



SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

31 Mar 21 - Australian Air Force Officially Formed

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On this day, the Australian Air Corps (AAC) – a temporary Army unit raised 15 months earlier – was disbanded and replaced by the Australian Air Force (AAF) as a separate service. Although the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) was disbanded after WW I ended in 1918, Australia was committed to retaining a military air service. Britain had gifted 128 surplus aircraft to Australia to establish an air force, and some of these planes - along with training machines already at Point Cook - were operated by an interim army unit, the Australian Air Corps, during 1920-21.

The AAF immediately took possession of existing aircraft and equipment at Point Cook, Victoria, but not all the AAC’s personnel were transferred across. At its formation the new Service had 21 officers and 128 other ranks, and even six months later this strength had barely doubled. The 153 aircraft which initially came into the AAF’s possession were mainly war surplus machines received under an ‘Imperial Gift’ arrangement. Most stayed in storage, and for several years only 50–60 aircraft were actually in use. Economies imposed in 1922 forced the RAAF to cut back on development plans, so that even after five years in existence it had less than 700 personnel.

The Commonwealth Gazette of 31 March 1921 announced the formation of the Australian Air Force. The prefix Royal was granted soon after and promulgated on 31 August 1921. Financial restrictions held back the formation of the Reserve elements for some time, even after approval was granted in November 1921. By sheer hard work and determination the reserve elements of the permanent squadrons came into being and in April 1936 several autonomous Citizen Air Force Units were raised in the major cities of the east coast and in Perth.

The RAAF was the second independent air force in the world, established three years after the Royal Air Force in Britain.





ANZAC Day 2020 Defeats Corona Virus

from the Editor

In 1916 the first ANZAC Day commemorations were held on 25 April. The day was marked by a wide variety of ceremonies and services across Australia, a march through London, and a sports day in the Australian camp in Egypt. In London more than 2,000 Australian and New Zealand troops marched through the streets; a London newspaper headline dubbed them “the knights of Gallipoli”. Marches were held all over Australia; in the Sydney march convoys of cars carried soldiers wounded on Gallipoli and their nurses.

This year, 104 years since that first ANZAC Day, ANZAC services and commemorations across the world were cancelled due to the threat of the COVID-19 corona virus pandemic. Undeterred, most Australians and New Zealanders still commemorated this sacred occasion, many by simply standing at the end of their driveways with a candle as dawn broke. Others with musical ability played the Last Post on a range of instruments including bugle, trumpet, bagpipes, clarinet, guitar, flute, tuba, and violin. Houses were decorated, even garbage bins were adorned to mark the occasion.



Bruce Niblett, President of the RADAR Branch, attached the branch banner to the front of his house





The less formal, but massive, nationwide commemoration of ANZAC Day this year is testament to the reverence in which our original diggers are held, and the ongoing support for veterans from every conflict and peacekeeping operation since those fateful days in 1915.



When They Let Fighter Pilots Get Their Hands On Old Daks

from Peter Scully

While I was instructing at CFS, as a break from Vampire and Winjeel instructing, I was offered conversion onto the Dakota. Immediately, I thought: “What if my fighter pilot friends (if any) found out? Anyway, the temptation was great and having already been familiar with the wonders of asymmetric flight (Pembroke and Meteor), I jumped at the chance and after much swearing I managed to get an endorsement.

My first ‘real student’ was a Navy Lieutenant. So, off we went and all went well until just on lift-off when the tower called up and said: “You have thick black smoke coming from your starboard engine”. A staff sig (Kevin Murray) was along for the ride and was standing between the seats. As you can’t get a good view of the rear of the engine from the right hand seat,



Kev ran back into the cabin, rushed back and yelled in my ear: “They’re right you know”. At this stage, the Chief Flying Instructor, Lyall Klaffer, was at the runway holding point in a Vampire and, knowing my limited experience in the Dak, he was yelling out: “For heaven’s sake Pete - don’t feather.” “Too late”, I cried and then quietly completed an asymmetric circuit and landing. No damage done – except the engine of course. I was more than a bit miffed as I was expecting a medal or two, only to be told by the Flight Commander: “I thought your approach was a bit flat.” I suspect that my Navy student was then keen to give this flying business away and get back to the rough seas.

The Dak wasn’t finished with me yet though; I was given the job of providing a refresher to the then Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Air Commodore Hurditch, who probably had 10 or more times as many hours on the Dak than I. Briefing over, we settled into the cockpit (flight deck?) and proceeded to ‘start her up’. But wait, the cockpit was not at all familiar to me. They had brought out an old C47-A which I had never seen before, as all my flying so far was in the C47B – the starting systems were very much different. What to do? I opened the right hand window and called out to the fire guard (I still remember his name, Tommy Sandfield): “Hey Tommy, got a few minutes please?” When he appeared in the cockpit all I could do was the ask: “Could you start her up for me please?”, while an astounded Air Commodore was looking in my direction, no doubt with some degree of horror. From then onwards the trip went very well; the Air Commodore did very well and so I signed him up as ‘first pilot’. I’ve always wondered how I managed to be in the next New Year’s promotion list to Squadron Leader – was it all a dreadful mistake? Too late now I guess!





Senior Driving

from George Hurley, via St George Branch Newsletter

As a senior citizen was driving down the motorway, his car phone rang.

Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him:

"Vernon, I just heard on the news, there's a car going the wrong way on the M5! Please be careful".

"Hell", said Vernon, "it's not just one car...there's hundreds of them!"



1 May 77 - Women Fully Integrated Across Air Force

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After nearly a decade of removing the inequalities between female servicewomen and their male colleagues, the final step was taken on this day of disbanding the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) as a separate entity and transferring its personnel to the ordinary RAAF. Similarly, members of the RAAF Nursing Service were integrated into the Air Force's Medical Branch.



The separate disciplinary code formerly applied to women was rescinded, and a uniform code covered both sexes in areas such as powers of command. Provisions which discriminated against women by preventing WRAAF members from serving overseas, remaining in the Service after marriage, and receiving equal pay to men, had all been previously eliminated – in 1967, 1969 and 1972 respectively. From 1977, it was mainly only areas of employment classed as combat-related which remained closed to women in the RAAF.

An unofficial WRAAF history is here: <http://www.wraaf.org.au/History.html>





Our Aircraft is Damaged!

from John Clarkson

After listening to the many war time stories yesterday, (Anzac Day) I remembered a story which was told to my father in the late 1950s. As a cheeky 14-year-old, I listened intently as this fellow told my father about one of his war time experiences. This fellow was an Engine Fitter (2E in those days) in the RAAF but had volunteered to be an Air Gunner in the 1940s, and was posted to No 2 Squadron, then in Darwin operating the Hudson aircraft. He lived with his wife and daughter in a married quarter on the base, which made it handy for him to cycle to and from the hangar for his flying activities.

During these months of operations, it was no surprise that the rumours abounded throughout the married quarter area. In particular, if an aircraft declared an emergency after an operation against an enemy aircraft or ship, then it would not be too long before this news would go through the married quarter area. However, the nature of the emergency would probably be expanded upon by each person who heard it and re-told it!

Our friend recounted one of these experiences during his time at Darwin. His story goes like this. On one mission, during which they encountered several enemy aircraft, they managed to destroy their target, although they were fired upon by enemy aircraft. During their return to Darwin, they radioed to base that their aircraft had been damaged by enemy fire and that their undercarriage may be unsafe, therefore, they requested emergency services on their arrival.

By the time they arrived at Darwin and were on approach, it was almost sunset. The rumours were abounding around the married quarters, and they were debating whose aircraft was damaged, and of course the type of damage was escalating by the minute. Fortunately, his aircraft made a reasonably good landing, although one of the main undercarriage legs folded up toward the end of the landing run. The emergency services carried out their tasks well and no aircrew members were injured. The crew went back to the flight hut, handed in their flying gear and headed for home. Our friend simply hopped on his trusty bicycle and rode toward his home. By this time, it was dark, but he wasn't worried as he had done this many times before. However, a few minutes later, he opened the door of his home, and his wife stood there and screamed! All she saw was her husband standing there bruised and bloodied all over. Yes, he was bleeding from numerous places and he was a mess! After his wife screamed, he simply said, "Sorry, I fell off my bike into a monsoon drain!"



Christmas 1965 Labuan

from Errol McCormack

Just before Christmas 1965, the RAF was having serviceability problems with Hunter aircraft of No 20 SQN that held alert at Labuan and Kuching in Borneo, as well as Tengah Singapore. The powers that be decided that 78 Wing would fill in at Labuan for two months while 20 SQN recovered their serviceability status. Since at that time Borneo was considered an operational zone with SAS and Royal Marines conducting operations along the Indonesian border, 78 WG decided that they should spread the wealth and deploy pilots for two-week periods so that the number of sorties to be flown would qualify the pilots for a war service home loan. The ground crews were required on base for 30 days to meet the war service requirement.



Since 78WG aircraft were already deployed on an earlier detachment, we flew to Labuan by RAF transport aircraft. Our team was SQNLDR Pete Larard, detachment commander, FLTLT Hans Roser, PLTOFFs Kev Merrigan, Jock Bryant, Bruce Searle and me. The detachments role was to pull alert in daylight hours and fly a couple of border patrols each day. The detachment was split into three flights: Larard leading Merrigan, Roser leading Bryant and me leading Bruce Searle.

The weather and high mountains made for some interesting valley flying. One day we ended up well south of the Indonesian border near Sandakan avoiding weather down a valley; low flying above 10,000ft around Mt Kinabalu was interesting! Our esteemed leader must have decided that this was his last chance for a medal, so a couple of times he had his flight beat up the Indonesian airfield just over the border. The Indonesians only had Mustangs at the base so the air threat was negligible, but there were 40mm guns on the Indonesian bases. The Indonesian gunners had shot down one of their own C-130s when the pilot was foolish enough to approach the Indonesian airfield from the Malaysian side of the border! We could see the crashed C-130 when flying along our side of the border.

RAF air and ground crews manned the base at Labuan. Most of the RAF members regularly played volleyball after work. With temperatures normally between 28 and 32 degrees C, the officers then donned their shirts and entered the Mess for dinner. This conduct did not impress Pete Larard who organized his team to gather fire extinguishers, move quietly up to the side of the dining room and hose down the gathered 'dirty Poms'. He also correctly deduced that we would probably not be very welcome at the Mess for dinner, so we drove to the Senior Officers' Mess some distance away.



Unlike our Mess on the airfield, which was a very temporary structure, this Mess was a stately building with entry by wide steps leading to French windows and polished floors. Larard decided that the station commander's land rover would be better parked inside the Mess out of the weather. He tried but missed the entrance and broke one pane of the French window. Roser however, did a better job and drove the vehicle inside. Merrigan and McCormack were detailed to remove the shattered glass pane so that it would not be noticed! As we removed the glass, we were distracted by a pair of shiny black shoes leading upwards to an irate RAF WGCDR, who we quickly introduced to SQNLDR Larard. Things were not looking good for us until one of the RAF members soaked from our actions in the other Mess, decided he would get his own back and use a fire extinguisher on us: he had not recognized the RAF WGCDR.

Have you ever seen somebody trying to act like nothing was happening holding an activated one-shot fire extinguisher? He certainly took the heat off us and after we removed the land rover from the mess we made a quiet retreat. I don't think we ate that evening.

After seven operational sorties and one recovery from a weather diversion, I joined the team for the ferry back to Butterworth. The weather was such that we had to transit via Tengah for fuel. And so ended another great Aussy/Pom liaison experience!



The Grim Reaper came for me last night, and I beat him off with a vacuum cleaner. Talk about Dyson with death.





7 Apr 83 - Mirage made 'spy flight' over Tasmania

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On this day, No 77 Squadron Mirage III A3-57 was flown from RAAF Base Williamtown, near Newcastle, NSW, to undertake a photo reconnaissance mission over the Franklin River in western Tasmania. The distance involved required the pilot to land at Avalon, outside Melbourne, to refuel both before and after crossing Bass Strait to carry out the mission. Within days, the episode became a cause célèbre, after it became public knowledge that the mission had been ordered by Gareth Evans, the Attorney-General in the newly-elected Hawke Labor Government in Canberra.



State Government plans to dam the Franklin for hydro-electricity generation had attracted widespread and vocal opposition across Australia. The new Federal Government directed a cessation of work at the site, and A3-57's sortie was to ensure that Tasmanian authorities were complying. The affair was a key moment in the history of constitutional relations and environmental protection in Australia.

Comment: Gareth Evans was subsequently grilled at the National Press Club in Canberra about this 'operation' and the ensuing F-111 mission on 8 April. His response: *"I can best summarise all of this complicated saga by uttering what is known in the profession - or if it isn't known in the profession it ought to be - as the 'streaker's defence'. And it goes something like this: "It seemed, your worship, like a good idea at the time"* entered the political lexicon for some years. Senator Evans also attracted the less-than-flattering sobriquet of 'Biggles'.



The Trappers

(Central Flying School)

from Peter Scully

Way back in the 'olden' days, a team of staff instructors from Central Flying School (CFS) used to make annual visits to all flying squadrons to check-out all pilots. In Sep 1956 while at No 75 squadron flying Meteors it was my turn. Off we went and all seemed to be going well until I was told to do a practice asymmetric landing. No problems to an ace fighter pilot (just nine months after gaining his wings) and the circuit and touch-down were 'perfect'.

However, just after landing the testing officer instructed me to 'go around'. This was strictly verboten by the squadron flying orders – with trim wound all one way, if there was an engine failure of the opposite engine, it would not be possible to maintain control. I naturally thought that the instructor was checking if I knew the flying



RAAF Meteor



orders but not so: when I refused to go around, he yelled at me to do what I'd been told. I still did not and quite a barney followed and I was ordered to taxi back to the squadron.

Some quite unpleasant words were said about my lack of confidence with the aircraft and that I would be sent down to CFS at East Sale to be tested to see if I was entitled to retain my 'wings'. The testing officer marched me into the CO's office and repeated all this. The CO, being senior went ballistic, ordered the instructor off his squadron, then wrote to Command Headquarters with the result that no more annual flying tests of squadron pilots were ever carried out (annual testing of instructors at the flying schools continued of course).

So, I was responsible for getting rid of those annual tests that all pilots dreaded. I received no medals and I don't think I even got a beer!



It's a Long Way to Riverina

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The boys and young men of Australia unquestioningly heeded the call to defend the Empire at the outbreak of the war. Of a population of 4.9 million, 417,000 Australians enlisted for service, equal to almost 39 per cent of men aged between 18 and 44. It was as if the continent had been picked up and turned on its edge so the nation's youth spilled into army training camps in Brisbane, at Sydney's Liverpool and at Puckapunyal outside Melbourne. That demographic shift was under way in any case, and it had been changing Australia.

In the short term it did something else. These men often carried a bush band in their pocket: a harmonica. Harmonicas were the most popular instrument in Australia throughout the 19th century, particularly favoured by shearers, drovers and farm workers in the days before radio. So while British officers might have early gramophones and a few brittle shellac discs, the Australians mostly entertained themselves with harmonicas and other small instruments: concertinas, tin whistles, draw harps, the odd ukulele and plenty of combs and wax paper.

*It's a long way to Riverina
It's a long way to Riverina
It's a long way to go
It's a long way to Riverina
And the sweet bush girl I know
Goodbye, Wagga, Wagga; farewell dear old Hay
It's a long way to Riverina
But we'll come back – some day.*



The most popular songs with the Allied troops were *Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag*, *It's A Long, Long Way To Tipperary* and *Good-Bye-Ee!* Tipperary predates the war; the other two were written with departing troops in mind. There were a thousand variants of that and the other popular songs. Predictably, *Waltzing Matilda* was subject to a few makeovers:

*Fighting the Kaiser, fighting the Kaiser
Who'll come a-fighting the Kaiser with me?
And we'll drink all his beer
And eat up all his sausages
Who'll come a-fighting the Kaiser with me?*



The odd fate of the brothers who wrote the Australian favourite *Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag* goes some way to illustrating this. George Powell had composed the words, and Felix, with whom he had a band, knocked together a tune. The Welsh-born brothers considered it "piffle" and it went into a drawer marked "Duds".

*Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile,
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worthwhile, so
Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile.*

Spotting a wartime competition calling for marching songs, Felix reworked the melody and they submitted *Pack Up Your Troubles*, which duly won first prize. Florrie Forde soon made it a hit. But the boys had only been joking. In any case, George was a pacifist and, later, a conscientious objector, so when Felix wanted the band to tour the Western Front to boost troop morale, George refused to go. The song made the brothers wealthy almost overnight. Felix heard it all over Europe, and once even heard German troops singing it. But the cheery lyrics were at odds with the battlefields horror. By 1918, Felix – fearing that his tune had summoned countless young men to their deaths – was deeply disturbed, according to his family, possibly having suffered a breakdown.

The brothers reunited after the war and opened a theatre, Lureland, in the quiet town of Peacehaven in East Sussex. *Pack Up Your Troubles* became a hit again during World War II, but on February 10, 1942, Felix kitted up in his Home Guard uniform, took to the stage of the empty Lureland and shot himself in the heart with his .303 rifle.

Source: http://thegreatwar.theaustralian.com.au/wholl_come_afighting_the_kaiser_with_me/



Aircrew Behaving Badly - An Occasional Series

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The Wing Commander on 467 Squadron at Waddington was 'Billy' Brill, an Aussie farmer, and he sometimes carried on like one, said Nev Morrison of Glenhaven, NSW. One day he got me to go up in a Lanc with him to air test it, and after putting it through its paces decided to take it down to about fifty feet off the deck and round up a paddock full of sheep - which he did, successfully!

We also had some terrific parties in the Officers' Mess and when there were no ops on, Billy Brill would organise an 'air test' and take a crew to fly to Northern Ireland, to the airfield nearest to the border with (neutral) Southern Ireland. The crew would change into civvies and cross over to the South and buy a load of food and grog with money the Mess had thrown in. In the meantime, Billy Brill would contact Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley, AOC RAAF overseas in London, to inform him there was to be a party at Waddington the next night. He never missed one - neither did Eve, the popular barmaid at the Codgers Hotel off Fleet Street London, well known rendezvous for RAAF on leave. To liven things up several other little things happened at Waddington from time to time including; two guys having a race down a corridor in the mess - on motor bikes; and the sing-songs we used to have around the piano (Alec Turner, who used to play, would say, 'The piano's dry' and we would pour a pint of beer into it, then lift the piano up and shake it, when Alec would sit down again and say,



'That's better'); or two guys playing 'darts', but using revolvers! This last item is similar to one told by Dave Drury at 7 Squadron, Oakington when he said, 'late in '44 some of the boys, to relax, decided to try out their Smith & Wesson revolvers so they hung drinking mugs on several sets of antlers on the wall in the mess and used them for target practice!'

A biography of WGCdr William Lloyd Brill, DSO, DFC & Bar - 460SQN pilot, 463SQN Flight Commander and then CO of 467SQN - is here <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brill-william-lloyd-9582>



VIP Welcome

from Terry Maher

A new airman was on sentry duty at the main gate. His orders were clear...no car was to enter unless it had a special sticker on the windscreen.

A big RAAF car came up with an Air Vice Marshal seated in the back. The sentry said 'Halt! Who goes there?'

The chauffer, a corporal, says...'Air Vice Marshal Smith.'

'I'm sorry', says the sentry, 'I can't let you through. You have to have the special sticker on the windscreen.'

The AVM says...'Drive on.'

The sentry says...'Hold it! You really cannot come through. I have orders to shoot if anyone tries to drive in without a sticker.'

The AVM repeated...'I'm telling you son, drive on.'

The sentry walked up to the rear window and said...'Sir, I'm new at this; who do I shoot, you or the driver?'



The Motor Pool

from Terry Maher

The phone rings at the RAAF transport motor pool and an authoritative voice demands to know how many vehicles are operational.

Paddy answers...'We have 12 trucks, 10 utes, 3 staff cars and the Bentley that the fat-arsed AOC drives around in.'

There was a stony silence.

'Do you know who you're talking to?' demands the gruff voice.

'No', says Paddy.

'It's the fat-arsed AOC here that you so insubordinately referred to!'

'Well,' says Paddy, 'do you know who you were talking to?'

'No', roars the AOC.

'Well thank goodness for that', says Paddy, as he hangs up the phone!





Fast Caravan

from Peter Scully

In 1967, No 75 Squadron began the ferry of the first Mirages (21 aircraft) to Butterworth, via Townsville, Darwin and ‘that place’ (don’t tell anyone, but Djuanda in Indonesia). It was a complicated and really massive operation. The major concern was ‘that place’; our survey party found a first class aerodrome but the facilities were very run down. Our troops repaired their radio equipment and also donated a large quantity of recreational equipment for the Base staff.



75SQN Mirages over Darwin

There were a host of minor problems to be resolved there, perhaps the main one being the resolution of landing fees. Our support Hercules posed no difficulties as they were regular visitors, but the Mirage was unknown. As the aircraft were being refuelled (with some difficulty), the CO, myself, our attaché, (down from Djakarta), and the Indonesian Base Commander wandered off to negotiate a price. On the way the air attaché opened his briefcase to reveal to me that it was tightly packed with US dollars. The resolution was most

amicably achieved: the briefcase was handed over to the OC Base who promptly handed it back to our Senior Engineering Officer, Jack Holden (dec'd), who had been there for several days and was on good terms with all the locals, together with a shopping list for purchases on Penang Island.

The first Herc, on return from Butterworth to pick up our transit troops, was loaded to the gunwales with TVs, radios and other ‘goodies’. A very satisfactory arrangement I thought, and a brilliant piece of diplomacy as well. I’m not certain how our air attaché managed to ‘square the books’ but what the hell, we were out of there!



Recognising the Role of United Nations Peacekeepers

Thursday, 28 May 2020

Tomorrow is the International Day of United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers, which provides an opportunity for all Australians to show their respect to those who have served and contributed to global peacekeeping. Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Darren Chester said Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel, police and civilians have been involved in more than 50 multi-national peacekeeping operations for more than 70 years. “Australian men and women have made a significant contribution to worldwide peace, with peacekeepers in the field with the UN since 1947, where in the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) they were part of the very first group of UN military observers anywhere in the world,” Mr Chester said. “Tragically, 16 Australians have died while serving as peacekeepers striving for peace in regions around the world and tomorrow we will honour their memory and thank all those who have served in UN operations.”





Over the past 55 years, members of Australia’s police services have also served in peacekeeping operations around the world. “Peacekeeping operations in which Australia has been involved have lasted months, years or even decades, and have seen small to large deployments, often at short notice.” “I would encourage Australians to pause tomorrow on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, as we honour all peacekeepers and their contribution to making the world a safer place.” Australia has made significant contributions to peace operations, including commanding operations in Kashmir, Cambodia, the Sinai, Iraq and East Timor. Currently, Australians are deployed on operations in South Sudan, the Middle East and Cyprus.



To learn more about Australia’s UN Peacekeeping history, go to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs Anzac Portal <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/media/file/control-stories-australianpeacekeeping-and-humanitarian-operations>

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



My Boeing Story

Peter Marosszeky, FRAeS

November 30th. 2016, Sydney Australia

It is with pleasure that I would like to contribute to the celebration of the Boeing Company’s 100th. Anniversary. With over 56 years of the most interesting and rewarding times working on Boeing aircraft, a career that has taken me through various fascinating and rewarding roles from station engineer with Pan American to supervisor line maintenance, manager engineering and maintenance operations with American airlines, manager engineering and maintenance South Pacific with United Airlines, then to Qantas as manager maintenance and engineering at Qantas Link and then general manager maintenance and engineering for the new start-up low cost international carrier, Australian Airlines. I then became an academic at the University of NSW and a consultant to industry with Aerospace Developments Pty Ltd, while also a volunteer engineer with the Historic Aircraft Restoration Society, the largest repository of warbirds and historic flying aircraft in Australia.

The focus of this story is the work of the Boeing AOG team and the remarkable feats of recovery and ingenuity in the repair and return to service of aircraft that have been involved in accidents. Over the years I have had the good fortune of being associated with the recovery of many broken aircraft, although this was the first and most memorable event; the aborted take-off and subsequent crash of Pan Am flight 81201 in Sydney on 1st December 1969.



The aircraft was a Boeing 707-321B, serial number 20029; it had been owned and operated by Pan Am since its manufacture and was delivered to Pan Am on the 4th March 1969 with the Certificate of Aircraft Registration being issued on the 27th March 1969. The aircraft had flown a total of 3,044 hours since new, 930 hours since the last equalised service, and 79 hours since the last Terminal



Service. There was no evidence in the aircraft records of any engineering deficiencies which could have been relevant to the accident and all reported deficiencies had been corrected.



In Sydney, Qantas was not only the prime support organization for most airlines, they were also managers of the Crash Aircraft Recovery Kit, along with professional and experienced engineers. Pan Am headquarters in New York was advised of the accident and promptly issued instructions. Mr Bill Hertle (Pan Am supervisor maintenance San Francisco Base) was sent down the next day to assume control of the operation and to act as the liaison with Boeing AOG team.

The salvage took approximately nine days with the Boeing assessment team arriving on 12th December. The Boeing team was led by Mr George Lansing who had overall authority of the contract and the Boeing team consisting of 53 technicians, engineers and specialist support people. The opportunity to work with this team provided an invaluable experience for future roles, not to mention experiencing the discipline of team work and camaraderie between the team members. Teams were to operate two 11 hour shifts working seven days.



All the parts required for the repair came from the Boeing production line including the specialist tooling and equipment, scaffolding was supplied by the local manufacturer Hills Co Pty Ltd. Any sundry items were provided on loan from Qantas. It was agreed that no work was to be planned or undertaken by Qantas unless special circumstances arose; the exception to this was the repair of three of the engines in the Qantas Engine Overhaul Centre under their FAA Station Approval, including testing in the Jet Engine Test Cell. The fourth engine was deemed serviceable.

The aircraft was released from the hangar on January 28th. After pre-flight checks, a test crew undertook a test flight under the control of the Boeing test pilot and the following telex sums up the aircraft's performance:

QL SYDMMPA CPY SYDOWPA
.HNLOOPA 291855 HNLXTPA
FOR HERTLE/BILL ANC CREW
COMMENDATIONS ON A GOOD JOB. AIRCRAFT HANDLED WELL IN CONSIDERABLE MODERATE CAT AND PRECISION
CRUISING TECHNIQUE VS FUEL CONSUMPTION INDICATES RIGGING EXCELLENT. DURING TAKEOFF SYD CMA NECESSARY
TO RECYCLE GEAR LEVER TWICE TO RAISE NOSE GEAR. SUSPECT SEQUENCE VALVE DUE LIGHT INDICATIONS. OVERALL
PERFORMANCE VERY GOOD.
CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS /S/RED HORT
=MGP1855CLK
=291922



On reflection, the commitment, teamwork and producing the same level of high quality work provided a valuable insight into the quality and design of Boeing aircraft, and in later years proved to be useful in other incidents involving Pan Am and United Airlines.

To the Boeing Company, thanks for the memories.



Australian Air League Undaunted by COVID-19

from Brian Grinter via Mr Ray Bell

The Air League has had a challenging few months with the COVID 19 lockdown. To keep the cadets enthused and engaged we've been introducing a number of exciting initiatives for our cadets.

Light Up the Dawn – ANZAC Day 2020

The Australian Air League has been assisting and participating in ANZAC Day Services back as far as 1939, and like all organisations this year we found we couldn't take part in the traditional Dawn Service and ANZAC Day parade. Upon hearing of the "Light Up The Dawn" movement, we got our cadets involved from all over NSW and Australia, they sent in photos and videos which we used to put together this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HCFHJJB6gY>



Virtual Parade Nights

While our cadets can't meet face to face – that hasn't stopped us meeting online. Back in the earliest days of the League we ran a Correspondence Wing for distance members (a bit like School of the Air) and they'd get their weekly program via radio 2GB etc – well today it's on the Internet we're doing the same thing with Squadrons working from home and logging in for weekly classes.

Online Q&A and Virtual Tours



Again harnessing the Internet we've run several online Q&A sessions with guest speakers from the aviation industry – a Qantas 2nd Officer, a flight test engineer and an RAAF F/A-18 pilot. Another popular event was an invitation for a virtual tour of the RAAF Central Flying School where the cadets got to speak to Roulette 7, FLTLT Aimee Heal, who gave the cadets a walk around of the new PC-21 aircraft and answered their questions – we had 100 cadets logged in for that!





Preso's Prattle: June 2020

from Ron Glew, State President, NSW Division

Our AGM for this year was held by video link and not quite 40 members attended and we received around 18 apologies, which was a great turnout given the current restrictions. The following members were elected and once again, all positions were filled:

- President Ron Glew
 - Vice President 1 Peter Gustafson
 - Vice President 2 Mike Stuart-Watt (Serving WGCDR RIC).
 - Secretary Peter Ring
 - Treasurer Philip Speet
- Council Members Robert Redman, Geoff Sheppard, Ivan Petrovic (Base WOFF for RIC, Glenbrook and Orchard Hills), Karim Anwar and Andy Schollum.

I am extremely pleased that we now have two serving members on our State Council as well as a younger AAFC member. Thank you all for your commitment.

National Awards

I was also very proud to announce that Geoff Peterkin was made a Life Member, Richard Kelloway received the Geoff Michael Award, and Philip Speet the O'Connor Trophy for 2020. Well deserved gents and thank you all for your magnificent and ongoing support.

National: The current National priority is the consolidation of all membership, administration, data and media as considered appropriate being transitioned to National, rather than the fragmented current Divisional systems to assist in collating membership numbers and other issues like mailing lists for Wings, commonality of direction etc. To this end the National Board has set up a Joint Board Steering Group (JBSG) with a representative from each Division with a view to making the Association fit for future purpose, working on the premise that AFA's accountability and efficiency will be facilitated if Divisions' governance, management and administration are, to a reasonable extent, harmonised. The Joint Boards Steering Group (JBSG) is a Sub-Committee of the National Board to progress the project and they have autonomy to make far reaching recommendations for approval by the Board to achieve its stated goals. We are very capably represented on the Group by VP Peter Gustafson.

NSW: We continue to progress our Crisis Centre initiative totally within NSW and once we can be face to face with other ESOs, we anticipate rapid adoption and progression in making it operational. We also have a very dedicated band of volunteers working with our Business Manager to canvass and develop progressive and free thinking ideas, and we can expect initiatives that will be outside the square as we currently know it. I am excited about this group's thinking and I thank them sincerely for their dedication to our Association.

I am currently working with Cumberland RSL, the NSW Minister and Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs and Cumberland Council to restore the 2 Stores Depot Memorial.

Commemorations have been severely limited during the Corona virus crisis and the only event that I attended, in my position of Vice President of the Anzac Day Dawn Service Trust, in company with A/President RSL NSW Ray James, was to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph at 0430 on the 25th April.





RADAR Branch Awards Presentations

from WOFF Raylee Scott, HQ 44 Wing and GPCAPT Nathan Christie, OC 41WG

Each year the RADAR Branch presents awards to deserving personnel from 44WG and 41WG. The 44WG award is the GES Stuchbury award in memory of WGCDR Grant Stuchbury; while the 41WG awards are in memory of WGCDR A.G. Pither (considered the father of RAAF Radar) and WOFF Joe Ulett.

Although unable to present the annual RADAR Branch awards in person this year, the Branch ensured that the three awards were delivered to the respective Wing HQs for presentation to the deserving recipients. Officer Commanding 44WG (GPCAPT Ruth Elsley) presented the Stuchbury

Award via video link and also released a communiqué which read in part '*...The GES Stuchbury award is named after a very dear friend of mine and a very fine Air Traffic Control Officer whose passion and devotion to 44 Wing were beyond reproach. This award recognises the officer of any category within 44 Wing who clearly stands out from her/his peers by demonstrating professional mastery beyond her/his core duties. As in previous years, there were several excellent nominations from within each squadron and this was an extremely difficult decision to make. However, after considerable deliberation, I am pleased to announce that the recipient of the GES Stuchbury award for achievements during 2019 is FLTLT Ryan Higgs 8552374 of No 453SQN PEARCE FLT.*



SQNLDR Nicholas Bird (L), acting Flight Commander 453SQN Pearce Flight, presents FLTLT Ryan Higgs the Radar Branch GES Stuchbury Award

The 41WG winners were: the Joe Ulett Memorial Trophy awarded to the airwoman or airman who has provided the most positive contribution to the operational performance of 41WG – **SGT Bryce Hannan (114MCRU)** and the Pither Trophy awarded to the airwoman or airman who has provided the most positive contribution in the support of 41WG activities – **LAC Alexander Dyson (1RSU)**.



Calling All Centenarians

from SQNLDR Bernie Nebenfuhr

The Air Force 2021 Centenary Planning team is examining ways to potentially include some of our longest surviving veterans or veteran spouses. We are seeking to learn if any of these citizens are 100 or turning 100 next year, to consider what event may be able to highlight their story or even host them at an appropriate event where feasible. We ask the help of all ex-service and veteran organisations to assist in identifying such citizens and any such information would be greatly appreciated by the following coordinating officer:

SQNLDR Bernie Nebenfuhr
Base Liaison Officer Williamtown
Air Force 2021 Branch
bernie.nebenfuhr@defence.gov.au
Mob: 0449 669 718





Donald Bradman Enlisted in Wartime RAAF

28 Jun 40

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

When the start of WW II brought a temporary halt to international cricket matches, famous cricketer Donald ('The Don') Bradman was among the many Australians swept up in public enthusiasm for the Empire-wide pooled training scheme set up to help man the RAF's fighting squadrons. He put his name down to join the RAAF and was enlisted on this day. Although passed as fit for aircrew duty, he was among the large number of volunteers obliged to wait until actually called up for training. After waiting four months, he was persuaded by the Governor-General of Australia, Lord Gowrie (an avid cricket fan), to join the Army instead, which he did in January 1941. Lieutenant Bradman became a physical training supervisor at the Army School of Physical and Recreational Training at Frankston, Victoria, until discharged with a health problem in April. He retired from cricket in 1948.



Lieutenant Bradman at Frankston



A teddy bear is working on a building site. He goes for a tea break and when he returns he notices his pick has been stolen. The bear is angry and reports the theft to the foreman. The foreman grins at the bear and says "Oh, I forgot to tell you, today's the day the teddy bears have their pick nicked."



From The Flightline – National President's Message

from Carl Schiller, OAM, CSM National President

COVID-19 has certainly curtailed Division and Branch fellowship opportunities and caused commemorations to be modified with attendance limited to a few dignitaries. However, I am pleased to hear that many of the Association Divisions' branches took the initiative to hold commemorations and honour our fallen servicemen and women using various other formats, mainly video casting. The appearance of people commemorating ANZAC Day in their driveways demonstrated the high value the community holds for its past and present servicemen and women.

COVID-19 is also creating some uncertainty for the nature of the forthcoming Air Force 2021 Celebration. There will be a ceremony in Canberra on March 31st, 2021 which we hope former Air Force members and their families will be invited to attend. The Association has agreed to assist with the coordination of their attendance. There is a regional celebration program that I hope, along with other information, will be available in October this year. A new Air Force Memorial Statue to be



situated at the southern end of the Point Cook base's main parade ground will be unveiled by Chief of Air Force, probably to coordinate with his attendance at the Avalon Air Show that has been postponed until November 2021. Divisions will be notified the date and nature of these events and their members' opportunity to attend when firm arrangements are known.

I am pleased to advise Sharon Bown, an Air Force veteran of two conflicts, was recently appointed as the National Vice-President, Air Force Association. Sharon is a very public person. Simply 'google' her name and you'll read about her Air Force background, operational experiences, association with the Australian War Memorial, and her professional standing. Sharon was chosen by the Prime Minister to address the nation from the Australian War Memorial at its last ANZAC Day Memorial Service. We should all be proud she has taken up the appointment.

I have previously alerted you to the plight of former ADF firefighters who are seeking recognition of their Service-related health conditions due to their exposure to contaminants through smoke inhalation. The Association, along with several former ADF firefighters, has had several meetings with DVA specialist staff. It is abundantly clear DVA's ability to support these veterans to the extent they deserve is limited by the veterans support legislation. The Association considers a suitable remedy will require a submission to Government proposing a management plan similar to the F111 Reseal/Deseal incident. It is interesting to note that in this case, Air Force firefighters who burnt poisonous waste materials were covered by an amendment to the veterans support legislation. Your Association is continuing to support these veterans and will remain on their case until resolved.

The Association's National website is woefully outdated. A new website is under development with links to various social media platforms. The National Board has agreed to contract a professional to manage the website and social media to increase awareness of the Association and to ensure it presents as a contemporary organisation.



The Most Destructive Weapon

from Bryn Evans

Background: In response to your request for submissions to SITREP I have attached an article, The Most Destructive Weapon, drawn from my book 'The Decisive Campaigns of the Desert Air Force 1942-1945' (2014), which has previously been mentioned in your newsletter. The book is being reissued by Pen & Sword Books in UK in paperback in July 2020, and I have also attached a copy of its book cover. This reissue is also being timed to coincide with my next book 'Airmen's Incredible Escapes', which will be published by Pen & Sword in August/September. Both books include many personal accounts of Australian airmen who served in either RAF or RAAF squadrons.

Seventy five years ago in 1945, on 2 May in Italy then two days later on 4 May in Germany, all Axis forces surrendered. In those campaigns the hard won air supremacy of the Allies made a crucial and decisive difference. A weapon first used in North Africa, and little recognised outside of battlefield tactics at that time, made a revolutionary impact in the defeat of the Axis armies. In the Second World War Allied armies fought their way from Egypt through Libya, Tunisia, Sicily and the length of mainland Italy, without any major reverse until final victory in May 1945. This was despite the German forces and their defences being favoured by the mountainous terrain, first in Tunisia then throughout Italy.

Historians and veterans of the campaigns speak consistently of the German soldiers' professionalism and training, and of their superior weapons and equipment. Most problematical of all is that the Allied armies in Italy hardly ever enjoyed a 2:1 advantage in ground troops, and were often outnumbered. Air superiority established by Allied air forces, of which the Desert Air Force (DAF) was a renowned leader, was a decisive advantage for the Allies. Air Marshal of the RAF, Lord Tedder GCB, who was



commander of the DAF in North Africa, and in the invasions of Sicily and mainland Italy, stated that the DAF played a lead role, and was ‘...the key to the ultimate victory’ in Europe’.

DAF was made up of both squadrons and individual airmen from nearly every Allied nation. Americans, Australians, British, Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans were prominent from the early years, either in their own national squadrons, or in RAF formations, within DAF. Later DAF embraced airmen from many other Allied nations, such as Czechoslovaks, the Free French, Greeks, Poles and Yugoslavs. Many believed DAF gained its strength and esprit de corps from its very diversity of nations and cultures. A common cause welded them together.

In the final battle in Italy for the River Po, the lead-in air blitz and sustained air-to-ground bombardment were pivotal to assist the Allied armies’ victory on the ground. The final battle which broke the German armies in Italy demonstrated that the vision espoused earlier by General Auchinleck and Tedder, had been followed to the end. When General Montgomery had taken command of Eighth Army in August 1942 he had confirmed his trust in this strategy, and said that Eighth Army and the DAF ‘... must fight hand in hand. It is one battle, not two.’

Air Chief Marshal Slessor of the RAF summed up the Italian campaign, when he said that ‘if there had been no air force on either side, the German Army could have made the invasion of Italy impossible’. From embryonic beginnings in 1940 in RAF Eastern Command in North Africa, the air force groups, wings and associated squadrons that became designated as the Desert Air Force fought an air war against the Italian and German air forces for five years. Over those years they won and sustained air superiority until the final victory. In that time they pioneered numerous innovations and ‘firsts’, which were copied in most other theatres of the Second World War. Not only was DAF the leading air force in introducing and implementing these techniques, tactics and strategies, it deployed them often simultaneously, and flexibly, in support of ground forces in long, gruelling campaigns. The formative years of DAF in the desert instilled adaptability to harsh conditions, where the variety of challenges and the hardship of operating demanded fortitude of spirit. These attributes became engrained in the ethos of DAF.

One of its most important achievements flowed indirectly from its success and is often overlooked. The dominance of DAF first in North Africa, then in conjunction with other Allied air forces in Italy, allowed Allied armies to re-deploy over long distances in rear areas, without Axis air forces spotting, attacking or disrupting their movements. This enabled Allied armies to concentrate for an offensive with impunity from enemy interference, and very often bestowed the benefit of surprise for the attack.

The development of the fighter-bomber role in the air-to-ground war by DAF became perhaps not only the most physically visible impact but also the most psychologically damaging on the Axis forces. The ever increasing destruction which was wrought on German forces in Italy reached a crescendo in April 1945. General von Vietinghoff, C-in-C of the German Army Group C in northern Italy, thought the fighter-bombers to be the most destructive weapon used against them in the final battle:

‘They hindered practically all essential movement at the local points. Even tanks could not move during the day because of the employment of fighter-bombers. The effectiveness of fighter-bombers lay in that their presence alone over the battlefield paralysed every movement’.

General von Senger of XIV Corps stated:

‘We could still move when required at night, but we could not move at all in the daytime due to air attacks. It was the bombing of the river Po crossings that finished us’.

The role of the fighter-bomber, and related tactics learned from DAF, were also used to great effect by other Allied tactical air forces in the Normandy invasion, and the subsequent advance into Germany. Although the technology has advanced beyond any comparison, the principle and strike power of the fighter-bomber can be seen in the evolution into modern multi-role combat aircraft an indispensable weapon to project military capability.



The achievements of DAF over five years is also demonstrated by the subsequent career success of each of its commanders. In January 1943 AVM Tedder became deputy to Eisenhower at the latter's request, and AOC-in-C Mediterranean Air Forces. Then, in December 1943, when Eisenhower became Supreme Allied Commander for the Operation OVERLORD invasion of Normandy, Tedder went with him as his Deputy. Subsequent DAF commanders, Coningham, Broadhurst, and Dickson, followed in successive transfers to very senior air force appointments for the north-west Europe offensive.



Yet the achievements of DAF owed everything to all of its officers and men in whatever role or period of time they served. From 1940 to 1945 it was they who suffered, died, were wounded, maimed or taken prisoner, but who made the enterprise a success. As AVM Foster said, '...it is the quality of the youngsters who actually do the job, and the enthusiasm of the maintenance crews who keep their aircraft going for them, that gets the results'.

The first-hand accounts and stories from DAF airmen in this book are but a small sample of some of those youngsters who did their job for those results. And some are still with us in their later years to tell of their time in the legendary Desert Air Force. Read the stories of the exploits of many DAF airmen in this book, and you will better understand the history that they made. And you can be the judge as to whether the Desert Air Force was the Allies' leading tactical air force of the Second World War, and whether the fighter-bomber was the most destructive weapon? And was

Air Marshal Lord Tedder correct, to judge that the DAF had been a fundamental key to the Allied victory in Europe.



Iroquois Gunships Retired

26 Jun 04

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On this day, the UH-1H Iroquois helicopter gunships, also known as Bushrangers, were retired from Defence service. Originally developed for the RAAF during the Vietnam War, the gunships operated with No 9 Squadron until 14 February 1989 when all battlefield helicopters were transferred to the Army. Three gunships flew over Brisbane in the afternoon accompanied by another Iroquois flown by then Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Angus Houston.



The retirement ceremony was conducted at Gallipoli Barracks following the flypast.





Myths About Good Health

Reprinted from the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation Newsletter, the 3rd Act

Myth #1: If you exercise a little bit every day, it doesn't matter if you spend most of your day sitting

If you spend extended periods of time sitting, you can still be at risk of health problems.

Myth #2: Your body doesn't need as many nutrients as you get older

You need fewer calories as you get older, but you still need the same amount of nutrients. In some cases, you actually need more nutrients than you did when you were younger. For example, calcium.

Myth #3: Mental stimulation is the best thing you can do for your brain

Although things like crossword puzzles and Sudoku are great for your brain, exercise and physical activity are the best things to help prevent memory loss, cognitive decline, and dementia.

Myth #4: Thinner is always healthier

Many health problems are associated with being overweight. However, being very thin can be a sign of frailty. Where you carry weight is also important. An 'apple' body shape is a higher health risk than a 'pear' shaped one. Being apple-shaped can increase your risk of heart disease and breast cancer. Talk to your doctor about maintaining a healthy weight.



1SQN flew last RAAF F-4E Phantom II sortie

20 Jun 73

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Problems with the General Dynamics F-111C aircraft ordered by the RAAF in 1963 delayed their delivery, and the ageing of the Canberra bombers in service necessitated a stopgap measure to fill the void. As a result, the United States Government offered to lease to the RAAF 24 new F-4E Phantom aircraft from the USAF at heavily discounted rates pending the delivery of the F-111C. The Australian Government reluctantly accepted the offer and the project was named 'Peace Reef'. The official contract was signed 22 June 1970 with the aircraft being delivered to Australia in September and October of that year. Phantoms, flown by Nos 1 and 6 Squadrons, were popular with both aircrew and groundcrew for the aircraft's flying characteristics and





ease of servicing. During their Australian service only one Phantom was lost in an accident and the remaining 23 were returned to the US Air Force in 1973. The squadron flew the last Phantom sorties on 18 and 19 June before the last flight was flown on this day by SQNLDR D. N. Rogers (pilot) and FLTLT L.J. Cavanagh (nav) in 69-7208.

More on the McDonnell Douglas F-4E/Phantom here:

<https://www.airforce.gov.au/sites/default/files/minisite/static/7522/RAAFmuseum/research/aircraft/series3/A69.htm>



Thanking And Remembering Our Nation’s Military Nurses

Monday, 11 May 2020

Tomorrow on International Nurses Day, we recognise and celebrate the important contribution of nurses to the safety and prosperity of our country through times of conflict and in peacetime. Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Darren Chester said for as long as Australians have served in combat, from the Boer War to present day, there have been nurses right behind them caring for those in need and saving many lives. “More than 8,000 nurses served in the two World Wars in hospitals, on hospital ships and trains, or in casualty clearing stations closer to the front line. Sadly, 103 died across the two wars,” Mr Chester said.



WWI Nurses

Many nurses experienced enemy action and became prisoners of war, with the most well known nurse being Sister Vivian Bullwinkel. In 1942 Vivian Bullwinkel survived the sinking of SS Vyner Brooke and became one of the few survivors of Bangka Island massacre before becoming a prisoner of war for three and a half years. “Vivian’s story is just one of many that demonstrate the courage and bravery of our military nurses who sacrifice much to serve our nation,” Mr Chester said. “Since the formation of the Australian Army Nursing Service in 1903, the Australian military has relied on the work done by military nurses, with more than 800 nurses currently serving in the Australian Defence Force, in either a full-time or reserve capacity. “Today, as our country faces a significant health crisis, our military nurses are also supporting the domestic healthcare effort to combat coronavirus, with 26 military nurses currently deployed. “On International Nurses Day, I encourage all Australians to take a moment to reflect on the service and sacrifice of Australia’s military nurses throughout our nation’s history. Thank you for your service.”



Contemporary ADF Nurse

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RAAF Unit Supports Latest Space Launch

from Bettina Mears, Communications Adviser, HQ SRG

Air Force's No.1 Remote Sensor Unit assisted with SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule launch to the International Space Station on May 31. Joining an international network of space surveillance sensor capabilities and operators, the unit - based at RAAF Base Edinburgh - provided monitoring and tracking support. During the launch, unit personnel monitored the progress to ensure the upper stages of the Falcon rocket re-entered Earth's atmosphere in the planned locations over the Indian Ocean. Later in the flight, the C-band radar tracked the Crew Dragon capsule as it passed over Australia. This information was fed into the US Space Surveillance Network to help further refine the orbit. It was the first time since the space shuttle retired nine years ago that NASA astronauts had launched from American soil.



**Air Surveillance Operator
Leading Aircraftman Sean
Bull**

Air Surveillance Operator Leading Aircraftman Sean Bull said it was exciting to be a part of the history-making flight. "It was rewarding to engage our skillsets and do our job for such a special event," Leading Aircraftman Bull said. "The launch went fine and we didn't detect any flight anomalies. Everything our sensors picked up for the Crew Dragon capsule was as we were expecting."

The safety of astronauts during flight and at the space station relies on the precise tracking of more than 20,000 objects orbiting Earth, such as satellites and space debris, that can reach velocities of almost 30,000 km/h. Commanding Officer Wing Commander Richard Harrison said support for activities of this type required high-level operator expertise developed through years of routine surveillance operations. "The success of

the No.1 Remote Sensor Unit mission depends solely on the skills and ability of the people operating our sensors," Wing Commander Harrison said. "I'm proud to see the dedication the operators and technicians apply to all of our taskings on a daily basis."

Since 2015, the unit has tracked space objects at ranges up to 3000 km away with a C-band space tracking radar located on the north-west coast of Western Australia.

Combined with access to satellite information supplied by the United States Air Force, the unit contributes daily to Australia's awareness of space activity and the safety of flight satellites. The unit will expand its capabilities in 2022 with the planned delivery of the Space Surveillance Telescope, also located in Western Australia. This highly advanced telescope will enable the observation and detection of objects in space up to 36,000 km above Earth.



The C-band space tracking radar used by No. 1 Remote Sensor Unit.



My neighbour knocked on my door at 2:30am this morning; can you believe that, 2:30am?! Luckily for him I was still up playing my bagpipes.





Tribute to Deceased US Firefighters

from Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton 25Jan20

“Always” Tanker 134

Three heroes left to do their job, three did not return
Every task cheating death, peril at every turn
Experience their master, flown with upmost care
Passing through the gates of hell, where most others did not dare

They rose into the hostile sky, of gale and smoke and dust
The high noon of their destiny, the wind’s deadly gust
Staring down nature’s wrath, they had done it all before
No time for complacency, in a fire storm’s war

No one will ever know, the loss their families feel
For sadly that for many, some wounds never heal
A scar upon the bushland, a reminder of their plight
A place down by the snowy, now a sacred site

The flag upon a casket, a tribute well deserved
Taps, a sad reminder, of the nation they had served
The eagle and the kangaroo, will pause to shed a tear
A century of mateship, with those we hold so dear

Three heroes left to do their job, three did not return
Many miles across the sea, loving hearts will yearn
Three heroes left to do their job and mounted heaven’s stairs
Three heroes left to do their job, “always” in our prayers

Title “Always” From the film of the same name



Air Force Association Life Membership: Mr Geoffrey Peterkin, OAM

from Dave Leach, VP FSB

At the New South Wales Division Annual General Meeting (conducted by video link on 4th May) State President Ron Glew announced the award of Air Force Association Life Membership to Geoff Peterkin. The certificate and life member badge had been presented to Geoff by Fighter Squadrons Branch president Mike Lavercombe at an informal afternoon tea the day before in order to circumvent the isolation issue.



New life member, Geoff 'Terkin' Peterkin with FSB President Mike Lavercombe (R) and VP Dave Leach (L)

Geoff, who has been a member of the Fighter Squadrons Branch since 2004 and Honorary Secretary for most of that period, received the award for his diligent and enthusiastic contribution in the development of IT systems to enable information dissemination and membership management within NSW Division and particularly the FSB. Additionally, as honorary secretary, Geoff has played a key role in bringing members of several disparate fighter squadron associations into the FSB of the AFA.



Receipt of the award took Geoff by complete surprise and he was humbled to think that such an honour should be given to him for doing something that he finds so enjoyable. Congratulations Geoff on the well deserved award.



When I was in the pub I heard a couple of plonkers saying that they wouldn't feel safe on an aircraft if they knew the pilot was a woman.

What a pair of sexists. I mean, it's not as if she'd have to reverse the bloody thing!



To Our Reserve Forces – Australia Says Thank You

Tuesday, 30 June 2020

Tomorrow the nation marks Reserve Forces Day, and all Australians are encouraged to recognise the vital role of our Navy, Army and Air Force Reservists in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester said it is important to acknowledge and thank all who have served, and continue to serve, as part of the Australian Defence Force Reserves. "Reservists have always stepped up in times of emergency, playing an important role in rebuilding the lives of entire communities. This has been especially evident through this year's unprecedented bushfire season and the corona virus pandemic," Mr Chester said.



Earlier this year Reserve Brigades responded to the first ever compulsory call-out, with around 3,000 reservists putting their lives and careers on hold to protect tens of thousands of Australians against devastating bushfires. "These dedicated men and women helped evacuate people from isolated communities, including from my electorate of Gippsland, supported evacuation centres and provided vital assistance to the response of our state and territory emergency services. "More than 2,000 Reservists have also supported Australia's corona virus response, expanding the capacity of state and territory authorities to deal with the impacts of the pandemic. Reservists have supported contact tracing teams, quarantining of arriving international passengers and provided logistic and communications support at border crossings. "We should also not forget that throughout Australia's history Reservists have served and sacrificed alongside their full-time counterparts in domestic and overseas military operations. "To all of our Reservists both past and present, Australia thanks you for your service. "We also thank our Reservists' partners, families and employers, who provide invaluable support to our Reservists when they are called on. It would not be possible for Reservists to play such an active role in the Forces without them."

Media Contacts: Cedric Szigeti: 02 6277 7820 DVA Media: 02 6289 6466 Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT.





Anzac Day: Member Raises Flags at La Perouse

from John Dennett

For the past 30 years or more I have been trying to have our council raise the Australian Flag on Anzac Day to no avail, even though they have four flag poles. Every time I have requested to raise them - request denied! It's the same on Australia Day, so I decided to raise them myself - not on council land. As you can see the Australian Flag at the top and WWI memorial flag just underneath purchased from Australian war memorial Canberra. It's a shame there is a minority group in council that are hell bent on removing our past history.



I don't really have a story to tell about the flag pole; I know it was something that had to be done in our suburb, La Perouse. It has so much history with the first fleet arriving in 1788 at the same time with Captain La Perouse and more. I came up with the idea when asked by day trippers and tourists what did the name La Perouse mean. Being a resident for 36 years I thought people needed to know, so I made a sign and placed it on the bus shed 10



years ago. The flag was an extra; I try to fly it on weekends weather permitting.

In addition, I have painted the bus shelter three times over the past 30 years. Got paid once by UTA. The black and white stripes on the interior of the shelter are a camouflage pattern ships were painted during WWI so as to make it difficult for German U-boats to target; it was a British idea and the Americans called it 'razzle dazzle'.



Truscott Base Close Call

from Janet Collingwood, Doug Sandow's daughter
A WWII Memory from Pilot Officer Doug Sandow

The 75th Anniversary of the end of WWII has brought back many memories including my memories of Truscott Air Base. As quoted from an article by Russell Skelton in the Sydney Morning Herald many years ago:

“The scattered wreckage of a Liberator bomber, the rusted hulks of trucks and military hardware long ago abandoned and the unusually long airstrip are today all that remains of the “top-secret” Truscott Airbase in the Kimberley. The landing strip was built in secrecy in 1944. Truscott was the closest point in Australia to enemy strategic positions in the Indonesian archipelago. For the WWII bombers, it saved air time by reducing the number of air miles to be flown.”





Bombers took off from Darwin and refuelled at Truscott before heading out to our mission targets in the Pacific. As a Pilot Officer, flying Liberator B24s for 2 Squadron, I landed our aircraft and crew at Truscott several times to and from our missions. We would never have made our targets without this all important runway in the middle of ‘nowhere’. According to a senior curator at the Australian War Memorial, Japan’s imperial command made a big effort to find and destroy the base, but never did.

On one of our missions we had a narrow escape – both for our aircraft and crew and the ongoing secrecy of Truscott’s location. A Japanese fighter had decided to follow us in and see if he could locate



Truscott. Luckily for us, he turned before we started to land. Must have been running out of fuel and had to turn around to make it back to his base. When we landed, Ops questioned where the ‘second’ aircraft they could see got to. I said, “What aircraft – not part of my mission.” A lucky escape – the enemy aircraft could have tried to shoot us down on our way home, but was so keen to find our

secret refuelling base, he didn’t. Lucky too for Truscott – its position remained a secret. We now know that Truscott’s existence was not acknowledged until years after the war had ended.



I went to the cemetery yesterday to lay some flowers on a grave. As I was standing there I noticed four grave diggers walking about with a coffin.

Three hours later and they're still walking about with it. I thought to myself, they've lost the plot!



Magnetic Island

from Ross (Bags) Mathieson

On several occasions in 1976 I was deployed to Townsville, this time with Iroquois A2-773, to provide SAR support for the Mirage squadron while they practiced bombing Rattlesnake Island. I have always been blessed with good luck, and an amazing example of this occurred during the SAR standby operation.

The day started as usual with transporting the range safety officers out to their bunker on Rattlesnake Island, from the safety of which they could observe the bombing runs. As usual, we flew via a low level lap of Magnetic Island, to take in any sights of interest, such as wildlife or nude sunbathers. On this morning, I noticed that we had passed directly over what looked like some sort of open air church service, and as we were only 100 feet AGL, the noise would have been very loud in the morning air. I thought trouble could ensue from this incident.



Sure enough, next morning I was summoned to the office of the Officer Commanding, RAAF Base Townsville; I think the OC at the time was Group Captain Lyons. As I stood at attention in front of his desk he said that he wanted to read a letter to me that he had received from the Magnetic Island branch of the RSL. The letter was thanking him for providing a flypast for their commemoration service on the 11th of November, and asking him to praise the pilot for his skill in timing the

pass to take place at exactly 11 minutes past the hour of 11 o'clock, right in the middle of the two minutes silence. I hadn't even realised what date it was. The OC finished reading the letter and then said; "You got away with it – this time! Dismissed."



Army Medic vs RAAF

from Cynthia Slade

On exercise my Medical Corps was working with the RAAF. The medics lined up to board the chopper, and a male RAAFie called us forward. Entering the aircraft in order, settled in, seat belt on, I was handed a head set.

Off we go when about five minutes into the flight, the pilot says to his companion 'Did you see the knockers on that?', then turned around to look; I waved at him. Spinning back around he says to his co-pilot "HEAD SETS ON!", to which I cracked up.



The First Apple

from John Clarkson

A woman ran a red traffic light and crashed into a man's car. Both of their cars were demolished, but amazingly neither of them was hurt.

After they crawled out of their cars, the woman said: "Wow, just look at our cars! There's nothing left, but fortunately we are unhurt. This must be a sign from God that we should meet and be friends and live together in peace for the rest of our days."

The man replied, "I agree with you completely. This must be a sign from God!" The woman continued, "And look at this, here is another miracle. My car is completely demolished, but my bottle of 75 year old scotch didn't break. Surely God meant for us to drink this vintage delicacy and celebrate our good fortune."



Then she handed the bottle to the man. The man nods his head in agreement, opened it, drank almost half the bottle and then handed it back to the woman. The woman took the bottle, immediately put the cap back on, and handed it back to the man.

The man asks, "Aren't you having any?"

She replies, "No, I think I'll just wait for the police."

Some years ago, Adam ate the apple which Eve gave him. Men will never learn!





79 Squadron RAAF Ubon Thailand 1968

from Mike Lavercombe, President Fighter Squadrons Branch

In early 1968 while based in Ubon Thailand with 79 Squadron, the following somewhat embarrassing and humorous event occurred to me. 79 SQN provided two Sabre aircraft on Alert 5 status (5 minutes from scramble notification to airborne) from dawn to dusk seven days a week.



Unidentified members of 79 Squadron, pushing an Avon Sabre into position prior to take off.

Two pilots were rostered daily along with ground crew and we spent our day

in an Alert Shack (Crewroom and Flight Authorisation Area) located near the threshold at the southern end of the runway reading, playing darts, board games etc, waiting for a scramble notice by phone from the USAF Radar controller – LION Radar. All meals etc were consumed in the ‘Shack’.

To ensure 79 SQN early morning commitment was achieved, the rostered crew received a pre-dawn wake-up call. They proceeded in the VW crew-van to the squadron area and subsequently taxied the aircraft to the Alert Holding Bay on the Operation Readiness Platform(ORP), adjacent to the end of the runway. Understandably, an early retirement to bed was the order of the day. The 'wake-up alarm' was by one of the Service Police (SP) or airmen on guard duty at the entry gate to the RAAF Base Area. They had a list with the rostered pilots' names, their room in the corrugated iron hut and which bed each slept in (two to a room and not necessarily in the same room). The beds were draped with a dark green mosquito net resembling a large cage.

One night I had retired early for alert duty next day when at a late hour I was awakened by Pilot Officer Pete (Wombat) Wagner. He had crawled under the mosquito net and sat on my bed saying “Don’t worry Combi, the others are after me to dunk me in the pool; I just want to hide awhile”. Shortly after a number of the team trundled through the hut like a herd of elephants looking for Wombat. I heard someone mumble “Don’t wake Combi, he’s on alert in the morning”. I drifted back to sleep.

The next morning, I was awakened by a shake on my shoulder and a bright torch light in my eyes with an SP asking “Sir, which one is PLTOFF Lavercombe?” I replied, “Me, of course! Why?” He said, "well there are two of you there!" Yes, also sleeping on the bed was Wombat! The story got around the base very quickly that day and I spent a lot of time trying to explain why Wombat was asleep on my bed. At least he was fully clothed in his previous nights off-duty gear and, he didn’t end up in the pool!





Finland's Air Force Quietly Drops National Swastika Symbol

edited from a Nine News article

A 102-year-old European air force has quietly removed a swastika symbol from its national logo. Finland's Air Force removed the swastika - also known as a Hakaristi - it has had for its staff members and shoulder patches since the organisation's creation in 1918, according to Teivo Teivainen, a world politics professor at the University of Helsinki.

"I had already noticed that hakaristi visibility on the Air Force's website is slightly lower than before," he said. "I have now received confirmation that the Air Force Headquarters has already done in 2017 the 'harmonisation of troop division codes with the Air Force Defense Branch Badge'. "An important reason for turning the logo to 'more neutral' is that in connection with foreign visits, attention has been paid specifically to the crosshairs of the shoulder marks.



The organisation first adopted the symbol as part of its insignia mere months after the country declared independence in 1917. "The reform has been done with minimal noise. To the best of my knowledge, no press releases or other information have been deemed necessary. "The use of the symbol may be challenging in today's world."

Swedish government funder Erin von Rosen in 1918 donated Finland its second aircraft and painted the swastika on it as what he called a good luck charm. The symbol, believed to represent the sun, was also later featured on a white circular background in a bid to separate the country from Nazi Germany during World War II.



Since the change to the logo in 2017, the official emblem has appeared as a golden eagle and a circle of wings, despite the swastika still being present on some flags and decorations. "As unit emblems are worn on uniform, it was considered impractical and unnecessary to continue using the old unit emblem, which had caused misunderstandings from time to time," an air force spokesperson told the BBC.

