

The

WHISPERER

**The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland**

APRIL 2000



With the high-finned tail of a Boston for background, R.A.A.F. pilots at an operational base “up north” enjoy a spot of humour. The lethal-looking objects in front suggest that the enemy would not appreciate the joke. These men took part in a heavy raid on Japanese positions over Mubo, New Guinea. The raiding force comprised more than 50 aircraft, which dropped 106 tons of bombs in 45 minutes. Immediately Australian troops surged forward and captured Observatory Hill, an important strategic point. This is just one example of the co-operation between air and land forces which has reached a huge pitch of efficiency in this theatre of war. Four states are represented in the group, which reads, left to right: F/O Austin Skinner, of Wonthaggi, Victoria; F/Lt. Charles Learmonth, of Tyrendarra, Victoria; F/Lt. Claude Sladen, of Camden, N.S.W.; F/O Dick Feathers, of Perth, W.A.; F/O Jack McMaster of Hamilton, Queensland; F/Sgt. Alec McKay, of Caulfield, Victoria; and F/Lt. Dick Hunt, of Double Bay, N.S.W. The flight-sergeant seems to have told a good one.

President's Corner



Dear Members

First the good news: I was honoured and deeply touched to be presented with the framed photos of the "Boston" going in at a rate of knots after being bit by ack ack. I am sure none of us will ever forget the old saying

"There but for the grace of God go I". Thank you for the very fine gesture, which is much appreciated.

Now the bad news: I have a very real problem re Anzac Day which I have spoken about at some length to Peter. As Senior Vice President of Surfers Paradise R&SL Sub-Branch, I am normally required to stand in for the President at official functions, when he is unable to be present.

Our President has been a vital cog, for the past two years in the ABC broadcasting team giving the commentary for the Brisbane Anzac Day march and will again be in assisting in the commentary this and future years.

During 1998 and 1999 the Sub-Branch gave me dispensation to march in Brisbane with our Association instead of leading the Surfers Paradise march and conducting the civic ceremony. However I am told I am expected to carry out the President's functions at the march and the civic ceremony.

As I feel I am letting the B&B team down, I suggested to Peter that I should resign as President and let some else take over who would be prepared to led the Association in Brisbane in April. However, as an alternative, Peter feels he could arrange for one of our members to lead our Association on Anzac Day. It's up to you chaps, how do you feel about the matter? If you would let Peter Know your wishes ASAP, I would be most grateful.

Whatever your decisions I can assure you of my unqualified support, as always, and the continued use of our home for the AGM and BBQ, if the Association so desires.

I have just received a letter from Air Commodore Peter Growder advising of his retirement. His successor Air Commodore Dave Dunlop, takes over as Commander, Strike Reconnaissance Group, RAAF Base Amberley on 6th March 2000. I have responded on behalf of the Association wishing Peter and his wife Fran, all the best for the future. Peter has certainly been a good friend to us during his term of office.

RALPH

USAF BOSTON MYSTERY SOLVED



In January's "Whisperer" we published a series of four photos, that were found on a rubbish dump at Eagle Farm in Brisbane. We asked if anyone could shed some light on these photos.

We got an immediate response from Vice President Bill O'Connor, who had a copy of a book titled "The Roarin' Twenties" written by Russel L Sturzebecker.

This gentleman was one of two Americans who attended the "Roll-Out" of the two restored Bostons "Jessica" and "Hell-N-Pelican", at RAAF Amberley, on 12th September 1996. They were also our guests at a dinner the Association hosted at The United Services Club to celebrate the occasion. Quite a number of our members had the pleasure of meeting them both and talking Boston Tales.

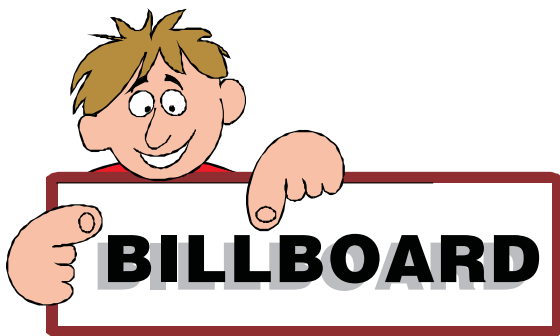
At this dinner Vice. Pres. Bill learned from Russell Sturzebecker of the book he had just published, requested a copy, and shortly after the book arrived. Little did I know when I published the pictures in January's "Whisperer" that I had met a guy who not only knew the details of the action, but had included it in a book.

The following is a precis taken from the photo copies of the relevant pages of the book, that Bill sent, in response to our request for info. The book is a history of the 312th Bombardment Group US Army Air Force World War II.

The US Bostons were operating from Hollandia at the time, and 22, 30, & 31 RAAF Beaufighter and Boston Squadrons were operating from Noemfoor and operated against the same targets, Ceram, Bocla, Kokas, and Utaroy. The target where the "Boston" met its fate was Kokas, on the Bay of Seker, which was an important supply depot as well as an important barge relay point.

The low level attack was by 12 Bostons from 312th Group, and on return to base one Boston was missing.

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SAN REMO MEMORIAL

Association member George Robertson has advised that The San Remo Memorial has now been completed. Our congratulations must go to him, for being able to carry out this project, on his own initiatives, in spite of the apparent unsurmountable obstacles, that caused our Association to abandon the project last year. The Memorial is to be unveiled and dedicated on Anzac Day, 25th April 2000, at 1700 hours. All members will have received an invitation, from the President of The San Remo Club to attend this Service some weeks ago. Arrangements have been made for a wreath from our Association to be laid during the Service.

LEST WE FORGET.

PAINTING 22 SQUAD, BEAU FIGHTER

A painting of a 22 Squadron Beaufighter has been carried out by well known artist Brian Wood, for Eddie Morton, who flew this aircraft, whilst serving with the Squadron when it was based at Morotai Island. Mr Brett Williams of the Military Workshop, at 489 Creek Road Mt Gravatt 4122 has arranged for prints of this painting to be available for sale. He has offered a generous donation to our funds, in return for members of our Association who served with Eddie in the Squadron, to sign the prints. Those who agreed to sign the prints are President Ralph Ind, Jack Chamberlain, Ron Collins, Bill O'Connor, Ken Creedy and Ron Hall. The prints will be available from The Military Workshop, 489 Creek Road, Mt Gravatt, 4122. Telephone (07) 3349 7986.

BOSTON MODEL

A 1/48 scale model of Boston A28-7, is nearing completion by members of the International Plastic Modeller's Society. This model is encased in a clear plastic display case, and is a twin of the Beaufighter previously presented to the Association by the Society, which is now displayed at the Warplanes Museum at Caboolture. This is to be presented to us on 24th March and will be displayed alongside Beaufighter A19-137 at the Museum. This Boston was flown by F/LT Bill Newton VC, with Crew F/SGT John Lyon and SGT Eastwood, one of the two aircraft flown by this Crew, in successive missions against the same target, oil tanks and installations at Salamau. This aircraft was

so badly damaged by ground fire, it was nothing but a miracle it was flown back to base. The same crew flew A28-3 on the second mission to Salamaua, and they were shot down.

MADANG RSL CLUB MADANG

In response to a request made by them for donations or memorabilia, because that area was of great interest to our Squadrons, we have posted them a Stan Curran special squadron plaque. They have also requested photos, so if you have any to spare the address is PO Box 914 Madang PNG.

23 RAAF SQUADRON

A plaque to the memory of four members of 23 Squadron, who were killed in a head-on collision over Cleveland practising fighter tactics, in February 1942, is to be un-veiled at the Cleveland cemetery on 24th March at 1000 hours. All four were friends of Hon Sec. Wreaths will be laid by President Ralph for our Association, Vice President Bill for Redlands RSL, and Stan Curran for Logan RAAF. There will be a low level fly-over by two restored Wirraways, from The Warplanes Museum at Caboolture, and the Army Band will be in attendance. The service will be conducted by Chaplain Wing Commander Paul Goodland from RAAF Base Amberley.

ANZAC DAY PARADE YEAR 2000

Assembly point will be the same as last year, near the corner of Charlotte and George Streets. The Association Banner will be in place there, and will be carried by a 20 Flight Colour Party. Assembly time is 0945 Hours for a 1000 hours start. The Association will be led by Vice President Bill O'Connor. Should you require transport please advise Hon Sec. SAP, so that the necessary bookings can be made. Transport will leave from Elizabeth Street, near the entrance to Myers. Lunch will be aboard the Club Crocodile's River Queen, which will depart from Eagle Street Wharf at 1215 hours. The cost is \$29, for a buffet lunch. Drinks will be cash at the bar. Please wear Medals and Name tags. The RAAF Association will hold a Memorial Service, before the March at 0900 hours, at the RAAF Memorial in Queen's Gardens.

COMMITTEE

Patron	Raymond Smith	3263 1274
President	Ralph Ind	5538 5439
V. President	William O'Connor	3286 1067
Secretary	Peter White	3287 5488
Committee	Stan Curran	3290 2980
	Jack Chamberlain	3648 2194
	Les Turnbull	5537 7953

STAN'S PAGE

THE DEFENCE OF UBON, THAILAND



It must have been my first or second tour to Ubon, because we were still billeted in tents. There were two rows of tents, the officers were at the end of one row and the senior NCOs at the end of the other row. I was in the end tent close to the officer's end tent/ I suppose it was about 0100 to 0100 hours, early in the morning. When I heard an urgent voice say "All out quick! Come on all out." A sleepy voice replied "Get.....". Unbecoming language for an officer and a gentleman. First voice with authority and urgency, "It's the C.O. here. We have an emergency". The second voice apologetically, "Sorry Sir". The first voice "There are forty slow flying aircraft approaching".

By this time I was dressed and heading for the other end of the tent line, where the transport pool was located. I was a FLT/SGT and wore two hats, one the Transport Officer, and the other NCO i/c of the flight line. When I arrived pool, the SGT driver was filling a jerry can of petrol from a 44 gallon drum. The drum was on its side on a stand and fitted with a tap. The Sergeant had removed the large side bung to allow air to enter so that the petrol could flow freely. The large hole was now on the topmost point of the drum. I asked "What are you doing"? He said "I forgot to fill the Commanding Officer's jeep last night".

At that moment there was a great whoosh. The petrol had been ignited. I took in the situation immediately. The sergeant was OK he had jumped clear, and was only slightly singed. It was then that I saw that he had been using a Hurricane lamp and the naked flume had ignited the fuel. There were no fire extinguishers and the fuel tanker was only ten yards away, which gave me some concern.

One of the drivers arrived on the scene, I said "Quick get the tanker clear." The fire was really getting fierce. The tanker wouldn't start. Another driver arrived on the scene, and I ordered "Get the truck and tow the tanker away". More people were turning up, and in no time they had the tanker well clear. I don't know where the tow rope came from, but between them they had done a good job.

It was then that I could relax a bit. The petrol would just burn itself out, but what a sight. The most spectacular "Flower Pot" I had ever seen. The flames were torching up from the bung hole and they seemed to be going forty feet up. I was thinking if those forty aircraft are going to attack us we are certainly showing

them the way. It seemed only minutes before the fuel burnt out, and all was dark again.

By this time we had a truck load of "Sharpies" (Air Force slang for technical men who worked on the sharp end where the aircraft are.) The sharp end was about two miles from the Base Camp. The men worked efficiently and fast to ready the aircraft. All knew exactly what to do. The first aircraft was ready but not armed. The pilot was in the cockpit and I was strapping him in and telling him it wasn't armed yet. He said "No matter I am taking off". I had reservations about how sensible that was. At that moment I became aware of another person on the wing at my elbow and he was saying "Sign this". My thought "What the hell".

It was the defence Officer issuing me with a rifle. I had a flash of anger, there is a time and place for everything, and this was neither. I really told him where to go and what to do with his rifle. I contained myself as the quickest way to get rid of him. Then to add insult to injury, he gave me five rounds of ammunition. Five rounds. We must be desperately short of ammunition, he may as well have given me a packet of throw downs for all the good they would be.

The Pilot taxied away. The rest of the aircraft were armed and took off later. I had a lot of experience with this sort of exercise and was pleased with the efficient way the ground staff had performed. Our aircraft returned without sighting any enemy. They were refuelled and serviced. When all the excitement died down, it was daylight. The all clear was given and we all went back to Base Camp for breakfast.

When we arrived there the camp was an amazing sight. There were slit trenches every where with men in them. The guys at Base must have worked really hard, even though the soil was fairly sandy. Near the Transport Pool where we stopped, was the Orderly Sergeant's tent, it was isolated somewhat. The Orderly Sergeant's tent had a telephone, and I suppose it was just far enough away, so as not to disturb anyone.

As our truck pulled up, the flaps of the tent parted, and Jim McGowen, the Orderly Sergeant stepped out. It was a funny sight to see. He just looked around in disbelief, rubbing his eyes and said. "What's happened"? He was the only in camp to sleep through it all.

Recently I was talking to another member of Logan City sub branch, of the Air Force Association. He had been at Ubon, sometime later, I told him about the slow flying aircraft. He said "Strange, when I was there the Radar picked up some blips like that, and it turned out to be migrating geese".

Fancy, nearly forty years later, I'd bet London to a brick that our forty slow flying aircraft were the same.

STAN CURRAN

Continued from page 2

No crew member had seen the missing Boston go down. Lt. Smith's aircraft had 128 holes, from intense ground fire, and had a remarkable series of four photographs, which, when shown in stop action mode, recreated the tragic crash of one Boston No. 43-9432, which had caught a direct burst in the underside and on the tail. Trailing smoke, the Boston turned on its side in a plunging glide. The right wing caught the impact of the water, and the plane exploded.

The pilot James L Knarr, from Pennsylvania, was on his 70th combat mission, and would have been grounded in a few short weeks, and returned to the United States. His gunner S/SGT Charles G Reichley was also from Pennsylvania, was on his 46th combat mission.

The loss of these two fine men was forever memorialised, when these photographs were selected by Higher Authority, and Historians, to exemplify, both the tragedy of the action and the heroism of the pilot and his air gunner.

Material by Bill O'Connor.

DON'T FLY WITH DENGUE FEVER

I flew as Navigator with Vic Tovey, and we had two mates George and Pete. In early June 1945 we were flying operations from Tawi Tawi in the Southern Philippines, against the Japs around Jesselton and Brunei in North West Borneo, in preparation for the landings on Labaun Island.

Late one afternoon a very dishevelled Pete, with a few minor cuts and bruises came to our tent, and said "I'll never fly with that so and so again, he just pranged us into the palm trees at the end of the strip." After a few days George came to our tent, also with a few bruises, and a very disconsolate look on his face. When we asked him what had actually happened he told us he felt a bit crook before taking off, he had done about five hours over Borneo, and the further he went the worse he felt, but pressed to complete his mission.

On returning to Tawi he could not be bothered with anything, he just floated down the strip, could see he wouldn't make it, but was so crook he couldn't be bothered going around again so just ploughed into the palm trees at the end of the strip. Things were a bit strained between George and Pete for a few days but happily they ended up the best of friends, and saw the war out still flying together. I understand George passed away some years ago, but if you happen to read this Pete, get in touch.

ALLAN MILLER.

THE FLYING INSTRUCTOR'S LAMENT

What did you do in the war, Daddy
How did you help us to win?
Circuits and bumps and turns, Laddie
And how to get out of a spin.

Woe and alack and misery me,
I trundle around the sky,
And instead of machine gunning Japs,
I'm teaching young hopefuls to fly.

Thus in my service rewarded,
My years of experience paid,
Never a Jap have I followed right down,
Never gone out on a raid.

They don't even let us go crazy,
We have to be safe and sedate,
So nix on inverted approaches,
They stir up the CFI's hate.

For it's oh! Such a naughty example,
And what will the AOC think?
But we never get posted to fighters,
We just get a spell on the link.

So it's circuits and bumps from morning to noon,
And instrument flying till tea,
Hold her off, give her bank, put your undercart down,
You're skidding, you're slipping, that's me.

As soon as you finish one course,
Like a flash, up another one bobs,
And there's four more to show round the cockpit,
And for more to try out the nob's.

But sometimes we read in the paper,
Deeds that old pupils have done.
And we're proud to have seen their beginnings,
And show them the way to the sun.

So if you find the money, and turn out the planes,
We'll give all we know to the men,
Till they clutter the sky with their triumphs,
and burn out the beast from his den.

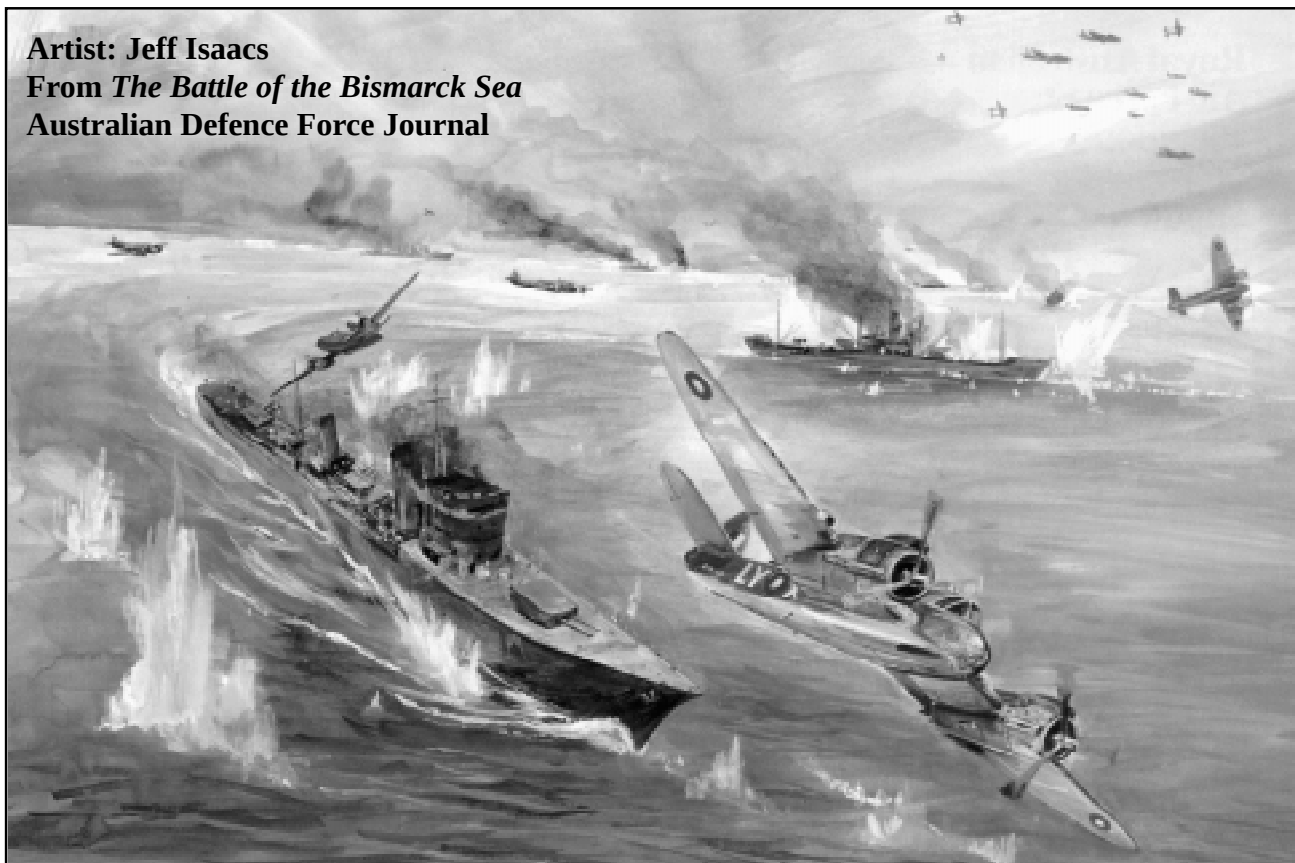
ANON.

STEAK FOR DINNER

It was reported that the Yanks has brought a Zebu heifer to Morotai, for breeding purposes, and it was seen wandering around at the end of the bottom strip. Unfortunately for the heifer it disappeared that night, and for the first time, on the following day we had we had a break away from bully beef, dog biscuits, and gold fish, we had steak. No has ever admitted that the steak actually came from the Zebu, but I can guarantee that we never had a steak on the menu before or after that.

ALLAN MILLER.

Artist: Jeff Isaacs
From *The Battle of the Bismarck Sea*
Australian Defence Force Journal



THE BATTLE OF THE BISMARCK SEA

*To the American 5th Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force
no commendation could be too great. Their outstanding efforts in combat, in supply, and in
transportation over both land and sea constituted the keystone upon which the whole arch of the
campaign was erected. They have set new horizons for the air conduct of war.*

Douglas MacArthur
General U.S. Commander - in - chief

CRICKET

Ian Johnson was with us at 22 Squadron, and somehow Comforts Fund sent us a full set of cricket gear, so a match was arranged between 30 or 31 Squadron, which went off quite well with Ian as our Captain.

Many years later Lindsay Hassett moved to Bateman's Bay and I had the pleasure to play many games of golf with him. When we first met he asked me if I was a relation of Keith Miller's, which I am not. However I told him that at one time I had played with Ian Johnson's team, to which he seemed a bit puzzled. A few days later Lindsay saw me again "Hey, Miller I've looked up all the records and I can't see where you played in Ian Johnson's team". I said it's probably not in the records, as this match was played at Morotai. Lindsay's remarks were "You bastard Miller". Apart from his expertise at golf, Lindsay was one of the best bream fishermen on the Clyde River, and had many friends at Bateman's Bay.

ALLAN MILLER.

FREE BEER

Liberators were being flown from Morotai on bombing and strafing missions to Balikpapan, prior to the landings there. It was during the worst weather we had at Morotai, pouring without stop night and day. Our camp was some distance from the bomber strip, but almost in line with it. I was sound asleep in our tent about 0400 hours, which was the normal time for the Liberators to take off, and I heard the first of them, on it's take-off run. Everything sounded normal as it droned down the strip, but it seemed to take a lot of time, taking off. Suddenly the pitch of the motors changed and then there was one hell of an explosion. Later in the morning we borrowed a jeep and found at the end of the bomber strip one large hole. We were warned that the American Liberator was carrying thousands of cases of "contaminated" beer to be dumped somewhere and under no circumstances was it safe to drink. Fortunately I am now 77 years old, and although the beer did have a 'tinny' taste it was better than the beer we were not getting at the time.

ALLAN MILLER

A 31 SQUADRON SHIPPING STRIKE

A19-156 was one of eight Beaufighters that departed Drysdale Strip at 1100 hours on 5th April 1944, and set course to Semau Island on a shipping strike.

A camouflaged 160 foot oil tanker was sighted by the crew and the strike leader alerted. A19-176 Leader and A19-156 attacked the tanker in Pelican Bay, and destroyed it, but on pulling away from the target A19-156 was caught in an area of light intense 20mm ack ack fire and hit on the starboard engine, which failed almost immediately. On setting course away from the island, the aircraft was lightened by firing off all the cannon and machine gun ammunition. Whilst still at low level and flying on the port engine, the port fuel oil pressure light came on the motor coughed and lost power, although the inner tank had been selected and contained 170 gallons of fuel. The fuel pressure light went out, when cross feed to the starboard tank was employed. A later attempt to feed from the port tank was unsuccessful. After firing off all the ammunition, some petrol was jettisoned, as with the feed from the port tank unserviceable there was insufficient fuel to attempt to reach the mainland.



After the attack. The camouflaged oil tanker found at Pelican Bay, Semau Island, on 6 April 1944.

Course was then set for Cartier Island, 160 nautical miles due south of Koepang at position 12 degrees 30 minutes south latitude, and 129 degrees 33 minutes east longitude. Cartier Island, Scott and Ashmore Reefs had been recently surveyed as possible forced landing sites.

A belly landing was made at 1345 hours. A hole was found just above the starboard engine flame damper, but the rest of the engine could not be examined, due to the position of the aircraft.

The crew kept occupied by dismantling all the instruments, clocks, the dinghy, with the nose camera and code book. They then adjourned for a swim in the channel between West and East Cartier Islands.

When a Catalina of 43 Squadron arrived shortly before 1800 hours, the crew commenced to walk to the rendezvous with the Catalina, about one mile from the Beaufighter, over rough coral, which broke and entered their boots. They also carried and towed the three dinghies. On reaching the edge of the coral after 1800 hours, it was now dark and the crew unknowingly walked off the edge, and lost part of their booty. They swam out to the Catalina and were bundled into the aircraft through the nose turret and as the Catalina Captain did not want to risk his aircraft on the coral in the dark, so the dinghies were knifed, the only items salvaged were the nose camera and two aircraft clocks.

A19-156 was set on fire by the top cover aircraft, and destroyed. On Tuesday 3rd December 1968, HMAS Advance left Darwin for Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island. On 7th December the crew landed on West Cartier Island and commenced to remove the propeller as requested by Mr Sam Boulder MP, Member for the Northern Territory, on behalf of the Alice Springs Sub-Branch of the RSS&AILA.

The propeller was re-furbished by Connellan Airways in Darwin, and is mounted outside the RSL Club. A plaque inside the Club is inscribed in part:

“To airmen - the airscrew on the Memorial outside was taken from a Beaufighter aircraft, which landed in Alice Springs, before operating from Coomalie Creek NT. On 6th April 1944, the aircraft attacked Semau Island and was hit by ack ack fire and was forced to land on Cartier Island, a tiny Atoll south of Semau Island. The crew were rescued by a Catalina of 43 RAAF Squadron.

In August a retired officer and his wife found the fuel barge in the channel in Pelican Bay, Semau Island, just where it sank on 5th April 1944. The barge was sitting upright, in water varying in depth of 12m to 20m. Some of the camouflage cover still remains, and it appears to have suffered an explosion amidships, the buckled plates of the hull tell of the heat generated by the fire. Some cannon holes can still be seen in the hull. It is encrusted with coral and there is a myriad of fish that have made the hull their home.

A report of the Squadron's attack on the tanker, and the dive on it many years, by members of the NT Scuba Diving Club has been published in the Sunday Territorian of 25th October 1992. A conformation of the “sink” for 31 Squadron.

During HMAS Advance's time at Ashmore Reef and Cartier Islands, the crew spread around “Australian trade marked cans” to establish Australia's continued sovereignty over the Islands, with regard to their remoteness off the Australian coast.

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MANY YEARS LATER

Early in 1993, while collecting items for our Squadron album the Department of Territories advised me that Cartier Island, Ashmore and Scott Reefs are close to the Chailis and Jabiru oil and natural gas fields, and are regularly patrolled by ships of the Royal Australian Navy. I wrote to the RAN in Darwin and asked if it would be possible for this "civilian" to go on one of the ships on patrol. They agreed to my request and subsequently asked if I could board the HMAS Launceston in Darwin at 1000 hours on Monday the 19th July 1993. I hastily agreed and contacted the ship, and was told they would be only too glad to have me, and land me on the Island to photograph A19-156 as she is now. They would then divert to Broome, and land me there, or I could stay aboard for the remainder of the patrol. This would take another two or three weeks. During my conversations with the navigator, who produced his charts, and

advised me that Cartier Island was a bombing and gunnery range used by the RAAF. This was confirmed during a telephone conversation with the Wing Commander, Armament Ranges, at Glenbrook NSW Air HQ. He stated that there were many un-exploded armaments on the island, and that it would be very dangerous to approach it. Reluctantly I approached the ship again, and cancelled the trip. Another alternative was suggested by an officer on HMAS Launceston, who advised that the RAAF Orion Squadrons of 92 Wing, based at Edinburgh, flew patrols over this area. Coastwarch, based at Broome and Darwin also patrolled the area. Maybe one of these could photograph the area.

A letter to 92 Wing brought a reply. That the RAAF no longer patrolled the area, and only visited it when on exercises, or when required. A letter to Coastwatch of Australia, brought a promise, that one of their patrols would take some pictures.

JACK BRASSIL

A 31 SQUADRON SINKING RE-VISITED.

In August 1992. A retired RAAF officer and his wife found the fuel barge in the channel in Pelican Bay, Semau Island, just where it sank on 6th April 1944. The barge is sitting upright in water, varying in depth from 12 metres to 20 metres. Some of the camouflage cover still remains and it appears to have suffered an explosion amidships, the buckled plates of the hull tell of the heat generated by the fire. Some cannon holes can still be seen in the hull. It is encrusted with coral and there is a myriad of fish that have made the hull their home.

A report of the Squadron's attack and the dive by members of the NT Diving Club, has been published in the Sunday Territorian of October 25th 1992. A confirmation of the "sink" for 31 Beaufighter Squadron.

During HMAS Advance's time at Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island the crew spread around "Australian trade marked cans" to establish to establish Australia's continued sovereignty over the islands with regard to their remoteness off the Australian Coast.

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Launceston in Darwin at 1000 hours on Monday 19th July 1993. I hastily agreed and contacted the ship, and was told they would only be too glad to have me, and land me on the Island to photograph A19-156 as she is now. They would then divert to Broome, and land me there. Or I could stay aboard for the remainder of their Patrol of some two to three weeks.

During my conversation with the navigator, who produced his charts, I was advised that Cartier Island was a bombing and gunnery range used by the RAAF. This was confirmed during a telephone conversation with the Wing Commander Armament Ranges, at Glenbrook NSW Air HQ, and that there were many unexploded armaments on the Island and that it would be very dangerous to approach the island. Reluctantly I contacted the ship again and had to agree to cancel the trip.

Another alternative was suggested, by an officer of HMAS Launceston "As well as an RAAF presence around the oil field, The RAAF Orion Squadron of 92 Wing, based at Edinburgh S.A. fly patrols over the area as required. Coastwatch, based at Darwin and Broome also patrol the area".

A letter to 92 Wing brought a reply that, the RAAF no longer patrol the area, and only visit when on exercises or as requested. However, a letter to Coastwatch of Australian Customs Service, who do the coastal surveillance in the north, has brought a promising response, as one of their patrols will take some pictures of the area.

JACK BRASSIL

WHAT HAPPENED TO SGT ATCHESON?

This is a question which has bothered me over fifty years. I had known Bill at the RAAF training school in 1943. We both graduated as Sergeant Wireless Navigators. He was posted to 30 Squadron, and I was posted to 22 Squadron. In September 1944 our Squadrons were based at Noomfor Island, both units were part of 77 Attack Wing.

Post war, I had heard nothing as to his fate. I knew in latter years he was buried at Bomana War Cemetery near Port Moresby. The mystery (at least to me) has now been unravelled. It is clear that he was murdered in Dutch New Guinea in late 1943. I am now in possession of most of the tragic facts, because I now have (legitimately), a copy of the National Archives file (Series 7051S Item 166/3/28-0) dealing with his last days on earth.

The 24th September was a significant date. Beaufighter A19-209 piloted by F/LT Albert James Moody, with Aitcheson as Navigator, had completed a barge sweep along the east coast of Ceram, finishing at Sebakor Bay on the southern coast of New Guinea. This mission was completed without opposition. Ten minutes after setting course for Base, Moody called to his accompanying Beaufighter, that he was experiencing difficulty, and would have to force land. On landing A19-209 commenced to burn. Several runs were made over the burning aircraft, and there were no signs of survivors, the other aircraft was compelled to set course for home. The position of the downed aircraft was 02.50S 132.53E. Two other aircraft of 30 Squadron, which happened to be in the area, picked up the message and located the downed aircraft within 25 minutes, a thorough visual search failed to reveal any trace of the crew. Fate would have it that the pilot of one of these aircraft was our own respected association member, Geoff Rose. He clearly remembers the incident.

A curtain of mystery now descends on the scene. To those who knew the area in the war years the Vogelkop (or turtle's neck) represented a large area of the then Dutch New Guinea, which would have been familiar to crews on missions attacking targets of opportunity. The area bristled with enemy bases, Babo, Sagan, Kokas, Fak Fak, Manokwan, and Jefman to name a few. The Maceleur Gulf is a large indentation almost bisecting the area. The crippled Beaufighter came down in the vicinity of Sagan. Archival papers are silent as to how Moody and Aitcheson made their way to the Gulf or indeed crossed it, but cross it they did. The file indicates that the two Australians linked up with friendly natives for about three days, but were then taken by four native collaborators to a native police boy, and then to Adore, and handed over to the Jap Kempai, prior to the 24th October 1944. Idore is at the eastern extremity of the Maccleur Gulf, and was the Headquarters of the Japanese army. All these

events, the betrayal, the capture, took place on the North side of the gulf.

The file shows that the two airmen were executed by the Japanese at Idore soon after their capture. Two bodies were located after the War (24/6/1947) and recovered by service recovery personnel at Idore. The two have been interred in the



Bill O'Connor

Bomana War Cemetery. There had been an attempted rescue of the airmen from Idore on the 29th January 1945, but the two airmen had been dead for some time. The attempted rescue reads like high drama, and is a story in itself, which space does not permit me to recapitulate. There was a raid on Idore by Dutch ground troops with RAAF support.

For me the mystery no longer remains. SGT Aitcheson's young body was recovered from a grave at Idore. A number of natives had been questioned and the evidence established beyond doubt that they both had escaped from the scene of the crashed Beaufighter. They made their way to Arundai on the North side of the Gulf, were given shelter by friendly natives there (latitude 2 degrees 9 minutes South and longitude 133 degrees East), were betrayed by Native collaborators and then cruelly and wantonly executed by Japanese. It should be of some comfort, particularly to our Association members who were brothers in arms, that the two heroes rest in peace in Bomana Grave No C8A6.

These are the brief facts as I have culled them from the National file. I am disappointed that a portion of the file is exempt material, with the exempted portion expunged, being from the final report of an Australian War Graves investigation into the execution of the two airmen. I am not at ease with the fact given by the file, advice as to the investigation, and or trial of the wrong doers, be they Japanese or natives, still Moody and Aitches rest in peace. You have not been forgotten.

After my receipt of the archives material my attention was drawn to the fact the story of the two Aussie airmen has been excellently handled by Jim Eamas in the book "The Searchers" (University Press). My notes have come from the Archival files and I am indebted to that source.

BILL O'CONNOR

RAMPAGE AT RABAU

Rabaul, the Capital of New Britain, was one of the largest Japanese Bases in the South West Pacific, after they over ran our meagre forces on 22nd February 1942. Rabaul is situated on Simpson Harbour, and at times there were up to 100 ships anchored there. These were protected by concentrated light and heavy ack ack, and in the harbour by flak barges.



Rabaul as seen by the Beaufighters on their approach to the target.

There were four landing strips in the Rabaul area, on which were based both fighter and bomber squadrons, a very difficult and well protected target to tackle. A large strike was planned, to be carried out by 308 aircraft, on Tuesday 12th October 1943, including Fortresses, Liberators, some based in Northern Queensland, Mitchells, and Beaufighters, with top cover of Lightnings. Thirty Squadron provided 13 Beaufighters for this strike.

The Squadron was then based on Vivigani Strip, Goodenough Island. To take part in this strike the 13 Beaufighters, flew from Goodenough to Dobadura, which was a large American Base, situated on the northern coast of PNG, near Buna. We were briefed that afternoon, in readiness for the strike the following morning.

Overnight accommodation was in an American Transit Camp. The rations were so much better than what we had been used to - I tasted ice cream for the first time in PNG, and spam with apple jelly. A real change from bully beef and hard tack biscuits.

That night, the Japs decided to lay on a bombing raid, possibly because of the large concentration of aircraft on the strips in readiness for the next day's strike. The yellow alert had been sounded, and I was on my way back to the tent where my pilot Arthur Thomson was, when the red alert was sounded. It was pitch black that night, and I was feeling my way slowly,

when a series of large explosions started. I thought it was a stick of bombs, and it scared the daylights out of me. It turned out to be an ack ack battery opening up very close to the camp. It took a while for the pulse rate to settle down. There was not a great deal of damage done by that raid.

As Beaufighters were the fastest of all aircraft taking part in the Strike from Dobadura, were detailed as last to take off. Because of the large number of aircraft taking off, and the fact that the strip was constructed of crushed coral, a great cloud of dust was formed and we were delayed for about ten minutes before we could take off safely.

To enable all aircraft to carry out the attack in an organised manner, two rendezvous points were given to enable us to assemble and take our place in the formation. When we arrived at the first rendezvous point over the wreck at Buna, there was no sight of the main formation. We then set course across the Solomon Sea, for the second rendezvous point at Cape St George, on the Southern tip of New Ireland, some 150 nautical miles from Dobadura, and fifty miles across St Georges Channel to Rabaul. There was no sign of the main formation, so we had not caught up to them. Course was altered for Rabaul, flying at a pretty low level. About halfway across the channel we sighted the main force coming away from Rabaul after their strike. There seemed to be aircraft everywhere, from low level to 8000 feet, mainly Lightnings and Mitchells.



Debriefing after the raid. P White (in cap), A Thomson with head in hand.

When they spotted us they thought we were Japanese Sallys returning to Rabaul, and proceeded to attack us. We were scattered far and wide taking evasive action. Not one Beaufighter was damaged.

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DECISIONS

5OTU (No. 5 Operational Training Unit) was formed in October 1942 at Wagga Wagga to train Aircrew and Ground crews to support 30 and 31 Beaufighter Squadrons operating in forward areas against the Japanese in World War 2. The Beaufighter wasn't an easy aeroplane to fly, particularly when taking off and landing as it was prone to swing.

It was soon appreciated that, as all the take offs and landings in the forward areas were on strips where extra care was needed that some of the training for pilots at 5OTU should include take offs and landing on strips. Wagga Wagga was just a big field with no strips, however, there were strips at Tocumwall about two hundred kilometres distant as the Beau flies.

It was decided that the pilot's course would include flying to Tocumwal together with ground crews to service the aircraft, practice take offs and landing for the day and come back in the evening. It was a good idea and worked well.

One of these trips has a prominent place in my memory bank. Early one morning some aircraft flew to Tocumwal including ground crews. At the end of the day when Flying training had finished it was time to return to Wagga Wagga. Beside the Pilot and myself was an instrument maker. Strange I didn't know him and couldn't remember seeing him in the squadron he probably worked in a secluded instrument section, he sat on the port side of the hatch and was wearing a lap type parachute. I still had some work to do. I gave the pilot a start it was an early Beaufighter and the engines were primed from the wheel wells. After start up I already had the pitot head cover then I collected the undercarriage locking pins. Stowed the chocks in the aircraft showed the pilot the cover and pins, closed the hatch and we were ready to leave. I was standing behind the pilot my usual position when flying in a Beaufighter I could see out watch the instruments and see what the pilot was doing.

We hadn't been airborne very long when things began to happen, the port engine instruments just went to zero the pilot was very busy. I asked him what happened, he told me the port engine just failed. The propeller was windmilling it was an early propeller and did not have feathering capabilities. I was surprised to see how fast the windmilling propeller was turning. I knew the Hercules engine had a propeller reduction of .444 to 1. When doing a daily inspection or a pre-flight we turned the propeller seven blades so that the engine would turn at least a full revolution. The propeller wasn't easy to turn so I was getting an appreciation of just how much drag it was causing. No wonder a failure of an engine gave some concern.

Then the Pilot gave me quite a shock, he said 'What will I do?' I was thinking, I'm only a Flight Mechanic he's a Pilot and he is asking me what to do. I think we are in serious trouble my mind was racing. I had been present when two of the pilot instructors had been discussing a fatal accident under similar circumstances. I remembered them saying. If you lose an engine keep the wing up on that side and don't turn into the dead engine. So I said to the pilot "Keep the port wing up and don't turn into it."

The pilot's next words gave me considerable relief, he said "Yes, what I meant was will I go on to Wagga Wagga or go back to Tocumwall? It didn't take me long to say "I'd prefer to go to Wagga Wagga. It could be a big repair job and all the facilities are there" I didn't mention that I didn't want him to try landing on a strip with only one engine. After all he had only been learning today to land on a strip with two engines, he said, "Yes I'd prefer to go on to Wagga Wagga."

We were soon passing the Rock at Uranquinty, then over the South side of Wagga Wagga. The pilot said to me "I don't know how I'll go landing this, do you want to bail out? I gave him a very quick answer, "Not on your life, I haven't got a parachute." He gave me a surprised look, then said "Ask the other fellow if he wants to bail out." I relayed the question to the other fellow. I had some difficulty getting an answer after all it was a big decision. Parachute jumping those days wasn't as pleasant or as safe as it is today, however, he decided to stay.

The landing was good. I had been in a lot worse with two engines. I congratulated the Pilot. I was feeling happy to be on the ground again.

Foot Note.

Some time later in another Beaufighter Squadron T.T.& S.D. (Target Towing and Special Duties), a new pilot was posted in, he was an experienced Beaufighter Pilot but hadn't flown a Beaufighter for some time so he took one up for familiarization. We were surprised to see him land with the starboard engine feathered. The Beaufighter has only one generator it is fitted to the starboard engine. That is why the starboard engine is started first. To unfeather a propeller of a starboard you have no generator only the battery for power. It takes 600 lbs. psi oil pressure pumped by an electrical motor. To do this the battery needs to be well charged, on this occasion the battery was too weak for the job. Lesson - If you are the Pilot of a Beaufighter and you decide to do some asymmetric flying it is prudent to select the Port engine to feather.

STAN CURRAN

BOSTONS TO THE DEFENCE OF SYDNEY

All Boston aircraft were flown to Wagga for engine modification etc. All were in various stages of disrepair.

Sydney requested a Boston for its defence. We replied "None serviceable". But they ordered "One Boston immediately to return to Sydney". There was a party organised for that night, and I was not known for leading the band, on social occasions, and I was very junior. So I was detailed to fly a Boston to Sydney even though there was not a compass in the cockpit, the back hatch was wired back temporarily, plus a couple of other minor defects. In addition the weather was atrocious at Wagga, but fine on the other side of the range.

As we were preparing to leave, a Wing Commander virtually commanded me to give him a lift to Sydney. I agreed conditional on his possession of a parachute. He told me to get one for him. I refused. I was under orders to proceed with all haste.. He arrived shortly afterwards having obtained his own chute.

We set out - me setting my Gyro from the navigators compass. Turbulence was severe and we experienced an upset. Later the Squadron song put it this way:

Rowell's aeroplane had wings on
Then he flew into a cloud
When he came out bottoms up
He nearly wore a shroud.

When we gained control my Gyro; (spun around and was almost useless) The intercom was U/S, all maps were out of reach and at first glance both mainplanes looked bent. In fact both had been strained to the extent that a full span of camouflage paint had peeled off, and the bare metal looked like a bend - I hoped.

I had flown over the area before, and when I found a railway line I followed it happily. All went well until the train line disappeared into a tunnel - but by then I had set my Gyro on a guessed at heading, and in due course we landed at Richmond Air Base.

I never saw the Wing Commander again, but my crew advised me that his chute was on the bottom hatch and he was sitting on the floor, leaning on it. During the upset, the temporary wiring attaching the hatch failed. The hatch, chute and half the Wing Commander dropped out. I forgave the Wing Commander for not thanking me for the lift, and was glad the chute was on his charge.

Perhaps as recompense, a couple of weeks later, I was given the task to look for submarines in Sydney Harbour. No restrictions on altitude - BUT DO NOT FLY UNDER THE BRIDGE. I believe the morning traffic would have preferred us under the bridge, rather than up over and down again, Better than a Harley Davidson

HARRY ROWELL

Continued from page 10

Perhaps their gunnery needed some brushing up. We were reformed and once again set course for our target. As we crossed Simpsons Harbour, fires and large columns of smoke were to be seen over a large area. Our specific targets were the two fighter strips Tobera and Rapapo. There were a number of Zeros and Haps airborne, stirred up by the main attack. We made a run over Tobera, and then over Rapapo, where we damaged a building. We were chased by a couple of Zeros and we flew low taking evasive action, for some time out to sea. One of them flew parallel for a while and I got a good look at the pilot. He was wearing a flying helmet, and goggles and a white scarf. They broke off and we set course for Dobadtira.

We lost one aircraft, Dick Stone and Morrie Hadwell were the crew, and were seen to be attacked by a Zero. We arrived back some fifteen minutes after all the other Beaufighters, to find, when we were sitting at the table being debriefed our CO had been awarded an immediate field award of the DSO. Later his navigator was awarded a DFC.

PETER WHITE

BLACKJACK'S FAREWELL TO DARWIN

The following is the story of the farewell to Darwin, as carried out by W/CDR Brian (Blackjack) Walker, and S/LDR John Hickey when they departed 12 Squadron (Wirraways), Darwin, Walker to become Commanding Officer of 30 Squadron (Beaufighters) being formed at 5OTU at Wagga Wagga, and Hickey who later became Commanding Officer of 22 Squadron (Bostons).

W/CDR Walker had been Commanding Officer of the Squadron and S/LDR Hickey had been one of the Flight Commanders. I was told of this farewell by John Hickey, whilst we were together in 22 Squadron, at Kirawina.

S/LDR Walker led a formation of all the Wirraways of 12 Squadron on a Fly Over of Darwin. As the formation approached the city, Blackjack gave the order "Cocks out and relief tubes ready", and when directly over Darwin he gave a further order, "Commence pissing", and the whole Squadron pissed on Darwin.

GORDON CLOSE.

A Beau for a 'Betty'

On the morning of 2nd October 1943, two Beaufighters from Thirty Squadron RAAF, based on Kirrawina Island, were detailed to carry out a barge sweep from Wide Bay to Jaquinot Bay, on the South East Coast of New Britain.

Barge sweeps have been very fruitful for Thirty Squadron. Because of Allied air superiority in this area, the Japanese supply and reinforce their bases with the barges, that travel at night and hide out during the day. As a crew we had been credited with 9 destroyed and 4 damaged in a period of 12 days.



Newspaper report of the destruction of the 'Betty'

My Pilot, SQD/LDR Arthur Thomson and I were flying in A19-137, and our Number Two, were F/O Ted Marron and NAV F/SGT Bunny Gollan in A19-142.

We set course from Kirrawina to Wide Bay on New Britain, a distance of some 200 nautical miles across the Solomon Sea to start the sweep.

Flying at a height of about 1000 feet, and about half way across we sighted an aircraft at the same height and on the same course. At first I wasn't sure that it was an aircraft, as other sightings of a like nature had turned out to be dark spots on the perspex of the cupola.

Closing in on it I confirmed it was an aircraft and more than likely a Beaufort medium bomber from 100 Squadron heading on a bombing mission to Rabaul.

As we got very close it was plain to see a large red dot on the fuselage, and in fact it was a Mitsubishi medium bomber known to us as a Betty.

This completely changed our attitude. It was highly possible that the gunners in the Betty had fired a few bursts at us without scoring any hits. Both aircraft then made a number of full deflection attacks on the Betty without apparently causing any damage.

By this time the Betty had dropped height to about 100 feet, trying to pick up speed. It had no hope as we were much faster. Our armament consisted of four 20MM cannon mounted in the belly, and 6 .303 Machine guns mounted in the wings, all zeroed in at 500 yards. My Pilot decided to attack from astern and closed in to about five hundred yards, reduced speed to stay in the same position, and fired a long burst which hit the Betty across the middle of the back and it exploded in the air and crashed into the sea. We then proceeded on and carried out our assigned barge sweep, getting three barges destroyed.

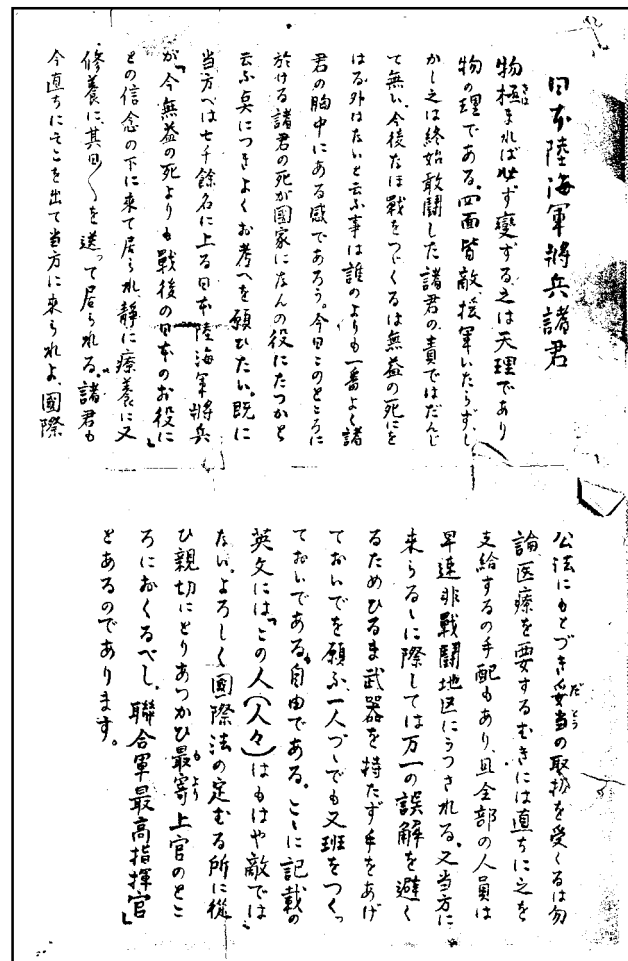
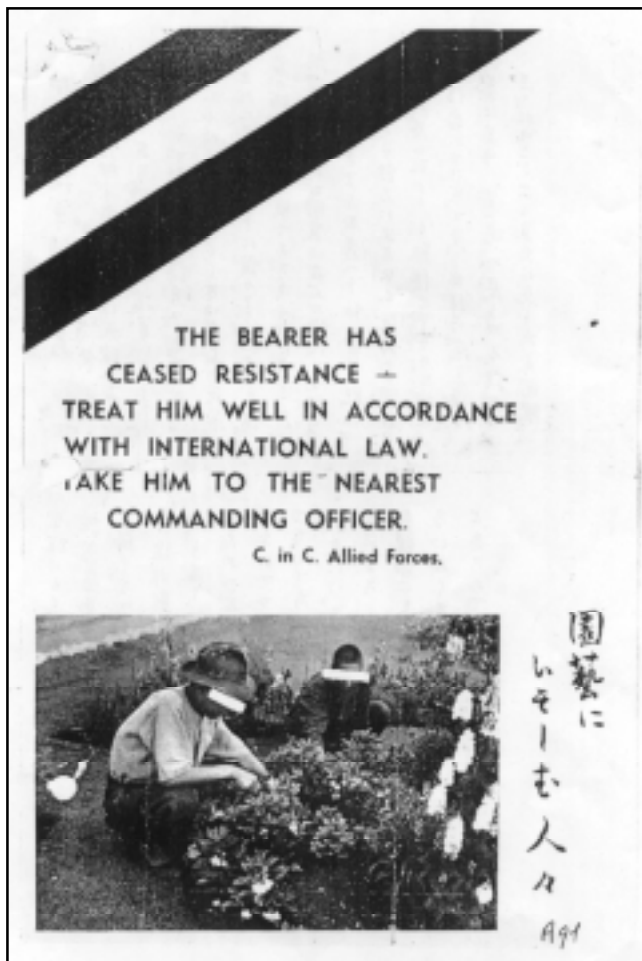


Squadron members celebrating the shooting down of the 'Betty' with a rare supply of beer.

Some years after the War I learned that the Betty came from number 702 Kokutai Squadron based at Rabaul. The Captain was Pilot First Class Risalino. The aircraft and crew were listed as missing presumed dead, and the Japanese were not aware of its fate until advised by our authorities after the cessation of hostilities.

The Pilot was a Japanese Air Ace, who flew in the Chinese wars, and over Kuala Lumpur, before being posted to the South West Pacific Area. I managed to get some good pictures of the action, and luckily we had just received some beer for the mess, so the Squadron had a pretty good party to celebrate our success. A19-137 had been a good aircraft for us, but we lost it a few weeks after this episode when we were damaged by Zeros at Wide Bay, crash landing at Kirrawina.

SURRENDER DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTED TO JAPANESE PERSONNEL



Translation of Jap Language on Surrender Document.

Officers and men of the Japanese Army and Navy with the war coming inevitably to an end (remember that) there is the law of man as well as the law of Heaven. (The second word of the Emperor) Those continuing the War are the generals. However, there is no blame falling on you, who from the beginning to the end fought bravely. To continue the War hereafter will lead to a useless (futile) death. Probably the feeling closest to your hearts is that foreigners should not prevail. We hope that you think about the idea, that the death of any of you, who are here today will not help your country. Up to now, more than 7,000 Army and Navy Officers and men have surrendered in the belief that it is better that I am there after the War to help Japan, rather than die

futilely now. They have been removed to an area away from the fighting and are being cared for medically. We will treat any surrendered soldier fairly in accordance with international law and of course arrange for unlimited medical (and other) help as required. Furthermore all personnel will be move immediately to safe areas. To ensure that there is no chance of misunderstanding (your motives) when you come to us, come during the day, singly or in squads, with you hands up and without weapons, The front of this card reads in English, "The bearer has ceased resistance - treat him well in accordance with international law. Take him to the nearest Commanding Officer, CinC Allied Forces".