

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

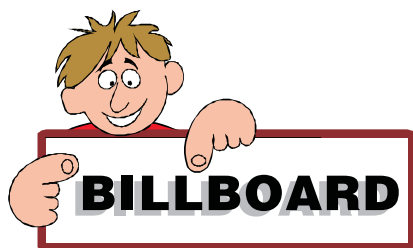
DECEMBER 2002

No. 9 - Beaufighter Course 5 OTU



**If you can provide the name of any of these
course members, please advise Hon. Secretary.**





BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA COMMEMORATION SERVICE

This Commemoration has now been held for the third time, after legislation was passed by the Federal Parliament. The date set by that Legislation for this service is the first Wednesday in September each year. This year is the 60th Anniversary of the start of that battle, and is the second time the service has been held in Brisbane, at the new Memorial which was unveiled in 2000 by Premier Beattie. The location is in the forecourt of a building in the Government Precinct, at the corner of George and Alice Streets. It is actually the site of the old Bellevue hotel opposite the Old Parliament House building which was secretly demolished by the Deen brothers in the early hours one morning. This year the service coincided with the RSL National Congress which was being held in Brisbane. As a result, Presidents and other senior members of all State Branches were in attendance.

It was disappointing that the service was held on a weekday in a small site at the corner of two busy Brisbane streets, with an attendance of only some 250 people. The address of welcome was given by Major P J O'Keefe (Retd), chairman of the Battle for Australia Committee (Qld). The 60th Anniversary Address was presented by Major General Peter Phillips AO MC, who made the period of Milne Bay and The Kokoda Track the major part of his address, which was very well received.

A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE GOLD CARD

More doctors are now refusing to accept the Gold Card for consultations or treatment, and many others are threatening to do so. The Australian Medical Association has advised the Government, that if it does not increase the present subsidies paid for all procedures, it will advise all their members to refuse to accept the Gold Card.

The R&SL will support a claim to be made to the Federal Government by the Australian Medical Association to increase the present subsidies to bring them into line with all the other states, which if done will rectify the present position. Members are requested to write to their Federal Member encouraging him/her to support the application. I have already sent letters to the Minister for Vet. Affairs and my Federal member on behalf of our members.

VALE JOHN RAWLINSON

John Rawlinson has died of a heart attack. John was a fitter 2E in 30 Squadron during 1943 and was one of George Robertson's ground crew, and flew with him on a number of occasions George had kept in close touch with John and family since the war days.

RAFFLE

The prize for the raffle, is a framed print of Brian Wood's Beaufighter painting "Ordinary, Men Extraordinary Deeds". It will be drawn at the AGM in January, 2003.



SICK PARADE

President Ralph under went serious back surgery early in September, and is now in pretty good shape. Prior to his entry into Alamanda Hospital on the Gold Coast, for the surgery, he was able to host 30 Squadron visitors from New South Wales, Don Angus and his wife Dulcie. They are regular visitors to the coast, and we had an excellent lunch at Surfers RSL Club. They have promised to let me know when they intend to holiday at the coast next year, so that we can get together again.

Your's truly Peter spent a week in Greenslopes Hospital, had some plumbing fixed up, and can now hit the wall pretty easily.

COMMITTEE

Patron	
Hon. Sir James Killen	
President	
Ralph Ind	5564 0181
V. President	
William O'Connor	3286 1067
Secretary	
Peter White	3287 5488
Email:	petewhite@iprimus.com.au
Committee	
Stan Curran	3388 6053
E-mail:	currans@powerup.com.au
Jack Chamberlain	3848 2184
Les Turnbull	5537 7965

Keith Nicholson Remembers

Continued from September issue

The following day I took the brass hats down to Gurney Strip at Milne Bay where we stayed with No 77 Kittyhawk Fighter Squadron. The weather to and from Milne Bay was absolutely putrid: in fact I shouldn't really have flown back to Moresby that day at all. I actually flew along the coast at about 50 feet, watching the trees on the shoreline for reference, It was a dangerous flight and I shouldn't have attempted it, but I got away with it and kept them on schedule. The VIP's were thrilled to have flown in a front line operational aircraft and I'm sure their appreciation was quite genuine. They wanted to experience actual combat conditions so I made a few dummy attacks during the various stages of the flight. They were most Impressed with the performance of our aircraft and I'm sure they got an appreciation of what it meant to be given air support. At some time later Mike Burrows and I were invited to dine with them in their official Army Mess.



On another occasion 'Blackjack' bellowed for me over the Tannoy at the June Valley campsite, to alert me for a take off for Horn Island, just off the tip of Cape York Peninsula. Waving his long barrelled Luger around in the air, he didn't give much away, other than my destination and that the aircraft and crew had to be ready for combat. He gave me an envelope to be opened only when airborne and that meant that nobody in Moresby could find out what was about to happen. When I got to Horn Island I found that Bob Bennett was already there and that our job was to escort the first Spitfire Squadron across the Coral Sea and down to Milne Bay.

The Spitfires did not arrive at Horn Island until the following morning, having experienced engine problems on the way up from the South, I watched their landings most of them were bloody awful and in fact one of them tipped up on his nose and bent the propeller. We discovered that their VHF radio frequencies were different from ours, so we didn't have any radio communication with them. At a briefing with the squadron we agreed on a system of hand signals and I outlined our intended route, and told them I wouldn't be flying in cloud, or above unbroken cloud, If we struck, those conditions, I would descend and fly underneath the cloud layer. I also had to reassure them that there were no problems, and that we would get them across to Wards. As I could not monitor each aircraft, it was their duty to watch our aircraft and follow whatever I did for the two hour flight. So off we went as a gaggle, with our aircraft as the mother hen and the Spitfires as the obedient chick, they didn't stray too far away, being terrified of losing me and thus their only means of getting to Moresby. We all landed safely at Wards for refuelling and next day took off for Milne Bay. I didn't land there however, but returned immediately to Wards.

When Bob Bennett landed back at Wards after the escort mission, the fitters found a serious defect in one of the elevator hinges and so the Engineer Officer, Norm Fraser, grounded all our Beaufighters until they had been inspected and any faults repaired. Hence there were no operational sorties for several weeks until all aircraft were certified OK again. During that time our CO, Brian Walker completed his tour of duty and went South on leave, and Wing Commander Clarrie Glasscock arrived to take over command.

Komiatum on the Owen Stanley ranges was our next target as an army co-operation mission. Maurie Ball led Blue section and I led Red section. We had to climb to 18,000 feet to get above the clouds at the Gap and when we saw a break in the clouds in the direction of the target, we dived some 10,000 feet in two minutes. We came down so fast from freezing upper air that our 2 inch thick armoured windscreen fogged up, making it very difficult to see through. I made three runs along the track near the target, strafing huts and stores and I saw at least 30 carriers packs on the ground. There was no ack-ack or interceptions, but the weather was lousy.

About a week later we lost one of our aircraft in a fatal accident at Wards. Ed Woolcott had been on my OTU course at Forest Hill, but I had come across him before when he was a trainee pilot on No 14 course at No 4 SFTS Geraldton, where I was on No 16 Course. On one occasion, Ed was practising a forced landing procedure (with one of the Anson engines brought back to idle) at a satellite drome trainee pilots were not supposed to actually land the aircraft, but at a height of about 50 feet, would push on full power on both engines and climb out again.

When Ed got down to that height and opened the throttles, the idling engine didn't respond, bringing about a real forced landing situation. The correct procedure in an aircraft such as the Anson, which was not designed to fly on one engine in that attitude, was to cut both engines and land straight ahead, In other words, get it back on the ground immediately, no matter what lies ahead. But Ed tried to fly it off on one engine. It stalled and spun into a tailspin, wrecking the aeroplane, with Ed sustaining minor injuries. A few weeks later he landed another Anson with the undercarriage still retracted, and the CFI again forgave him.

When we were at Forest Hill doing our OTU and again at Moresby in the squadron, Ed and I argued at length about the correct and safe action in the event of an engine failure during take off in a Beaufighter. I held that if the aircraft hadn't reached single engine speed (about 150 kts) then the remaining engine should be cut

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and the take off aborted, landing straight ahead, whereas Ed maintained that he could get off the ground with one engine. His belief ultimately cost the lives of both him and his navigator, Bob Hasenohr.

On 15th June eight Beaufighters were briefed to attack villages at Kiapit and Bomana. I was to be the reserve in A 19-74. As reserve, I was ninth in the order of the 0830 take off, immediately behind Ed Woolcott. I started my take off run with Ed in A 19-93 about half-way down the runway and was just opening up to full power when I saw the starboard tyre of his aircraft blow out. The tail of A 19-93 was high in the take off position and the Beau lurched right, the starboard wing dropped, and the starboard propeller threw tip a great shower of sparks as it hit the runway. Then I saw what I took to be engine cylinders thrown up in the air from that engine and the aircraft started to veer right. I expected Ed to cut the power and probably ground-loop, but he continued with the take off and the Beaufighter went into a classic stall, flicking over on its back and crashing into the ground in a ball of fire and smoke.

I went on with my take off, flying through the smoke and exploding ammunition from the crash, and slotted into the formation in Ed's place. But my starboard motor started throwing oil and generally playing up so I decided to notify the leader, Maurie Ball, and return to base. I had been closer to Ed than anyone else in the Squadron and seeing the crash back at Wards had upset me considerably, so I really wasn't in a fit mental condition to go on with the mission, particularly if the leader was relying on me for support or to take over the formation.

The Squadron was scheduled to vacate Wards and spend a few weeks at Milne Bay before re-locating to Goodenough Island, so all the aircraft without tailplane defects were sent down to Turnbull Strip. We remained at Moresby until our aircraft was repaired with a spare part from Australia and arrived at Milne Bay on 2nd July with the Medical Officer as a passenger. While we were delayed at Moresby I helped reduce the bar stocks to zero, as requested by the CO before he departed, so we had very little to bring down with us. At Turnbull, 30 Squadron was temporarily lodged with No 6 Beaufort Squadron for messing and accommodation purposes, Ken and I installed ourselves in the tent occupied by Doug Raffin and George Dick, who had gone back to Moresby with the CO and we got to work to make the tent a bit more habitable. We put in a steel mesh floor supported on 8 by 3s, and covered with malthoid, which raised it above the mud below.

We didn't get out on another strike mission, mainly because of the foul weather, until 20th July when we went in A19-74 with Clarrie Glasscock in A19-104, to do a photographic reconnaissance of Gasmata. Mike Burrows came in my aircraft and we made one run down the strip while Ken operated his hand-held camera. There was heavy ack-ack and we photographed a Zero on the strip.

Two days later, Clarrie Glasscock led seven other Beaufighters in an attack on Gasmata, in which Bostons, Beauforts and Kittyhawks also took part. The Kittyhawks were to give top cover for the mission, The Beaufighters went on their strafing run first, mainly to suppress the anti-aircraft fire, which was normal, and then we stooged around as low-level cover while the other squadrons had a go with their bombs. Graeme Hunt had about two feet of his port wing blown off by the ground-fire and three other aircraft were holed by .50 calibre shells,

I led the formation back to Milne Bay and nearing Turribull, called them into echelon right for the squadron landing drill. I did the usual thing on arrival, shot along the strip at dot feet, pitched left and up to do a very tight, low circuit, without enough time to visually check the locking of the starboard undercarriage leg, but I was able to see the port leg lock down. I heard the hydraulic system relieving, and thus knew that it was to full pressure, so both legs should be down and locked. Because I was concentrating on the short circuit, I didn't bother to check the gear indicator (fruit machine) and it wasn't until I was on very short final that the klaxon went off and I found that the starboard leg was still up in the nacelle.

K NICHOLSON

To be continued

219 (AAFC) SQUADRON FORMAL DINING IN NIGHT.

The Squadron's Commanding Officer F/Lt (AAFC) Bob Haiduczok invited President Ralph and members to the Squadron's Dining in Night. The function was held at The Jim O'Sullivan recreation room, at the Police Services Academy Oxley, on 14th September 2002.

A number of our members attended and enjoyed a very good night. The ceremony was conducted in traditional manner, thereby introducing the young men and women members of the Cadet Squadron to one of the very old and fine traditions of the services. The Colour Party carried out the introduction of the colours, with skill and precision showing the benefit of good drill instruction. The function then carried on in a very happy atmosphere, with representatives of other organizations, parents and friends present.

Appropriate speeches were given, firstly by the Police Commissioner, followed by The Commanding Officer of the Cadet Flying Training Squadron, Mr Eric Cavanagh (Greenbank RSL), Peter Vine (Pres Logan RAAFA) and Peter White (Sec Beaufighter & Boston Assoc) in the absence of President Ralph who was in hospital.

Emphasis was made on the advantages of a close association between the Association and the Cadet Squadron. During the coffee break it was good to talk with a number of parents and witness the enthusiasm and appreciation these parents have for the work the Cadet Squadron is doing.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Members

Peter, Stan Curran and I attended the Annual RAAF Commemorative Church service at St Thomas Aquinas Church at St Lucia, on Sunday 10th November. I wish it were possible for more of our members to attend this ecumenical service which is always impressive. I note however with the passing of time, fewer and fewer WWII veterans are able to attend each year, which I guess is a sign of the times.

Peter and I will be attending the Passing out Parade of 219 Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets at Archerfield on Saturday 23rd November 2002. All members are invited to attend, and are requested to advise Peter, SAP.

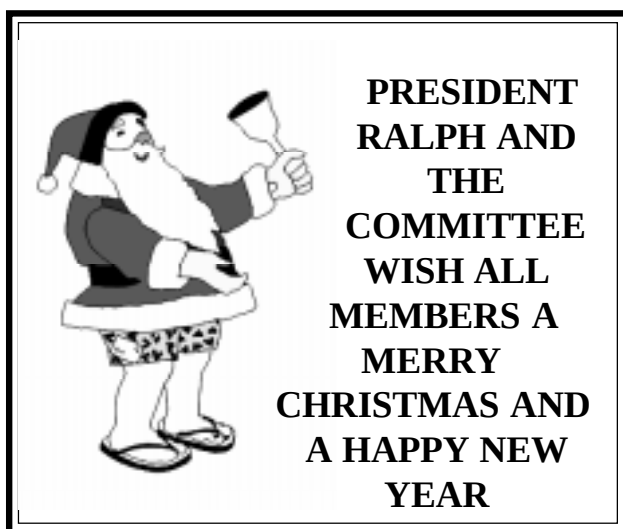
I am sorry I was unable to attend the Squadron's Dining in night, but I had not fully recovered from the Laminectomy at that stage. I understand Peter and Stan enjoyed themselves very much.

The Combined Associations annual visit to RAAF Amberley will take place on 10th December next, commencing with a Memorial and a Wreath laying Service at the Rose Garden of Remembrance at the entrance to the Station.

It would be appreciated if as many members and their wives/partners could make the trip to Amberley. Again please contact Peter for further details if you intend going.

In view of our change of address, Peter has arranged for the AGM and Barbecue to be held at 219 Squadron AAFC headquarters at Archerfield. See further details in this issue. Joan and I are very disappointed that our change of address precludes us from holding the event in the same manner as we have in the past.

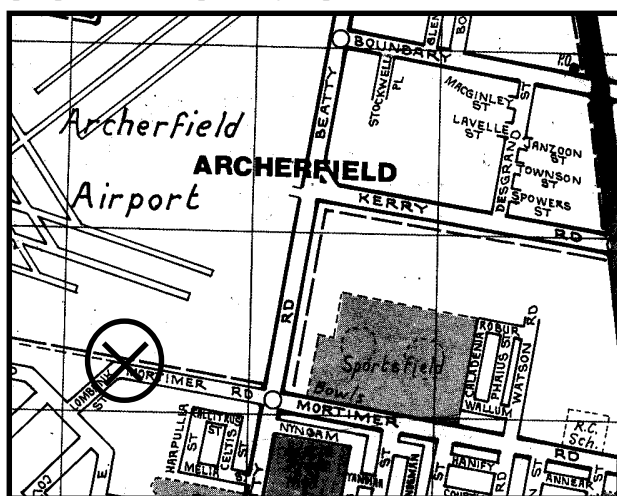
Regards RALPH.



AGM BARBECUE

The Annual General Meeting and Barbecue will be held at the Headquarters of the Flying Squadron of the Australian Air Force Cadets at Archerfield Aerodrome. The meeting will be held on Thursday 16th January 2003, starting at 1100 hours. The Squadron's premises are located in Mortimer Road, which is the Southern boundary of the aerodrome: see sketch.

Members of 219 Squadron AAFC Parents Committee will do the barbecue, and cadets will wait on us. Ladies are requested to bring some salads etc, as in past years. Members are requested to RSVP to me at 3287 5488 by 10th of January. There is a contribution of \$10 per person to help defray expenses.



Annual Day at RAAF Base Amberley

Our Annual Combined Day at Amberley, with 463-467 Squadrons (Qld) Association, The Pathfinder Force (Qld) Association and The RAAF Beaufort Squadrons (Qld) Association, will be held at the Base on Tuesday 10th December 2002.

The day will commence at 0930 hours with a short ceremony at the Memorial Rose Garden, located just outside the main gate of the Base. President Ralph will lay a wreath on our Memorial on behalf of our members. The RAAF will provide a shuttle bus service from the front gate after this service. A host officer has been assigned to look after us for the day, and will meet us at the Memorial Gardens. Members are requested to park their cars opposite the Caltex Service Station on Southern Amberley Road.

Morning tea will be provided in the Officers' Mess, followed by a series of short briefs and visits to various locations on the base. A buffet luncheon will be served in the Officers' Mess at 1130 hours, followed by the presentation of annual trophies. There is a cost of \$18.20 for morning tea and luncheon. This will be collected on the day.

Members requiring transport please contact me and I will try to arrange for you to be pecked up. Please RSVP by 6th December, as a list of members attending has to be provided for security purposes. If you have any enquiries please do not hesitate to contact me.

NOMINAL ROLL 2003

Addison GCAPT W	15 Ferdinand Avenue Campbell ACT 2601	02 6248 9282
Angus D	21 Madrrers Avenue Kogarah 2217	
Atkinson LAC W	42 King Street Deception Bay 4508	3204 1667
Anderson F	58 Peridon Village Daleys Point 2257	
Beadle LAC F	11 Tuggerah Street North Booval 4304	3281 3928
Brassil FSGT J	46A Melbourne Street East Gosford 2250	02 4322 7576
Brazenor FLT R	7 Virginia Street Mt. Waverley 3149	
Boehm T M	45 Carbeen Avenue St. Ives 2075	
Campbell CPL C	22 Wangawallen Road Eagle Heights 4271	5546 1980
Castle J	41/7 Watlands Esplaade Runaway Bay 4216	7552 8699
Chamberlain FLT J	120 Dudley Street Annerley 4103	3848 2184
Clark LAC K	Lake Sherrin Homes Boundary Rd. Thornlands 4164	3206 4146
Clark Mrs M	92/42 Ridley Street Bridgeman Downs 4103	3263 5412
Close FLT G	7 Chaley Street Aspley 4034	3253 5387
Gaunson Mrs J	15 Benze Street Logan Central 4114	3208 3379
Copping Mr P	C\O AWM Post Office Box 345 Canberra ACT 2601	
Coleman FLT MID E	100 Kirkwood Rd West Tweed Heads Sth 2486	5524 9379
Collin s FO R	4/71 Chatsworth Road Greenslopes 4120	3394 2005
Corbett Mrs D	2 Bellbird Street Wellington Point 4160	3107 3398
Creedy FLT K	84 Richmond Street Gordon Park 4031	3857 2875
Curran SLDR S	6 CaloolaDrive Springwood 4127	3388 6053
Cutler FLT S	14 Turner Street Ipswich 4305	3281 3145
Dallitz Mr W	69 Eucalypt Street Bellara 4507	
Donnelly W/O A	P O Box 5 Graceville East 4075	3892 4848
Drury F/Lt G	5 Hanlon Cres. Sandown Vil. Sandy Bay 7005	
Dunlop FLT N	8 Ermina Court Carindale 4152	3308 9238
ENGLISH OBE A	33/9 Salford Street Victoria Point 4165	3207 7424
Fanning FO L	2 Burkitt Street Bundaberg 4670	4152 4522
Goodland GCAPT P	12 Tenterfield Place Forest Lake 4078	3879 1252
Gordon FO I	97 Shenton Road Swanborne 6010	
Haiducsuk B	17 Holmedale Street Oxley 4075	3375 5848
Hall FO G R	403 Levitt Road Upper Kedron 4055	3351 4052
Hamilton FO J	135 Victoria Street Mackay 4740	4955 1313
Hayes Mrs J	8 White Street Gladstone 4680	4972 2560
Hill LAC A	39 Stewart Street Bundaberg 4670	4152 0637
Holt Mrs Y	34 Charles Street Baulkham Hills 2153	9639 9862
Hornsey Mr D	PO Box 136 Raymond Terrace 2324	02
Houston WO F G	47 Plover Street Slade Mackay 4740	
Hunt Mrs N	PO Box 123 Tweed Heads 2485	5536 6767
Hunt Mr B	4/71-73 Wharf Street Tweed Heads 2485	5536 2533
Hutchinson FSGT R	61 Alpha Road Greystaines 2145	02 9896 6891
Inches CPL R	717 Rutheven Street Toowoomba 4350	4636 5917
Ind FLT R MID	49 Atlantis West 2 Admiralty Dr Paradise Waters 4217	5564 0181
Jacobi FO J	27 Tilquin Street The Gao 4061	3300 2090
Jensen MS P	PO BOX 2388 Bundaberg 4570	4159 6866

NOMINAL ROLL 2003 - *Continued*

Jensen CPL C	MS 963 Langebecker Road Bundaberg 4570	4159 7356
Johnson FO G	8/134 Middle Street Cleveland 4163	3821 3574
Kemp Mr S	9 Acacia Street Thornlands 4164	3286 2511
King FLT C	127 Britannia Avenue Morningside 4170	3399 3540
King LAC F	2 Megan Street Tweed Heads 2486	5524 3637
Lawson LAC R	2186 Wynnum Road Wynnum 4178	3396 4580
Loveband WO J L	PO Box 494 Batemans Bay 2536	02 4471 3853
Lovell S	PO Box 770 Mossman 4873	4098 8406
Lyons WO D	316 Beaconsfield Terrace Brighton 4017	3269 1331
Marks K	14 Grebe Place Burleigh Waters 4220	
LAC Masson	Wilderness Yeulba 4427	4624 4034
Masterson FO W	4/5 McKean Road Scarness 4655	4124 4034
McClymont Mrs S	"Palmal" 151 Nth Creek Rd Lennox Head 2478	02 6687 7304
McDonald K	5 Grosvenor Street Frankston 3199	03 9787 6962
McMillan D	42 Vergulde Road Regents Park 4118	3402 3528
McMinn SGT V	4 Kurrawa Avenue Mermaid Waters 4218	5572 2805
Meers C	PO Box 117 Mapleton 4560	5445 7565
Merrotsy SGT J	17 Murphys Road Kingscliffe 2487	02 6574 2830
Miles Mr C	29 Pilbi Street Woodridge 4114	
Miller FO A	21 Whitesands Place Batehaven 2536	02 4471 1187
Morgan LAC H	119 Madsen Street Grovely 4054	3356 6596
Moore L	PO Box 2060 Innisfail 4868	4063 3557
Nicholson FLT K	RAAF Estate Baltimore Parade Merriwa 6030	08 0311 4470
Mixon Mrs B	"Phiara" Rolleston 4702	4984 3163
Nye Mr Tony	61 Sussex Road Acacia Ridge 4110	
O'Connor WO W	26 Coburg Street Cleveland 4163	3286 1067
Quinn FSGT K	23B Tweedale Road Applecross 6153	08 9364 1343
Robertson FLT DFC G	189 Quarry Lane Rockhampton 4700	4921 2171
Rose FLT G	16 Novar Court Robina 4226	5562 0202
Rowell FLT H	10 Duncraig Road Applecross 6153	9364 7656
Scheckenbach Mr A	23 Brigden Crescent Theodore ACT 2905	02 6292 8782
Smith SLDR C	43 Juliette Street Annerley 4103	3391 4255
Smith Ms B	PO Box 1371 Southport 4215	5502 8387
Snell Mr R	59 McLean Gulliver 4812	4779 5042
Tanner Mr D	8 Majorca Place Slacks Creek 4127	3208 2340
Taylor Mr D	135 Hansford Road Zillmere 4034	3265 6866
Thomson DFC SLDR A	323 Myers Road Merricks North 3926	03 5989 7219
Tritton MID SLDR N	142 Yabba Street Ascot 4007	3262 5965
Turnbull FLT L	40/7 Oatlands Esplanade Runaway Bay 4216	5537 7965
WARDLAW Mrs E	30 Curramundi Road Caloundra 4551	5493 4374
Wells Mrs K	13 Considine Street Rockhampton 4700	4922 6260
Wemyss Ms A	78 Stuart Street Bulimba 4171	3395 7210
Wish-Wilson Mr C	60 Debra Street Toowoomba 4350	4635 7634
Wicks Ms B	1/40 Ian Avenue Hervey Bay 4655	4194 0149
White FLT MID P	9 Scott Street Beenleigh 4207	3287 5488

FRANK REMEMBERS 93 SQUADRON DAYS

Continued from September.

On the 9th December, Squadron Leader Gulliver came to my tent that evening, and after talking about wives and his two young sons, he told me he was going to Saigon again in the morning. I told him I had just written home to Jean and told her I didn't intend to fly again until I came home. "Good" He said. A couple more wanted to go with him. He told me he was leaving at 0800 hours the next morning.

I went down to the strip about 0700 hours and serviced the plane. I was sitting in the cockpit after testing the motors, when two officers walked by and stopped under the starboard mainplane. I could hear every spoken word. One was saying what a wonderful party they had that night, the best he had ever been to with all the nurses there. He sounded as though he had a wonderful time. The other said how full some were and couldn't stand up. When they left I took off both oil filters and went up to the engineer's tent, Ernie Shields, and asked him for the log book on A8-184. He wanted to know what I wanted it for. I said "I am declaring the kite unserviceable".. He said "It sounded good to him when he heard it running". I said "The oil pressure was no good". When I got back to the plane I was sitting on the ground, with the oil filters in front of me, when another officer walked up and stood a few feet from me. He said "Are you worried about Squadron Leader Gulliver?" I didn't answer him, he then said "He's allright and fit to fly, and that he was flying with him. Next breath he said "I am the Doctor".

I didn't know what to think. I thought the first two could have been romancing and the Doctor should have known. So I made the kite serviceable. Just before 0800 hours the two ground staff that were going, came and got in. Then the navigator, then a Wing Commander and the doctor. Keith came just on 0880 hours. He asked if the plane was OK. I said "Yes". He then taxied to the end of the strip. I got on a Jeep and I went to see the take off.

After Keith had done his usual checks he started to roll off, he hadn't gone far when he swung to starboard. He straightened it up, then moving to port he swung back, and must have had air speed up. He started to take off when his right mainplane dipped down as though he was banking to starboard. His mainplane hit two Mustangs parked beside the strip. His plane burst into flames and Keith walked through them. We got him into the Jeep. He was in a bad way. We got him to the hospital, but he passed away at 2300 hours that night. I was in shock as I would have always been on the plane with him.

F/O Kirkwood was placed in charge, and a couple of days after the accident he came to me with Ernie Childs the engineer. They said they were going to give me Corporal stripes. I said I am only a Flight Mechanic, all they wanted to know then, how did I get on the CO's plane. Nothing more about being a Corporal.

The Squadron started to disband before Xmas, but I was left there with two planes and one pilot and two navigators, to wait for the new CO to come up. Squadron Leader Stark arrived on 4th January 1946.

He told us he was staying a few days. We finally left Labuan on 12th January 1946.

When half way over Borneo the starboard motor started running very rough. The whole plane was shaking. I couldn't stand up behind the pilot. He was going to feather the motor but I asked him to throttle back and keep it running. We turned for Tarakan, he flew with the sea on one side and a swamp on the other, with a few planes with their noses in the swamp. He then turned for Morotai. We flew over 700 miles of water, and I didn't have a Mae West. As we approached Morotai the engine started to run a lot better, and by the time we went to land it was running perfectly. Was I glad I told him not to feather the motor. I asked him once on the flight, how was the oil pressure, and he said it was very high. When we landed, I removed the oil filters, and they were full of sludge. It's marvelous how they got through the pipeline and did I curse the 2E's that had done the engine change, only a couple of weeks before.

On leaving Morotai next morning we headed for Higgins Field and on the way we had to fly around an air sprout, you could see it miles ahead. Next morning on leaving Higgins, I thought I would be seeing Jean in a couple of hours, but he turned and made for Charleville. On arriving at Charleville we entered a severe dust storm and couldn't see the drome. We circled a couple of times before we could land and the petrol was getting low.

Next day Narromine after a couple of days Squadron Leader Stark called us on parade and called for volunteers for Japan. Our Squadron was escorting the Mustangs up for occupation duties. All the new recruits stepped forward and I moved backwards and he spotted me. Did I get a lecture, the air was black and blue. The best swearing I've ever heard. I asked him when would I be posted and he told me two days, and it was up to Amberley on strength. After a few days I went on sick parade and finished up in Greenslopes and had the right knee operated on.

On discharge I was given a small pension. A couple of weeks after discharge I took Jean to Cairns to meet my brothers and sisters, whom she had never met, and whilst I was there I went paralysed down the right side and I was like that for two months. I think nerves might have got the better of me, even at night I would leave the bed in one leap. Poor Jeannie I must have given her many a fright.

A couple of years ago I read in one paper written by F/Lt Peter White about the three Beaufighter Squadrons No's 22,30, and 31. I phoned him and said he had lost one. He said there is no more. I said "Yes, 93. I have never heard of it, he said. I told him Squadron Leader Gulliver was the CO. He said he knew him and then he asked me my name, and I was immediately enrolled in the Beaufighter and Boston Association of Queensland.

I am glad I did phone, as I've met a lot of damn good fellows: now keep your hat on.

LAC Frank Beadle. Flight Mechanic. 93 RAAF Beaufighter Squadron

GEORGE DRURY'S MEMOIRS of THE BATTLE OF THE BISMARCK SEA



General MacArthur described it as "the decisive aerial engagement" of the war in the South West Pacific; historian Lex McAuley says it was one of World War II's 'great historical moments, a land battle fought at sea and won from the air'. Yet the Battle of

the Bismarck Sea, fought more than 50 years ago, remains Australia's forgotten victory.

I should record here my own personal recollections of taking part in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. On February 28th, 1943 we began carrying out practice missions on the old Moresby wreck. Some squadron members assumed this ship was the *SS Macdhui*, sunk by the Japanese air attack near Moresby, but according to Lex McAuley this was incorrect. Our target was the 4700 ton P.& O. liner, the *SS Pruth*, which had been driven aground on Nateara Reef on 30 December 1923.

We knew that a Japanese convoy had left Rabaul and come round the top of New Britain, so we practised in conjunction with the Americans. It was just as well we did, because the first practice day one squadron turned up 20 minutes late. Our coordinated mission was then fine tuned and fine tuned and fine tuned, with Air Commodore Bill ('Bull') Garing as the master mind. He was stationed at the headquarters at Port Moresby. I think I took part in two of the practice runs, and they were well organised, I tell you. There was just a select group from every squadron to take part in the final strike, although I do think in recollection that I myself was not aware of the magnitude of what might be ahead of us. To me, being fairly new in the squadron, I was just going out on another routine practice job formation flying, cooperation with various other aircraft B25s, B17s and fighter aircraft and A20's and ourselves. I enjoyed it and thought it was part of my education, but as I say I did not quite realise the implication and importance of these training runs.

My diary entry for February 28th, 1943, reads: 'A slice of practice today, in the form of a coordinated attack with one formation of B17s and 3 formations of B25s. And very interesting it was too. The two pairs of Beaus consisted of Little, No 2 to him Bob Bennett, and

Bob Brazenor with myself as No 2 to him. We took off, formed up and choofed down to Hood Point where the five formations positioned themselves out, and set course for the Port Moresby wreck.

The B17's went in first, bombing from 8000 feet and damned good bombing, then the B25s were next, right after the B17s but from 5000 feet. We then dived in a strafing attack right after the bombs, so bloody much 'right behind' them in fact that the bombs were bursting around the wreck as we were diving which wasn't exactly the most comfortable feeling in the world. However we gave it a good squirt peeling off a few of the rusted plates. We then wheeled round so that we could see the B25 effort. The strafing formation which consisted of 4 B25 C 1s, a plane fitted with long range tanks and eight .5s fixed in the nose to be used as a front gun strafing, dived in and played buggery with the wreck, but it was only a second class of buggery compared to the formation of five which followed them in and skip bombed the wreck. One bomb hit the wreck amidships sending skywards a column of rusty smoke. After the show we returned and landed.

On March 2nd, 1943: "**Pandemonium.**" Yesterday afternoon a Jap convoy consisting of 7 transports, 4 destroyers and 3 cruisers with about 40 Zekes as top cover was sighted on the north coast of New Britain heading this way, evidently for Wewak, Madang or even possibly Lae. This morning the whole squadron was briefed to do a coordinated attack beginning as soon as the convoy came within safe range. The attack was to be the largest air attack ever attempted in this area. About 70 aircraft were to take part. The Beaus were to lead about a dozen B25s (skip bombing) in at mast top height as an ack ack diversion and to knock out as many guns and personnel on the warship escorts as possible and then strafe any transports which came into the sights. However the weather closed in on the target area and we had to return to Moresby.

I don't remember a lot about the pre briefings from 'Blackjack' Walker, but I know that our instructions were that the Beaufighters were to go in first, and that we must hit the bridge on the enemy ships, because the bridge would contain the captain and the navigator. Evidently in the Japanese navy, if the captain and the navigator were knocked out the ship was completely helpless, as there was a highly organised hierarchy.

I do remember a gradual build up of excitement. Although our Squadron had flown numerous strike missions, it had rarely seen a Japanese below the green carpet of trees. This time however the target would be easily visible. I certainly do remember the ground staff all gathering round to wave us off on March 3rd when

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we took off on the coordinated air attack on the Jap convoy, because it might have been expected that lot of us would get the chop, although you didn't adopt that attitude. In those days you were going to come back, you *knew* you were going to come back, of course you were going to come back.

The thing that stands most vividly in my memory, which is not written in the diary, is the build up of the feeling as the air strike force was gathering at the rendezvous over Cape Ward Hunt. The Beaufighters were there first, and we just gently circled round and round. I think our position was 6000 feet from memory. There was not a cloud in the sky, and we'd see coming through the Gap in the Owen Stanleys, another squadron of B25s or A20's; then the B17 bombers would be coming through and they'd get up to their allotted height and gradually circle and circle and circle. Then the Lightning fighters right up at the top, and right at the appointed minute this air armada, which consisted of about 300 planes - I can remember the excitement, the magnitude! On the European scene 300 aircraft wasn't much, because they used to send 1000 bomber raids from England over Germany, but we'd never seen anything like this before. We couldn't *imagine* in our wildest imagination that anything like this could happen. Then this air armada started going along the north coast of New Guinea and we sighted this Japanese convoy which was bringing 15,000 crack Japanese marines from Rabaul to land them at Lae and thus recommence their drive towards Australia. We were instructed to get the transports.

Well it worked out well. I don't think we made any mistakes. Probably some of the bomber aircraft were a bit ahead of their schedule and bombs were failing around the Beaufighters, but as soon as we got in sight of the Jap convoy it was always the Australians' strict procedure to keep to radio silence. You wouldn't say a word unless it was a dire emergency. But as soon as we got in sight the Yanks came out on their wireless systems and they were yelling "Get in there, boy! Get into them! Go! Go!" And really this did build up the terrific excitement, and the adrenalin was pumping. We came down to the right of the force and turned through onto the transports which were in the centre. There was a row of cruisers in the front, then a row of destroyers,

then the two rows of transport ships with 15,000 picked Japanese marines on board, then another row of destroyers and another row of cruisers. We went in so low that one line of Japanese ships firing at us were really firing at the other line of Jap cruisers and destroyers. I've just tried to describe there the terrific feeling of intense excitement that had built up. In my diary I wrote:- 'I've seen on the movies, shots of wheeling destroyers, of the sky filled with ack ack bursts, of warships firing broadsides, of the sky filled with milling aircraft, of ships being blown up by bombs, but none so exciting as those five minutes running through that convoy.'

We banked between the masts of the ship, which shows how low we were. In our case, we did the first run, and got three in a line, beautifully lined up, and we hit the first one, pulled up for the second one, and the terrific vibration had evidently blown the globe in my gun-sight. However that didn't matter a lot, because I started my tracer at the water-line and just eased the nose up so our guns were striking on the bridge again. I could see fires starting as I passed overhead. Then I pulled up for the third one, but my navigator shouted "Bandit at five o'clock. Dive!" A Zero jumped us, so I didn't get a run at the third ship. Navigator Dave Beasley gave me a running commentary; 'He's fallen down on another Beau. This was Ron Downing from Ballarat, and Ron got hit and set alight at the tail, but miraculously it went out after about a quarter of an hour as he set out for home. Dave again, yelling that a B25 was diving on a destroyer for a skip bombing attack. It got a direct hit on the bow and in Dave's words 'blew the arse right off.' We all formed up then, outside the convoy, and went for home.

Such an amazing victory with so few losses on our side is almost unbelievable. The Beau boys were certainly an excited and happy lot when we got back.

One of the things that is not in the diary is a cutting from the *Guinea Gold*, which was the newspaper that was circulated throughout the forces. I think it came out every week in New Guinea. God, though I wish I had every copy that was ever made. They would tell a tremendous story, and possibly be worth a fortune.

GEORGE DRURY

To be continued



Keith Nicholson Remembers

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The following day I took the brass hats down to Gurney Strip at Milne Bay where we stayed with No 77 Kittyhawk Fighter Squadron. The weather to and from Milne Bay was absolutely putrid: in fact I shouldn't really have flown back to Moresby that day at all. I actually flew along the coast at about 50 feet, watching the trees on the shoreline for reference. It was a dangerous flight and I shouldn't have attempted it, but I got away with it and kept them on schedule. The VIP's were thrilled to have flown in a front line operational aircraft and I'm sure their appreciation was quite genuine. They wanted to experience actual combat conditions so I made a few dummy attacks during the various stages of the flight. They were most Impressed with the performance of our aircraft and I'm sure they got an appreciation of what it meant to be given air support. At some time later Mike Burrows and I were invited to dine with them in their official Army Mess.



On another occasion 'Blackjack' bellowed for me over the Tannoy at the June Valley campsite, to alert me for a take off for Horn Island, just off the tip of Cape York Peninsula. Waving his long barrelled Luger around in the air, he didn't give much away, other than my destination and that the aircraft and crew had to be ready for combat. He gave me an envelope to be opened only when airborne and that meant that nobody in Moresby could find out what was about to happen. When I got to Horn Island I found that Bob Bennett was already there and that our job was to escort the first Spitfire Squadron across the Coral Sea and down to Milne Bay.

The Spitfires did not arrive at Horn Island until the following morning, having experienced engine problems on the way up from the South. I watched their landings most of them were bloody awful and in fact one of them tipped up on his nose and bent the propeller. We discovered that their V.H.F radio frequencies were different from ours, so we didn't have any radio communication with them. At a briefing with the squadron we agreed on a system of hand signals and I outlined our intended route, and told them I wouldn't be flying in cloud, or above unbroken cloud. If we struck those conditions, I would descend and fly underneath the cloud layer. I also had to reassure them that there were no problems, and that we would get them across to Wards. As I could not monitor each aircraft, it was their duty to watch our aircraft and follow whatever I did for the two hour flight. So off we went as a gaggle, with our aircraft as the mother hen and the Spitfires as the obedient chick, they didn't stray too far away, being terrified of losing me and thus their only means of getting to Moresby. We all landed

safely at Wards for refuelling and next day took off for Milne Bay. I didn't land there however, but returned immediately to Wards.

When Bob Bennett landed back at Wards after the escort mission, the fitters found a serious defect in one of the elevator hinges and so the Engineer Officer, Norm Fraser, grounded all our Beaufighters until they had been inspected and any faults repaired. Hence there were no operational sorties for several weeks until all aircraft were certified OK again. During that time our CO, Brian Walker completed his tour of duty and went South on leave, and Wing Commander Clarrie Glasscock arrived to take over command.

Komiaturn on the Owen Stanley ranges was our next target as an army co-operation mission. Maurie Ball led Blue section and I led Red section. We had to climb to 18,000 feet to get above the clouds at the Gap and when we saw a break in the clouds in the direction of the target, we dived some 10,000 feet in two minutes. We came down so fast from freezing upper air that our 2 inch thick armoured windscreen fogged up, making it very difficult to see through. I made three runs along the track near the target, strafing huts and stores and I saw at least 30 carriers packs on the ground. There was no ack-ack or interceptions, but the weather was lousy.

About a week later we lost one of our aircraft in a fatal accident at Wards. Ed Woolcott had been on my OTU course at Forest Hill, but I had come across him before when he was a trainee pilot on No 14 course at No 4 SFTS Geraldton, where I was on No 16 Course. On one occasion, Ed was practising a forced landing procedure (with one of the Anson engines brought back to idle) at a satellite drome trainee pilots were not supposed to actually land the aircraft, but at a height of about 50 feet, would push on full power on both engines and climb out again.

When Ed got down to that height and opened the throttles, the idling engine didn't respond, bringing about a real forced landing situation. The correct procedure in an aircraft such as the Anson, which was not designed to fly on one engine in that attitude, was to cut both engines and land straight ahead. In other words, get it back on the ground immediately, no matter what lies ahead. But Ed tried to fly it off on one engine. It stalled and spun into a tailspin, wrecking the aeroplane, with Ed sustaining minor injuries. A few weeks later he landed another Anson with the undercarriage still retracted, and the CFI again forgave him.

When we were at Forest Hill doing our OTU and again at Moresby in the squadron, Ed and I argued at length about the correct and safe action in the event of an engine failure during take off in a Beaufighter. I held that if the aircraft hadn't reached single engine speed (about 150 kts) then the remaining engine should be cut

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and the take off aborted, landing straight ahead, whereas Ed maintained that he could get off the ground with one engine. His belief ultimately cost the lives of both him and his navigator, Bob Hasenohr.

On 15th June eight Beaufighters were briefed to attack villages at Kiapit and Bomana. I was to be the reserve in A 19-74. As reserve, I was ninth in the order of the 0830 take off, immediately behind Ed Woolcott. I started my take off run with Ed in A 19-93 about half-way down the runway and was just opening up to full power when I saw the starboard tyre of his aircraft blow out. The tail of A 19-93 was high in the take off position and the Beau lurched right, the starboard wing dropped, and the starboard propeller threw tip a great shower of sparks as it hit the runway. Then I saw what I took to be engine cylinders thrown up in the air from that engine and the aircraft started to veer right. I expected Ed to cut the power and probably ground-loop, but he continued with the take off and the Beaufighter went into a classic stall, flicking over on its back and crashing into the ground in a ball of fire and smoke.

I went on with my take off, flying through the smoke and exploding ammunition from the crash, and slotted into the formation in Ed's place. But my starboard motor started throwing oil and generally playing up so I decided to notify the leader, Maurie Ball, and return to base. I had been closer to Ed than anyone else in the Squadron and seeing the crash back at Wards had upset me considerably, so I really wasn't in a fit mental condition to go on with the mission, particularly if the leader was relying on me for support or to take over the formation.

The Squadron was scheduled to vacate Wards and spend a few weeks at Milne Bay before re-locating to Goodenough Island, so all the aircraft without tailplane defects were sent down to Turnbull Strip. We remained at Moresby until our aircraft was repaired with a spare part from Australia and arrived at Milne Bay on 2nd July with the Medical Officer as a passenger. While we were delayed at Moresby I helped reduce the bar stocks to zero, as requested by the CO before he departed, so

we had very little to bring down with us. At Turnbull, 30 Squadron was temporarily lodged with No 6 Beaufort Squadron for messing and accommodation purposes, Ken and I installed ourselves in the tent occupied by Doug Raffin and George Dick, who had gone back to Moresby with the CO and we got to work to make the tent a bit more habitable. We put in a steel mesh floor supported on 8 by 3s, and covered with malthoid, which raised it above the mud below.

We didn't get out on another strike mission, mainly because of the foul weather, until 20th JULY. when we went in A19-74 with Clarrie Glasscock in A19-104, to do a photographic reconnaissance of Gasmata. Mike Burrows came in my aircraft and we made one run down the strip while Ken operated his hand-held camera. There was heavy ack-ack and we photographed a Zero on the strip.

Two days later, Clarrie Glasscock led seven other Beaufighters in an attack on Gasmata, in which Bostons, Beauforts and Kittyhawks also took part. The Kittyhawks were to give top cover for the mission, The Beaufighters went on their strafing run first, mainly to suppress the anti-aircraft fire, which was normal, and then we stooged around as low-level cover while the other squadrons had a go with their bombs. Graeme Hunt had about two feet of his port wing blown off by the ground-fire and three other aircraft were holed by .50 calibre shells, I led the formation back to Milne Bay and nearing Turribull, called them into echelon right for the squadron landing drill. I did the usual thing on arrival, shot along the strip at dot feet, pitched left and up to do a very tight, low circuit, without enough time to visually check the locking of the starboard undercarriage leg, but I was able to see the port leg lock down. I heard the hydraulic system relieving, and thus knew that it was to full pressure, so both legs should be down and locked. Because I was concentrating on the short circuit, I didn't bother to check the gear indicator (fruit machine) and it wasn't until I was on very short final that the klaxon went off and I found that the starboard leg was still up in the nacelle.

K. NICHOLSON

WINNERS ARE GRINNERS

Man sitting at home waiting for his wife to come home from work. She is very late and when she arrives she shows the husband a gold watch she won in a raffle at the office while working overtime.

This goes on and on with her coming home every night, late and always with a win in the raffle. Gold bracelet, pearl necklace, fur coat all the things that make a wife happy.

One night she came in late again and told her husband she was exhausted after all this overtime and would he kindly run her bath for her. Husband dutifully prepares the bath but when the wife goes into the bathroom she is horrified. She comes out and says "Darling, you've put only half an inch of water in the bath?"

"Yes" he replies, I didn't want you to get your raffle ticket wet"

ANON