, which the Australian Service adopted in 1956, but these came to nothing for another decade. After receipt of the Royal Assent during the RAAF’s diamond jubilee year, the new Ensign was gazetted in 1982.



## Our Nation Remembers Rwanda Peacekeepers

*from the Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT.  
Saturday, 22 February 2020*

The service and sacrifice of Australia’s Rwanda peacekeeping veterans from Operation TAMAR will be remembered today at a national commemorative service held at the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra. Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester said it is crucial to honour the efforts of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel in bringing peace to a country overrun with conflict. “From 1994 to 1996 it is estimated that up to 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda — the magnitude of the violence and killings perpetrated on largely innocent civilians gained worldwide attention and condemnation,” Mr Chester said. “The men and women who served in Rwanda were faced with unimaginable conditions and not even their advanced training and prior deployments could prepare them for what they encountered. “In the face of these conditions, our ADF personnel went above and beyond in their duties. Thank you for your service to our nation and to helping a country in need.”

The two Australian contingents worked in the capital, Kigali and travelled throughout the country, providing help to civilians from July 1994 to March 1996. At the service, the Governor-General His Excellency General, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) presented the Meritorious Unit Citation Warrant to each Service Chief, or their representatives, who accepted on behalf of their respective service personnel who deployed on the operation. The Senator for Victoria, David Van, representing the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs acknowledged the role of all Australian peacekeepers who served in Rwanda. “All three services were represented during Operation TAMAR, and



Australian men and women gained great international respect and admiration for their compassion, professionalism and humanity in undertaking the peacekeeping operation,” Senator Van said.

“Today’s service is an opportunity to honour the service of those involved in Operation TAMAR in support of the United Nations’ peacekeeping efforts and I look forward to meeting many of those who took part and personally thanking them. “Today is also an opportunity to reflect on all those Australians who have served in peacekeeping operations since 1947 with the aim of making the world a safer and more peaceful place.”



**Australian peacekeepers giving out gifts to children at the Kigali Gaol, Rwanda, March 8, 1995**

Following the commemorative service, a reception will be held in the Anzac Hall of the Australian War Memorial, where a number of Operation TAMAR veterans will be presented with their individual Meritorious Unit Citation insignia. “For the some 700 ADF personnel who served in Operation TAMAR, the Meritorious Unit Citation is a worthy tribute in recognition of

what they were able to achieve in Rwanda,” Senator Van said. “Australia will not forget your efforts and I congratulate you on being awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation as deserved recognition.” The Commemorative Service will start at 10am today at the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra. To watch the service, visit the Department of Veterans’ Affairs Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/DVAAUS](http://www.facebook.com/DVAAUS)) or watch it live on ABC.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Minister Chester: Rachel Tharratt, 02 6277 7820  
Senator Van: Will Redmond, 0433 656 601  
DVA Media: 02 6289 6466 Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT.



## **Valuable Lessons**

*from John W. Clarkson*

**E**verything we need to know, we can learn from Noah's Ark:

**ONE:** Don't miss the boat.

**TWO:** Remember that we are all in the same boat.

**THREE:** Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

**FOUR:** Stay fit. When you're 60 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.

**FIVE:** Don't listen to critics...just get on with the job that needs to be done.

**SIX:** Build your future on high ground.

**SEVEN:** For safety sake, travel in pairs.



**EIGHT:** Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

**NINE:** When you're stressed, float awhile.

**TEN:** Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs...the Titanic was built by professionals.

**ELEVEN:** No matter the storm, there's always a rainbow waiting.

Have a pleasant day!



## **From The Flightline: National President's Message**

*from Carl Schiller, OAM CSM, National President*

**T**he Air Force Association celebrated its 100th Anniversary on February 26th at a dinner in Canberra. Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, AO, DSC, accompanied by his wife Louise, was the Guest of Honour. Air Chief Marshal (Retd) Sir Angus Houston, KT, AFC, and his wife Liz also attended as did Warrant Officer of the Air Force, Warrant Officer Fiona (Fee) Grasby, OAM. The evening was a great fellowship opportunity with many of those present having travelled from WA and northern QLD.

Unfortunately, centenary celebrations at the Divisional level had to be postponed due to the spread of COVID-19. I am acutely aware of the disappointment this may have caused our members. Fellowship is a key feature of our Association, and I am aware of the virus' impact on other occasions such as ANZAC Day, which has taken away opportunities for our members and their families to socialise. I have asked Division Presidents to arrange contact with their members by email or phone to ensure they understand they are not alone and that the Association will provide or arrange support where it is able. DVA has advised that Open Arms is being overwhelmed by calls with veterans suffering increased anxiety. My advice is to avoid social media that is spreading the panic with opinion rather than fact. Follow the Health Departments' advice on COVID-19 precautions and watch the world from your living room.

On a brighter note, I am pleased to advise Warrant Officer Grasby has become a member of the Association's Joint Board Steering Group that is tasked with modernising the organisation. Her role is advisory and keeping the Group informed of the needs of serving members and their families. I expect the Association's relationship with Air Force will be strengthened by having Air Marshal Hupfeld as our Patron and Warrant Officer Grasby on the Joint Board Steering Group. We have a commitment to serving and ex-serving veterans. We can only truly meet this pledge by understanding the needs of these two groups of veterans.

Air Force is on track to commemorate its 100th Anniversary in 2021 despite the uncertainty on the containment of COVID-19 by this time. I met with the AF2021 Team on March 25th to receive an update on the planning and how the Association may assist Air Force. Please keep watch on our National website for advice on the proposed celebrations and involvement of Air Force veterans and their families.

Stay safe and keep well



## **The World's First Air Traffic Control Tower**

*from Gordon Johnstone*

*edited from the article: By Ted Thornhill, Mailonline Travel Editor, 25 February 2020*

- The hut was built on the orders of the UK Air Ministry, which stipulated it should be '15ft above ground level'.



- At the time Croydon Aerodrome, formed of several huts and a grass runway, was London's main airport.
- In the 1920s it was the busiest airport in the world, with around a dozen flights a day to Paris and Brussels.

The world's first air traffic control tower was built by the UK government 100 years ago at Croydon Aerodrome, south London. The structure, a wooden hut, was built on the orders of the UK Air Ministry, which stipulated that it should be 'erected 15 feet above ground level' and with 'large windows to be placed on all four walls'. The Air Ministry letter ordering the building of the Croydon control tower also specified such cutting edge features as 'Light proof blinds' and a 'wind-vane'.



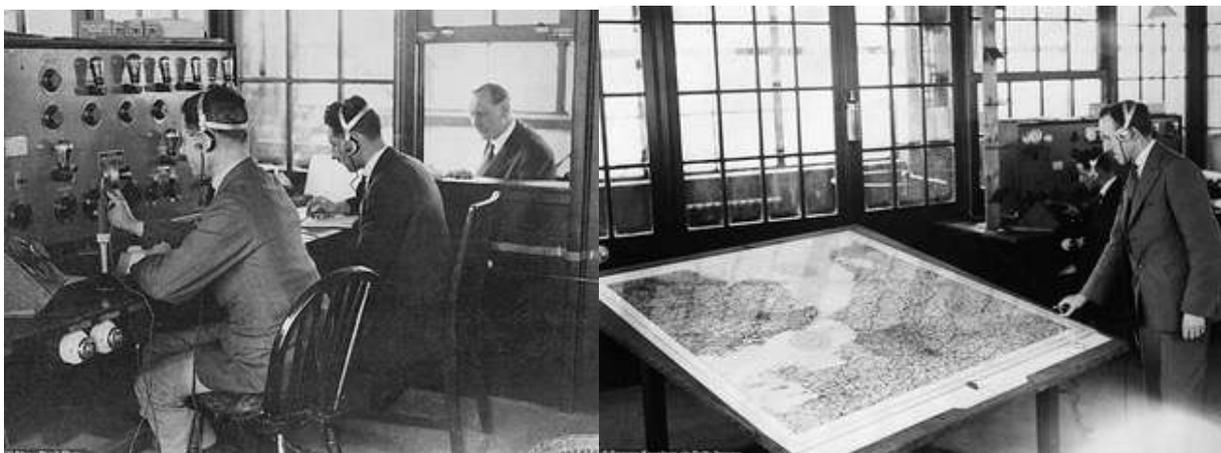
This building was to be called the 'Aerodrome Control Tower' and at a stroke, the ministry coined both the term that has remained synonymous with air traffic control for the past 100 years and a design that remains instantly recognisable. At the time Croydon Aerodrome, formed of several huts and a grass runway, was London's main airport

and this tower kick-started the development of air traffic control. A century later and NATS, as the UK's main air traffic control service, manages 2.6million flights a year carrying hundreds of millions of passengers.

The concept of air traffic control emerged alongside the rise of the world's first airline passenger services and the UK Air Ministry commissioned the Croydon tower on February 25, 1920, to help safely organise growing levels of traffic. In the 1920s Croydon Aerodrome was the busiest airport in the world, with around a dozen flights a day to Paris and Brussels.

Ian Walker, Chair of Historic Croydon Airport Trust, said: 'In 1920 there was no blueprint for what air traffic control or even an airport should look like, so it fell to those early pioneers to develop, test and implement the ideas that would enable air travel to grow safely.'

Airfields before this had radio offices and "aerial lighthouses", but nothing with the explicit intent of providing technical air traffic services to aircraft. The "control tower" was described as an "essential" development and its legacy lives on with us today.



The progress of the dozen or so daily flights was tracked using basic radio-based navigation and plotted on paper maps and using pins and flags



The first controllers – known as Civil Aviation Traffic Officers or CATOs – provided basic traffic, location and weather information to pilots over the radio, which itself was still a relatively new invention. The progress of the dozen or so daily flights was tracked using basic radio-based navigation and plotted on paper maps and using pins and flags.

Today, NATS' 1,700 air traffic controllers handle up to 8,000 flights a day in some of the world's busiest airspace. Juliet Kennedy, Nats operations director, said: 'We've come a long way since the first controllers in terms of the amount of traffic we handle and the tools we use, but the motivation to harness the latest technology to help make flying safer and more efficient remains at the absolute heart of what we do.'

Juliet concludes: 'The early pioneers of the 1920s laid down the foundations that allowed aviation to flourish in the 20th century and enrich the lives of countless people around the world. Now, with over three million flights a year predicted by 2030, we need to do the same for the rest of the 21st century.'



## Who Needs Enemies with Friends Like This?

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**A**ir-to-air gunnery practice is normally firing at a drogue - a fabric cone towed behind an aircraft. Being pilot of a drogue-towing aircraft was never a highly sought after job since novice air gunners were known to occasionally spray their fire too far ahead of the drogue, with the result that the towing aircraft sometimes landed with a few holes in its tail; a bit of a worry. But these risks were nothing compared with the experience described by Tom Offord, a WAG, from Bull Creek, WA.

The navy had two new warships in Trincomalee Harbour, Ceylon, (as Sri Lanka was then called) and requested that our flight provide a drogue-towing aircraft for firing practice and calibration work. This meant fitting a Vultee Vengeance Dive Bomber with towing equipment at breakneck speed and giving my pilot and myself a supershort course on the peculiarities of drogues and most important of all, on the delicate art of dealing with the Navy. It was impressed on us that the utmost secrecy must prevail as the Navy was trying out new equipment.

The great day arrived. We took off full of high hopes - flew over the target area dead on time and then wham! The warships opened up with more than pea shooters and - horror of horrors - shell bursts were deadly accurate as to height, but were exploding just ahead of our aircraft, instead of about one hundred yards astern where the drogue was.

My pilot, Len Pennock, quickly handed me a scribbled message with the instructions 'Send Urgently'. We didn't have direct R/T communication for the pilot; the WAG had to transmit any messages. So I promptly transmitted Len's message in plain language (P/L) Morse code. It read: 'We are pulling this bloody drogue, not pushing it'.

When we got back to base the fit had hit the shan. 'Transmitting P/L is not on', the CO fumed, 'except in cases of extreme emergency'. Len replied, 'It was an absobloodylutely extreme emergency; anyway it was my decision'. Len didn't mince words. The CO relented and we later learned that the Navy had framed our message. (After the war someone sent the story to Readers Digest, where it appeared in 'Humour in Uniform'. No, we didn't get paid for it, nor did we get the credit; 'c'est la vie', or maybe, 'C'est la guerre'.)

*SKYLARKS - THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE IN THE RAAF IN WORLD WAR II*, edited by Eric Brown, Air Power Studies



## A Fortunate Career

*from John W. Clarkson*

I enlisted in the RAAF as an apprentice on 18 January 1960, (yes, the 60th anniversary happened recently), graduating as an Armament Fitter on 14 December 1962, and I left the service in October 1984, just short of 25 years. Considering that the first four years were in training, (three years at Wagga as an apprentice, plus one year mandatory 'OJT' training at an Aircraft Depot), I actually had almost 21 productive years of service. When I look back, I consider myself very fortunate indeed to have accomplished the following in those 21 years:

- Endorsed to carry out servicing at all levels of maintenance on eight different aircraft types, including Sabre, Canberra, Vampire, Macchi, Iroquois, Orion P3-B, Orion P3-C, and the F111C. (I mention both types of Orion P3 aircraft, as for the Armourer, the P3-B and the P3-C aircraft were totally different).
- With regard to flying units, I was privileged to serve on five different types of operational squadrons, namely Bomber (1SQN), Fighter (77SQN and 79SQN), Helicopter (9SQN Vietnam – including the famous 9SQN Gunship), Maritime (492SQN with both P3 types) and Reconnaissance (2SQN – until the squadron's disbandment).
- Whilst posted at ARDU, at RAAF Base Laverton, I was part of a team to develop the Canberra Target Towing modification, although the initial draft modification was far stronger than the one finally approved by Support Command!
- In addition to flying unit experience, I was privileged to be part of a team at No 1 Central Ammunition Depot, (headed by SQNLDR Ray Sonsie) to introduce the "EXPENG" (Explosive Ordnance Engineering) to the Support Command Ordnance Engineering structure in the late 1970s.
- To the best of my beliefs, I believe that I amongst others belonged to the last Fighter Squadron to have carried out live scrambles (less than 3 minutes between the alarm and being airborne) with full loads of HE ordnance against a perceived foe. That squadron was No 79 Squadron in Ubon Thailand. Slightly prior to that, No 77 Squadron was performing live scrambles at RAAF Base Butterworth with full loads of HE ordnance during the Indonesian Confrontation. Some have said that some of those scrambles were reminiscent of 'Battle of Britain' days! Of all the fighter aircraft the RAAF has had in its inventory since the Sabre, I don't think there was one which could achieve a three-minute scramble from a stationary position at the end of the runway – with the pilot and ground crew on standby in a nearby hut.

Early in my service, there were many who would promote the possibility of achieving a fine career path in the RAAF, and this was a constructive thing to do. However, it was on my very first posting to an operational squadron, (No 1 Squadron – Amberley) in 1964/65, that I was to learn that the desire to be of service was a far greater emotional driver than simply desiring a career. When I arrived at 1SQN, I had been an LAC for a whole 3 months and was 3 months short of my 20th birthday! I looked around the Armament Section to view my colleagues and NCOs, as well as looking at the Warrant Officer Engineer (WOE), and thought, 'When I look at the seniority of all these men, the last thing I felt was to chase a career path'.

Of the six LACs, the most senior had seven years experience and the others were not far behind. The two Corporals both had WWII experience, (one with the RAAF and the other with the Army), and the Flight Sergeant had joined the RAAF from Australia House in London, having served with the RAF since 1940. Yes, he had been a young Armourer in a fighter squadron in the Battle of Britain! The squadron WOE told me that he had been a Warrant Officer for longer than I had been alive – and it was true!



It was from then on, all that I ever wanted was to serve on operational squadrons. Yes, when I look back, I have been very fortunate indeed to have served during a period of considerable change, yet the RAAF engineering as well as the ordnance empires rode out those changes very well indeed. So, one may bravely say that I didn't really have a career in the RAAF, but I had a strong commitment to operational service.

Several years after my discharge from the RAAF, I was to discover that my experience in maintenance planning at a number of RAAF units, as well as my experience at No 1 Central Ammunition Depot writing draft ordnance publications, would be of considerable benefit in two different areas of Qantas Airways Limited. I worked in Aircraft Allocation and Maintenance Planning at Qantas Engineering for six years developing the long term maintenance plan for all Qantas International Aircraft. Then, later I worked for Qantas Flight Operations in the Flight Technical area for eight years as part of a team who developed the Operations Manual suite of publications, by adapting the Boeing Manual to suit Qantas and Australian conditions. In my case, the aircraft allocated to me was the B747-400. Drawing on considerable experience in cooperating with RAAF flight crews, I was able to relate to Qantas pilots, their responsibilities and their difficulties; they were a good team. Yes, I have been retired now for some 16 years, and I am well aware that I have been very fortunate indeed.



## The National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention

*from Naomi Blundell, on behalf of COMMUNITYSUPPORTNSWACT@dva.gov.au*

The veteran community has welcomed the recent announcement of a powerful new independent body which will be created to investigate all suspected veteran and Australian Defence Force (ADF) suicides and causes to help save lives. The National Commissioner will have the enduring power, scope and resources to investigate suicides and related issues as they arise, rather than being restricted by a one-off review looking at past practices.



The National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention will be empowered to perform two roles:

- The Commissioner will be an independent and permanent public accountability body, with the same powers of a Royal Commission to compel the production of evidence and summon witnesses, and make findings and recommendations to Government.
- The Commissioner will also provide an ongoing investigative function of individual cases of suicide, working with each state and territory coronial office, making recommendations to Government.



## Australia Remembers The Bombing of Darwin

*from the Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT*

Today, 19 February 2020, is the 78th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin by the Japanese in the Second World War, recognising a time when our shores came under direct attack. Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester will join the Northern Territory community at services held this morning to commemorate the bombing of Darwin, as well as the sinking of U.S.S. Peary. "On 19 February 1942, Australia unexpectedly came under attack when



Darwin was bombed, with more than 250 people killed, including Australian and Allied forces,” Mr Chester said. “While the original raid on 19 February 1942 was by far the most damaging in terms of loss of life and in its impact on civilian and military infrastructure, some Australians may not know it was the beginning of a bombing campaign on northern Australia that continued for over a year and a half. “These northern Australian towns, especially Darwin, held military importance and the raids were aimed at reducing Australia’s ability to counter the Japanese offensive in the Pacific. “The 64th, and last, air raid on Darwin occurred on 12 November 1943, and the north of Australia was subject to almost 100 air raids which were directed against targets in Western Australia and Queensland as well as the Northern Territory.

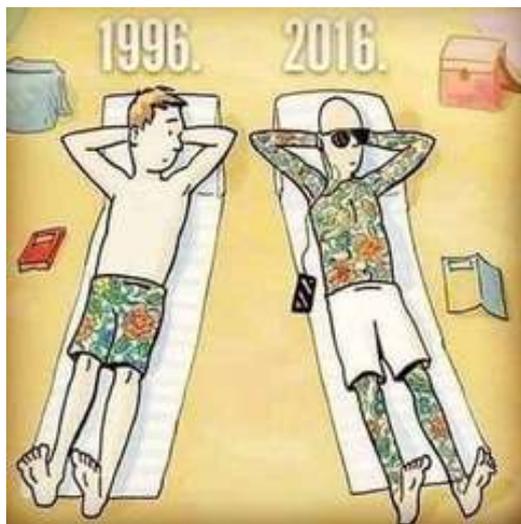
While Australia had been involved in the war on the side of the Allies since 1939, the bombing of Darwin came soon after Japan entered the war and was the first occasion on which the Australian mainland came under attack. During the first raid on Darwin, the American Destroyer USS Peary was sunk, killing 88 American sailors and wounding 13 - the greatest single loss of life on any ship attacked that day. “The bombing of Darwin occurred just two months after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Americans were our close allies in battle in the Pacific,” Mr Chester said. “Reports tell the story of members of Peary’s crew returning fire at the Japanese aircraft with heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft weapons, even as their ship was sinking. “We are forever indebted to these brave American sailors who gave their lives to help protect our nation from attack and they will always be remembered, particularly in Darwin. “Today, I encourage all Australians to take a moment to reflect on this significant day in our history to remember those who died and honour those who fought to protect our nation and our way of life.”

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and we should never forget the sacrifice of the some 39,000 service men and women who died fighting to protect Australia and its allies and the almost one million men and women who fought in this terrible conflict which spanned more than half a decade.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Rachel Tharratt: 02 6277 7820 DVA Media: 02 6289 6466 Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT.



### Then and Now





## The Odd Bods (UK) Association Memorial Plaque Dedication

14 March 2020

*from Peter Scully*

### Patron's Commemorative Address

The Friends of the Odd Bods have given me the great honour of inviting me to give the commemorative address this morning: thank you. I have been associated with the Odd Bods Assn for 35 years, having had the great honour of being their Patron since 1989 and, since 1996, also of their successors, the Friends of the Odd Bods. Thanks to a grant from the Australian War Memorial and over a two year period, I was able to interview 50 RAAF members who flew in Europe, 36 of whom were Odd Bods. I also transcribed those interviews so that these records are now available digitally for anyone interested in reading them.



**Peter Scully, Patron of the Friends of Odd Bods**

'Odd Bods': The name itself brings forth many blank looks, accompanied at times with a few smiles. (Some will remember that pithy comment: "The whole world is strange, excepting ye and me...and even thee is a bit odd at times"). Who were they and why are they being honoured here today? I would like to take this opportunity to provide a short historical background.

During WWII, Britain faced attack from the Nazi regime, mainly from the air. Britain was able to build the necessary aircraft for its defence, but they did not have facilities to train the great numbers of aircrews needed. The nations of the then Empire agreed to share that training task – known today as the Empire Air Training Scheme. Australia trained just on 28,000 aircrew for service in Europe - an enormous undertaking. Just on 4,000 of those lost their lives in combat and an additional 800 in training accidents. Over 1,000 became prisoners of war.

The agreement provided for the RAAF to form 17 notionally Australian squadrons for service in the European theatre but in addition, RAAF aircrew were scattered among 214 RAAF and Canadian squadrons, and I do mean scattered – at over 400 different locations, some as far away as Cairo and India. But these volunteers – and they were volunteers – once they arrived in the UK were then completely under the control of the RAF. Inadequate attention was paid to maintaining their unique Australian identity. The Canadians were much smarter, forming a separate Canadian Group. The RAAF CAS of the day, Sir Richard Williams, commented "They did not know that most of their achievements were not recorded in Australian history."

This was brought home to me when, sometime ago, I was asked by the ANU to write an entry for the Australia Dictionary of Biography for a RAAF pilot who commanded a RAF squadron of Spitfires in the Middle East. He lost his life just six months after his brother was shot down and killed over Berlin flying with a Canadian squadron. I searched our archives and back then his file contained just 2 folios; his enlistment and his discharge documents – absolutely nothing about his service. However, I must point out that since then, considerable progress has been made to expand these records, indeed that file now has over 40 pages, although there is much still to be done and the Australian Archives aims to complete this task by July 2023.

Of the 36 Odd Bods I interviewed, the archives presently show records for only 26, with only six of those containing any mention of service with the RAF. This information is only available through the British Ministry of Defence. How many are we talking about? Well, of the 28,000 RAAF aircrew who served in Europe, the Odd Bods comprised significantly the greater number. Of those killed in action,



1824 were serving in RAAF squadrons and 3089 in non-Australian squadrons. With no detailed records of their service achievements available locally, it is then, so appropriate that their service is now recognised here today. My grateful thanks to those at the AWM, especially Sara Hitchman - who have enabled this tribute to be established and to the Friends who have effectively pursued this objective with great enthusiasm.



**L to R: SQNLDR Bruce Waxton (Specialist Reserve 21 SQN); FLTLT Geoff Conacher (pilot, 622 Lancaster Sqn); WOFF John Ireland (CStJ, WAG, 575 Dakota Transport Sqn and WGCDR Edward Fleming (pilot, 550 Lancaster Sqn)**

What was the origin of the Odd Bods (UK) Assn? At the conclusion of that terrible war, members who had served were all keen to gather regularly in their old squadron groups to maintain friendships and remember those who did not return, but those who had served in RAF squadrons – sometimes just one RAAF member in a squadron – did not have sufficient numbers to enable this. George Smith was an Odd Bod with a very creditable wartime record of 44 missions in No 180 RAF Squadron, a Tactical Air Force squadron operating Mitchell bombers. He barely survived a serious aircraft crash. George came up with the concept of an Odd Bods Assn, becoming the Association President, long-time secretary and newsletter editor. He even obtained the Patronage of one of the greatest WWII airman, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC, OM, DSO and two Bars, DFC, who commented in his foreword to the book ‘Odd Bods at War’:

*“As 1939/45 recedes further into the past and those who lived through those fateful years diminish in number, memoirs such as these take on an added significance. WWII was fought on so vast a scale with such devastating consequences, that the individual tends to be swamped and the value of his contribution overlooked. The war demonstrated what can be achieved by teamwork. Even in its darkest hour, Britain never stood alone. From the word go, the Commonwealth was there too to offer in ever increasing measure her resources and manpower. By 1945 almost half of Bomber Command’s pilots came from Australia, Canada and New Zealand.”*

By 1960 the Odd Bods membership rose to over 600, so the Odd Bods eventually became the largest WWII ex-Service organisation, often with other RAAF squadron associations joining in Odd Bod reunions. As numbers of members inevitably decreased, George formally closed the Odd Bods and arranged to legally form the ‘Friends’ with the same objectives as their parent: ‘Pressing on, remembering.’ Thus, preserving memories into the future, a brilliant concept and one now under the



competent and enthusiastic direction of the now President, SQNLDR Bruce P Waxman OAM, RAAF (Ret'd) and his dedicated and enthusiastic committee and members.

The RAAF contribution to the war in Europe was massive; a previous Air Force Historian declared it was where the RAAF 'came of age.' These great efforts and associated sacrifices are almost unknown to the Australian people today. Indeed, retired Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal David Evans commented "Australians are really not aware of the contribution of the RAAF during World War II. It irks me to find that everyone knows about Gallipoli and Tobruk and we have a PM that makes sure we know about Kokoda. But very few know about the RAAF's contribution – it really was quite massive." Members of the Odd Bods formed the vast majority of this 'massive' contribution.

History such as this should not be allowed to fade away. Perhaps it might be helpful if the detail of this contribution could be more easily accessible to Australians. I wonder, as a Centenary of the RAAF project next year, whether it might be possible to enter into an agreement between the RAAF, our National Archives and the National Archives UK, to enable all British records of RAAF members who served in Europe in non-RAAF Squadrons to be made available for access through our own archives – those members deserve to be remembered.



### 7 Mar 07 - Yogyakarta Aircrash

*This material is compiled from sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and Peter Dunn. The History and Heritage Branch–Air Force is not responsible for pre-1921 items. Whilst every effort is made to confirm the accuracy of the entries, any discrepancies are solely the responsibility of the originator. As I am not a member of History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, all Air Force history or heritage queries should be directed, in the first instance, to [airforce.history@defence.gov.au](mailto:airforce.history@defence.gov.au)*

*Warrant Officer David Coles compiles a daily 2020 Diary item featuring ADF Aircraft. These entries will be included for the remainder of this year. Warrant Officer Coles is happy to take submissions at [david.coles1@defence.gov.au](mailto:david.coles1@defence.gov.au)*

On this day, Flight Sergeant Michael Hatton and LAC Kyle Quinlan were travelling on a Garuda Airlines 737-400 which crashed on landing at Yogyakarta airport in Indonesia. Both were members of the security detail for a contingent of diplomats, journalists, police and other officials covering a visit by the Australian Foreign Minister. When the aircraft struck the runway hard, 21 people were killed including five Australian passengers. On impact the aircraft had burst in flames on the starboard side.



Remains of Garuda flight 200

With the help of another passenger, Quinlan opened an emergency hatch on the opposite side and guided survivors to safety. Noticing that Hatton was temporarily incapacitated from a blow to the head, he also helped him to escape and moved him 40–50 metres away from the site. He then repeatedly entered the smoke-filled wreckage to remove other injured passengers, until the flames forced him to withdraw. On 17 August, Quinlan was awarded the Bravery Medal.





## Awkward!!

from John Clarkson

This event occurred some years ago, (after all it has been 35 years since I left the RAAF), so bear with me. Every year on the 7th December, the combined messes of units at Pearl Harbor and Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii have a combined dinner to celebrate the infamous attack by the Japanese forces. (I'm not sure if this event still occurs). If by chance, there is a visiting squadron or ship in or near Pearl Harbor, the Commanding Officer and the Senior Engineer Officer of that squadron and/or ship are invited to attend. (I am aware of a couple of RAAF SNCOs and Officers who have attended such a dinner).

During the dinner, the host usually invites their guests to say a few words which usually involves the reason the guest is there at Pearl Harbor and also a voice of appreciation for the invitation. These guests have come from a variety of nations and different navies and air forces. However, during the 1980s, a Japanese squadron was one of several who were on a combined exercise during the month of December. Therefore, there were a few different guests at the combined messes dinner. Each guest stood in turn to express their appreciation for being able to attend this occasion. When the Japanese Commander stood to speak, there was a hush in the mess, not knowing what the Commander would say. The Commander simply said, "We of xxx Squadron really appreciate your invitation to this occasion. Our squadron has actually been here before, but we were not able to land. So, it is our pleasure to finally attend".

I am told that conversation between guests and their hosts went suddenly quiet after that – and the dinner was over!



## 77SQN in Last Air Combat in Korea

27 Mar 53

*This material is compiled from sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and Peter Dunn. The History and Heritage Branch–Air Force is not responsible for pre-1921 items. Whilst every effort is made to confirm the accuracy of the entries, any discrepancies are solely the responsibility of the originator. As I am not a member of History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, all Air Force history or heritage queries should be directed, in the first instance, to [airforce.history@defence.gov.au](mailto:airforce.history@defence.gov.au)*

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On this day, two Gloster Meteor Mk8 jets of No 77 Squadron, flown by Sergeants George Hale (A77-851) and David Irlam (A77-446), were conducting a road reconnaissance over North Korea near Sinmak when Hale saw what he thought was a lone MiG-15.

It was only as he dived into the attack that he realised he was opposed by three enemy aircraft. In the ensuing dogfight, Hale's cannon fire sent one MiG down on its back, belching black smoke and shedding bits of fuselage as it dropped from view. Irlam's aircraft was badly damaged and returned to base. Hale was immediately confronted by another pair of MiGs; he scored hits on one of these also and saw it trailing white smoke as it climbed away from him. Having expended all his ammunition,



SGT Hale with his Meteor 'Halestorm'



Hale broke off contact. This was the last time that No 77 Squadron aircraft engaged in aerial combat in Korea, and indeed the last time that any RAAF unit has been involved in air-to-air fighting since.

Biography of George Hale is here:

<http://rnzaf.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=Aussie&action=print&thread=3660>

and a Temora Aviation Museum (TAM)tribute here: <https://aviationmuseum.com.au/george-hale/>



**WHAT DO WE LEARN  
FROM COWS,  
BUFFALOS AND  
ELEPHANTS??**

**IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO  
REDUCE WEIGHT BY  
EATING GREEN  
GRASS AND SALADS  
AND WALKING.**

*The Humor League*

