

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland



DECEMBER 2006

SOME MEMORIALS INITIATED BY BEAUFIGHTER AND BOSTON ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1995



Garden Seat at Anzac Square



RAAF Base, Amberley



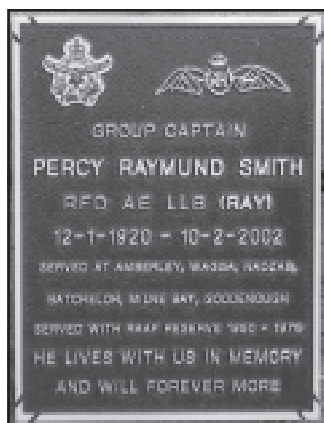
Amberley Memorial Wall



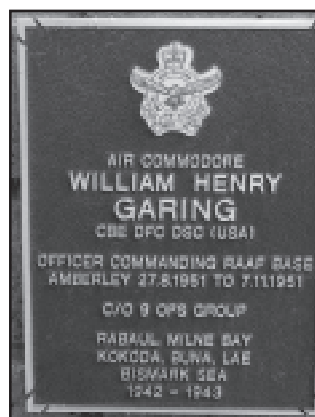
*Kimbe,
New
Britain*



*Queensland Air Museum,
Caloundra*



Amberley Memorial Wall



Amberley Memorial Wall

THE TIME HAS COME TO SAY GOODBYE

It is with great disappointment and sadness that I advise of the decision of a committee meeting held on Wednesday 8th November where it was unanimously decided that the Beaufighter and Boston Association be wound up because of the reduction the number of members attending meetings and functions.

We have a total membership of 83. There are only 12 members who live within a reasonable distance who could attend meetings and functions, if they are fit enough. The make up of the membership is local 12, Queensland country 25, interstate 43 and 3 international. It was clearly apparent that our Newsletter *Whisperer* was of great interest, and attracted the large numbers distant to Brisbane, some of whom contributed interesting articles and I express my thanks to them.

I have contacted The Officer Commanding 82 Wing requesting consideration be given allowing Logan RAAFA to replace us at the Annual Association's Day. This will ensure that our Shield and personal trophy will continue to be awarded to the successful member of 82 Wing.

Arrangements are currently being put into place by RAAFA Queensland Branch to store and ensure that the banners of defunct Squadron Associations will be safely stored, cared for, and carried on the appropriate occasions.

In the past we have annually awarded a Flying Scholarship to a member of one the AAFC Squadrons. I will personally ensure that this award continues.

Until 1995, when the association was first established there was nothing in place in South East Queensland to remind following generations of the part played by the Beaufighter and Boston Squadrons in the Battle for Australia. To rectify this situation the association has been active in putting in place suitable memorials at the following locations. Four number at RAAFA Memorial Garden Amberley, two number at Anzac Square Brisbane, Australia Air Museum Caloundra, and Kimbe in New Britain. In addition we have presented paintings by Gold Coat artist John Castle and a model of a Beaufighter and one of a Boston to the Warplanes Museum Caboolture. Paintings by John Castle were also presented to the Officer's Mess at RAAF Base Amberley. My thanks to all members who played an active part in providing these memorials.



My special thanks go to Dug McMillan for his work to ensure we had probably one of the very best newsletters in the country and to Mrs Leigh Williams for her help in organising the printing and posting of *Whisperer*. Thanks also to Stan Curran who personally designed, made at his own cost, and presented some 50 beautiful Squadron plaques to members and to others who assisted with their help and encouragement to make our Association a happy and friendly group during our eleven years.

PETER WHITE

NOT SO YOUNG HARRY REVISITS PNG

In 1981 my wife (Jessica) and I went to New Guinea to have a look around. We hired a car in Lae, with little formality, except an exchange of cash and "the little red one outside". It had a gear stick with 1.2.3. 4 R embossed on the top – but in the R it went forward, and it took a little time to work out the gear stick knob which had been turned around 90 degrees



We took on short trip out to Malahang Beach to look at the wreck, but stopped at a little stream across the road. I must have mumbled "better get out and check the depth". I thought it a man's job. But Jessica had her

shoes off and declared the stream fit to cross in no time. But voluntary paddling turned into regret. She had a large leach on her leg.

At Mahalang beach there was no sign of any wreck. The sea floor deepened sharply and some time ago the wreck rolled over and disappeared into the deep blue sea, but not as far out as the Commanding Officer's bombs!! (I'm a nasty bugger)

War artist Roy Hodgeskinson did a painting of lifting wounded David Duncan out of the top of the gunner's compartment. It is located in the Australian War Museum in Canberra. Several squadron fellows are identifiable – particularly Dr H H Jackson (Red Harry). He died in Melbourne a couple of years ago.

HAROLD ROWELL

TRITE SAYINGS

- I want to die in my sleep like my grandfather, not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.
- God must love stupid people. He made so many of them.
- The gene pool could use a little chlorine.
- I took an IQ test, and the results were negative.
- Consciousness: That annoying period between naps.
- Ever stop to think and forget to start again.

President's Corner

Dear members

It is with a great deal of sadness that I have to report the result of a meeting of the Executive of the Association held on the 8th of November last. Unfortunately the number of members who served with the various Squadrons & who live in the Metropolitan area or nearby have reduced, through age &/or illness, to such an extent that at the recent presentation ceremony at Amberley where we usually have a reasonable representation only 2 members other than myself & Barbara Smith turned up. You will appreciate that this situation is simply not good enough & in fact quite embarrassing.

It was quite obvious to the Executive after the Amberley debacle that as an Association we are unable to put together a respectable representation at such meetings for a variety of reasons. In the circumstances there appears to be little purpose in continuing as an association as we cannot guarantee a reasonable attendance of members. However we are not alone. At the Amberley meeting for instance, the President of the Beaufort Assoc. advised that his organisation was having similar difficulties & its members were considering its future.

In addition at the Annual Meeting of the Goldfish Club held in June last only 2 members including myself & their wives turned up together with 2 widows & their sons. It is doubtful if there will be another such meeting.

At the Executive meeting the members realised that time had arrived when we had to be brutally frank with ourselves. With average age of our members who served in the various Squadrons approaching 85 approximately it is difficult to see how our attendances at various functions such as Amberley could be respectable.

Accordingly the Executive, including Peter White, whose contribution to our Association has been truly magnificent over the past 15 years, decided that the Association should be wound up forthwith with the current edition of the *Whisperer* being our final publication.

Incidentally as some of you might know, Peter has not been in the best of health for some time but, as usual, has continued to give his best efforts for the benefit of our members.

Notwithstanding the above, it is my intention with the permission of Surfers Paradise RSL to honour the memory of our fallen comrades who served in the various Beaufighter & Boston Squadrons by laying a Wreath at the Dawn Service held on the esplanade at Surfers on Anzac Day.

Members it has been an honour & a privilege to serve as your President & I wish to thank you very sincerely for affording me that honour

With my very best wishes

Ralph



Extract from 30 Squadron Operations Report 1943 Sept. 1st.

Barge sweep Cape Archway to Arul, pay particular attention to Wide Bay and Cape Orford areas and inlets for 40 barges seen 40 miles west of Cape Orford by a Catalina on night 31 Aug/1 Sept.

A19-133	Glasscock/Kelley
A19-3	Ball/Hardman
A19-104	Mills/Coleman
A19-142	Fisher/Lutwyche
A19-111	Nicholson/Delbridge
A19-87	Thompson/White
A19-7	Burrows/Burgoyne
A19-141	Wein/Kirkwood
A19-107	Raffen/Dick
A19-132	Albrecht/Cain
A19-54	Tapner/Thomas
A19-53	Cornish/Braid

4 camouflaged Type A barges seen in Wide Bay, and 2 tied together at Cape Kallia Plantation jetty. A third was on the beach about 100 yards further north and a fourth was on the beach at Brown Island opposite Kallila Plantation jetty. Eight Beaufighters made several runs each over these targets, setting on fire the two beach barges and one tied to the jetty.

Long burst were directed at the other but that did not catch on fire, but it was severely damaged. Camouflage on the barges prevented seeing if any of these barges were loaded. The barge on Brown Island burnt fiercely with dense black smoke as though loaded with fuel. Whilst strafing the barge on the jetty tied to the jetty some of the fire from A19-104 entered the bush 10 yards from the shore lighting a probable fuel dump, since it burned with thick black smoke. Fired on ack-ack positions at Palmalmal Plantation, the light gun position being definitely silenced.

At Tower Plantation behind the houses is a tower about 40 feet high with a flat platform on top—probably an observation post. On the foreshores Waitevalu Plantation, which is next to Tower Plantation is another tower, about 30 feet high with a tin shelter on top. Ack-ack fire experienced from Palmalmal, medium, accurate from the position 200 yards from the Cape Cunningham side of the jetty, and slight inaccurate fire from near the end of the jetty. The light gun was silenced.

A19-111 was hit in the tail-plane by a medium gun, probably a bofors. Landed 1458. Duration 4 hours 25 minutes.

DIARY OF F/SGT DON KIRKWOOD

RAAF 30 SQUADRON

Continued from September 2006

Learnt at 2pm that a week's squadron leave is being granted to crews who have had 3 months up here, in future. Starting off with 7 course crews for some unknown reason and strange but true, or is it strange? Catt leads the list, with Fisher.

Sunday 31st

Slack day again. Rain and general bad weather has restricted flying

DELETED BY CENSOR

Our spirits are cheered once again by the news that the Boston took advantage of us.

He had taken out armour plating, ammunition, air gunner, and covered his gun ports. We were operationally loaded plus 3 extra people, yet we still held him. A great race has been announced again, for tomorrow at 5pm from one of the Amphlett isles to Vivigani, a distance of 25 miles. No holds barred.

NOVEMBER

Monday 1st

A book has been started for this race. I have a £2 interest: Over £200 has been wagered on the Beaufighter by our squadron. All the island is interested, the war is called off while we prepare. A19-54 is our charger and 4,500 pounds has been taken out. She is polished to a high pitch, all bumps and corners are covered and waxed, the DIF loop has been removed. 30 men are continually working on her while 15 stand by as reliefs, 3/4 pound of boost has been added. We expect 275 knots at least. 7pm Rain prevented our race but it is to be held tomorrow Tuesday.

No mail. Some received a few letters.

Tuesday 2nd

Weather is lousy again. Three active fronts lie between us and New- Britain coastline while New Britain itself is closed in. A great opportunity for the Japs to liven up their work.

No mail again.

Wednesday 3rd

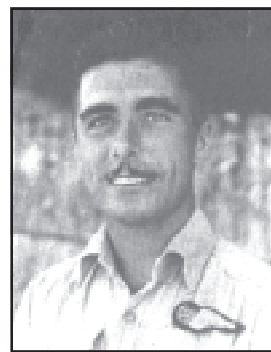
The Beaufighter won the race last night at 5.15pm but only by 300 yards. A very close go indeed. We won £4.

On the job twice today. Up at 3.30am and took off at 6am for a combined strike on our friends at Palmalmal mission, Jacquinot Bay.

Beaufighters first, Bostons then Kittys to dive bomb.

Everything was fair as an approach but at the last

minute the leader swings over to Mal Ma! in error. This caused great confusion in his own flight and upset ours, the second flight to no end. Due to being in echelon port this turn left put the leaders out of sight. We were sandwiched between George Robertson A19-120, passing over with 3 feet to spare and Bob Walker A19-147 going under with 3 feet clearance. Our empty shells pelted along Bob's aircraft.



This attack placed us broadside on to the medium gun at Palmalmal. One Boston was shot down by it thanks to our leading them into that position.

The Kittys requested 160K on the way out to conserve their fuel. We flew at 170 and over for an hour. One Kitty ran short of fuel by 5 minutes and ditched into the sea. The chap got out OK but disappeared.

A very bad performance all told. Afternoon's job was a strike at Brown Island and Kalai Plantation. This was wholly successful and met with no opposition.

No mail again.

Thursday 4th

Spent morning at pool. Another bash on Palmalmal today but our aircraft is being used by another crew.

Nothing else of importance.

Friday 5th

Up at 4am, packed up and dashed over to Kiriwina to be in on standby for a few days. Everything a hustle and bustle but nothing accomplished. The camp area and our particular site is hot, steamy and generally lousy.

The food is filthy served under pig sty conditions. The eating utensils are always filthy. No mail still which makes things a sight more aggravating.

Saturday 6th

Up at 5am down to the strip on standby. Our standby hut is a paper and scrap wood construction with a nice lumpy coral floor to rest on. Lunch arrangements were poor while the food was pig slops. No mail.

Sunday 7th

Same routine as yesterday. A Jap convoy or convoys is hanging around Rabaul and they fear an attack somewhere. Our job will be to go in ahead of the B25's and take the ack-ack. Purely a diversionary measure wherein some Beaufighters will be lost. Nice job.

Nothing has eventuated.

Monday 8th

Same routine for a couple of hours this morning but

fortunately our Japanese convoy friends have scrambled back up the other way again.

No mail.

Tuesday 9th

Wasted morning but flew back to Goodenough during afternoon.

Wednesday 10th

All hustle and bustle again. We are off to Dobodura once more to participate in a co-ordinated attack on Rabaul.

Arrive there at 6pm. Usual muck up but we managed to be briefed by 10pm.

No mail again.

Thursday 11th

Up at 5am. This is the day for the big do. The 11th hour of the 11th of the 11th month should see

Rabaul a shambles. We are not altogether over happy it is a risky and lousy job.

Bad luck. The weather has closed in and the bash called off. Only 1 section can get there. Over 700 planes were participating. Spent the rest of the day loafing.

Friday 12th

A day of activity.

Up at 6am took off for home at 7.15am. We were home for ½ an hour when we were instructed to pack up and clear out to Kiriwina for good. Arrived at Kiriwina our future base at 5pm. Usual scramble for tents etc. Kiriwina is a horrible place.

No mail as usual.

Saturday 13th

Started the day well with a terrific shower of rain.

Loafed rest of day apart from a swim during the afternoon.

No mail again. Very annoying.

Sunday 14th

Chased over the island for a couple of throat microphones. Duly acquired same. Spent rest of day loafing and growling.

Received several letters tonight including 1 from Mary.

Monday 15th

Feeling a bit ill today. Have had a splitting head ache all day. Maybe the WOG.

Had a trip down to the beach this afternoon. Nothing very startling apart from the Beauforts receiving a terrific bashing. Lost 3 last night poor beggars.

Tuesday 16th

Another day of nothing.

Briefed at 8pm for a barge sweep from Cape archway to Linden Harbour.

No mail tonight.

Wednesday 17th

Just a trip and that is all. Sighted nothing of interest and fired no rounds. Felt ill for the whole trip.

Cohn felt fuzzy for about an hour. Must be the food.

Received several letters tonight. A terrific storm raged for several hours this evening.

Thursday 18th

Still lazing about the place. Raining most of the day.

No mail today.

Friday 19th

Spent all morning down at our new camp site. Erected our own tent again. Plenty of hard work in the clearing of the area.

Saturday 20th

Spent morning down at the camp site. Corralled our floors this morning. Have a heavy head cold and am not feeling over bright.

Cleaned out the letter box today.

Sunday 21st

DELETED BY CENSOR

Monday 22nd

DELETED BY CENSOR

No mail today.

Tuesday 23rd

Same as yesterday.

Wednesday 24th

DELETED BY CENSOR

Thursday 25th

Up early for job as reserve. Took off at 6.10am and spent 30 minutes in the air.

Took off again at 0800 to test A 19-106 for at least an hour. Weather closed in so we proceeded to Goodenough. Returned at 1730.

Percy Coates and Don Chappell bought it today over Ubili, a supposed friendly village. He announced that he was experiencing trouble with the port motor and soon after he went over on his back, on his starboard motor and went in. Burnt immediately. Their first job unfortunately.

Continued on Page 6

Continued from page 5

Packed Percy's gear this night, he was sleeping in our tent. It is a little bit grim, bunking one night, flying with him and then come home without him.

Friday 26th

Took part of an engine over to Goodenough to A19-104. Spent several hours and bought up some cartons of cigarettes and matches. Sale tonight was profitable enough.

No mail tonight.

Saturday 27th

Time is up today but no sign of a posting for some time. Spent most of day at the beach again. Pictures this evening.

Sunday 28th

Very slack day again.

Swimming during the afternoon.

No mail.

Monday 29th

Washing day and it is raining cats and dogs.

Two crews went up to the north coast of New Britain today and caught 1,200 ton ship and 6 separate barges. A good haul.

No mail.

Don and Col were reported missing on 17th December 1943, whilst carrying out a mission to Cape Hoskins in A19-141. Don wrote his last letter back home on the morning of Friday 17th December 1943. Information received later indicated that both aircrew were captured, imprisoned at Rabaul and executed by the Japanese.

WHY WORRY?

In this life there are only two things to worry about.

Either you will be rich or poor.

If you are rich, there is nothing to worry about.

But if you are poor, there are only two things to worry about.

Either you will be healthy or sick. If you are healthy, there is nothing to worry about.

But if you are sick, there are two things to worry about.

Either you will live or you will die.

If you live, there is nothing to worry about.

If you die there are only two things to worry about.

You will either go to heaven or to hell.

If you go to heaven, there will be nothing to worry about.

If you go to hell you'll be busy shaking hands with all your friends,

You won't have time to worry!!!

BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Recently the *National Weekender* ran a cover story about Fred Hargesheimer, an American World War II fighter pilot who was shot down in the jungles of West New Britain province in 1942. He has since shown his gratitude to the people who saved his life by establishing a school, health centre and a library in the East Nakanai area. Now aged 90, Fred returned for the 15th time and Ekonia Peni accompanied him on an emotional journey to the crash site of his plane.



*A bell is not a bell until you ring it
A song is not a song until you sing it
Love is not love until you give it away
Because love was not meant to stay.*

This poem, by an unknown author, was recited by Fred Heigsheimer to depict what has motivated him all these years and enabled him since 1960 to travel 10,000 miles from the United States to Bialla in West New Britain province, 14 times.

Last week Fred returned for the fifteenth time to visit the people he owes his life to. Fred's life is a story of love and giving. He does not have to write books to explain, his life speaks volumes about love and giving. His circle of life began in World War II, when Fred, a US Air Force reconnaissance pilot was shot out of the sky by a Japanese fighter plane on June 23, 1943.

Sixty three years later the wreckage of his plane was discovered and this was the main reason for this, his 15th trip back to West New Britain. Fred had returned to complete the circle in his life. Fred was flown to the crash site on Monday 11th July by helicopter owner and pilot, Jurgan Ruh, who is based in Rabaul.

"It was nice to be involved with Fred's visit. I will remember this for the rest of my life" said, Ruh. The previous day a trekking party of twenty, of which I as a member, secured the site after a three and a half hours walk along the Nakani Ranges to the wreckage along the border of East and West New Britain provinces.

The local people from Masuari village in the Kol area where the plane crashed, contributed enormously in clearing a landing site for the helicopter to land. Paul Bluett of Islands Petroleum arranged with Jurgun Ruh for the use of his helicopter General Manager of Hargy Oil Palm Limited in Bialla, David Mather and the

company were instrumental in providing the logistics and preparations for the memorable trip.

Fred was carried from the heli-pad to the crash site some five hundred metres into the jungle. At the site Fred gazed at the scattered parts of the plane and remained silent. Tears fell as man and machine reunited after 63 years. "Interesting how I found the deepest valley to crash. Thank God I did not crash with it", said Fred after he saw the wing of the plane that was shot down by a Japanese fighter plane.

He was carried another few metres to see other parts of his plane." That is the strut. That is the manifold and that is the propeller. It is amazing, this is unbelievable", lamented Fred as he stood in silence for a few moments. "Fred you are dreaming!" I whispered. "You are right!" he replied." I am just wondering about this wreckage, because it shows how smart I was to bail out early from the plane."

I was warned that next time I bailout, it has to be next to a highway where I can easily and quickly found" said Fred in reference to the 31 days that it took him to be finally rescued to safety out of the Nakanai jungles. The locals who carried Fred did a great job ensuring he had a comfortable journey through the jungle.

The man tasked with the ground work was John Gabisini, the company's Senior Environmental Officer. "I was given the task by the GM (David Mather) to head the project. It was a challenge against time. With me was Bernard Uraliu, one of the company drivers and my two sons Lindsay and Patrick, who provided support.

"It took us about two months to walk the jungle and cross the Pandi River. We carefully negotiated with the local people and secured the crash site. Once the crash was located and cleared, we then chopped down trees to prepare the heli-pad for the helicopter . All this was done in consultation with the local people whose consent and support is very much appreciated, without which Fred's arrival in the jungle and his visit to the crash site would not have been possible" said a relieved Gabisini at the end of the trip.

Fred was crowned "Suara Auru" (Chief Warrior) of East Nakanai area in 2000 by the people in recognition for his contribution to the education of children, health and welfare of the people of the area since 1960 with funds through the Airmen's Memorial Foundation that he established.

On this visit at the age of 90, Fred dedicated a brand new library at Noau Primary School; to the EA Ea people, formerly handed over the chair of the Foundation to Garua Peni one of the early graduates of Airmen's Memorial School at Ewasse. He left Bialla and PNG a satisfied man. "I felt the love that filled the air. This has been the most exciting of the last thirteen trips. In fact it is the highlight," said Fred.

He was also surprised to meet Matthew Male, the only survivor of the group of men from Nantabu village who found him, and rescued him along the Pandi River in 1943. Relatives collected Male for a few moments reunion with Fred at Noau. They couldn't say much, except to hug and shed tears of joy,

Was that Fred's last visit? "It all depends on my health that is most important. What is also important for me is that I believe that the Foundation (Airmen's Memorial Foundation) is now in good hands. Having handed over the chair to Garau Peni I can now have a nice sleep" Fred said prior to his departure for Grass Valley, California, USA.

Fred Hargesheimer left our shores quietly on Friday 21st July in the same style as he had on those many prior visits. He has done so much for the education of children in the East Nakanai area for 46 years. A medal should be awarded to honour him for distinguished services rendered to the community over the years. Indeed no World War II veteran has ever done what Fred has accomplished.



SOME RULES OF FLIGHT

1. Every take-off is optional. Every landing is mandatory.
2. If you push the stick forward, the houses get bigger. If you pull the stick back, they get smaller. That is unless you keep pulling all the way back, they get smaller again.
3. Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what is dangerous.

MY LIFE MY JOB

By Gordon W. Savage

Having spent almost the whole of my working life flying aeroplanes, I have been immensely privileged to be given a birds eye view of most of Australia and several other parts of the world. The late Jack Buckham initially taught me to fly with the South Australian Aero Club, at Parafield. I went on holiday from Adelaide by steam train through Melbourne to Sydney in 1935 and hired a Gipsy Moth from the Sydney Aero Club to look at the City. I circled the bridge a couple of times and then flew around for a while, becoming dreadfully disoriented to the extent that I had no idea in which direction I should fly to return to Mascot. Fortunately, shortly after take-off I had noticed a couple of gasometers nearby, so I circled around until I saw a tiny pair of gasometers way out on the horizon and headed for them. Due to my very limited flying experience and total lack of knowledge of Sydney, I would have finished up in a most embarrassing situation had it not been for those two gasometers.

My RAAF cadetship commenced at Point Cook in January 1937, and so began the most wonderful career I could ever have imagined. For me, flying was never 'work'. To hire a Gipsy Moth from the Aero Club had cost me one pound ten shillings per hour for solo or two pounds for dual instruction, and in those days my wage as a junior employee was only thirty shillings per week. Full adult basic wage in Adelaide was then three pounds ten shillings. Consequently it seemed incredible to me that the Air Force would not only let me fly, but they would actually pay me for doing so. I trained on Avro Cadets and Westland Wapitis, and after graduation, I was sent to No 2 GR Squadron, Laverton, with Johnny Summers as C.O. The Squadron was equipped with three Bristol Bulldogs, three Hawker Demons, three Avro Ansons and the NA16, which was the fixed undercarriage US built predecessor to the Wirraway. What a glorious year that was! I could fly any of those four types whenever I wished. There was nothing more delightful on a beautiful spring or autumn morning than to strap myself into a Bulldog or Demon and then climb high up to some billowy cumulous cloud and play about with it. I used to loop up and over large chunks, fly into one side and out the other, dive down underneath and then up and over again. And when I had had enough of that I would circle around inside the cloud. The air temperature would usually be well below freezing and water droplets within the cloud would be super cooled. They would solidify and form rhimec ice on the leading edges of every part of the aircraft, nose, wings, tail, struts, bracing wires, windscreen etc until it looked like a Christmas tree. Then I would make a dash back to Laverton and try to stop on the tarmac before it had all melted off. Most of the aeroplanes of those days, particularly the biplanes had so many struts wires and

other bits and pieces sticking out all over them, that they had "built in headwinds" before moving off the chocks. Consequently their speed range between stall and terminal velocity was not enormous. With open cockpits, no heating, and flying in air temperatures often well below freezing, we always wore thick flying suits — mostly left over ones from WW1. Air temperature decreases by two degrees Celsius for each thousand feet of altitude, so when it got too cold it was common practice to simply roll over and dive downwards to a lower level. It was difficult to make a Gipsy Moth climb much higher than four thousand feet, but I remember its terminal velocity was 190 miles per hour vertically downwards with or without engine power. I think the Wapiti terminal velocity was about 260 mph and a Hawker Demon between 350 and 400. At such high speeds, the fixed pitch airscrews and engines would wind up to enormously high rpm. Whether the throttles were opened or closed made very little difference to the speed or rpm, so I usually left it 'wide open to provide a cushioning effect for the racing pistons. During a vertical dive, people on the ground for miles around would hear an enormously loud whine or bark, but that was not engine noise.

The fixed pitch wooden airscrews were comparatively thick even at the tips, and when they whirled around at such high rpm they trailed a vacuum or partial vacuum behind them and that was what caused the noise.

The Hawker Demon had an unusual characteristic in that when backward pressure was applied to the control column during a steep turn or when pulling out of a dive, the centre of lift on the wings would move well forward. This had the same effect as applying additional backward pressure to the control column causing an increase in the rate of turn or pull out from a dive. Therefore one had to consciously reduce the backward pressure on the control column or even push it gently forward to prevent excessive G forces building up and being applied to the wings. Having to reverse pressure on the control column like that was not an instinctive or natural reaction. And one pilot — not in our Squadron — actually allowed the aircraft to tighten itself up during the pullout from a dive, and the G forces became so high the wings folded up. He plummeted into the ground. To correct that abnormality, a horizontal bar with a lead weight at the end was attached to the controls pointing forwards.

Reacting upon the lead weight would apply forward pressure to the control and the pilot had to maintain the pressure or pull back even harder to stay in the dive hereafter no more wings were torn off.

In those pre-war days we never used oxygen and I once decided to see how high I could climb in a Hawker Demon. I wore a kneepad and at each 1000 feet I noted the altitude and air temperature. The aeroplane

had quite a phenomenal performance and it was still climbing well when I became so excruciatingly cold that I decided to give up. The temperature would probably have been about minus forty degrees C or F or even lower, so I rolled over and dived vertically to a low altitude and returned to Laverton. I told the ground staff what I had been doing and the instrument makers said that if I gave them the temperatures at each level they could work out exactly what height I had reached. In the office I removed my flying suit and parachute, and then studied the notes on my kneepad. Quite frankly I was too ashamed to hand them over as they were, because the last entries were scrawled all over the place and I could barely read what I had written. I couldn't understand why, so I wrote them all down afresh and gave it to the instrument boys. They told me later that they had removed the altimeter and checked it in a decompression chamber, and by using the temperatures I had recorded, they said I had actually climbed to twenty four thousand feet without oxygen.

Many years later when I was being trained to fly DC6b pressurized commercial aircraft, we were sent to Point Cook to do special high altitude training in their decompression chamber

Doing those exercises I again reached 24,000 feet without oxygen, and as we ascended were told to write down certain things. It was a repetition of my Hawker Demon flight in 1938 and it perfectly demonstrated how one's mental faculties are seriously impaired at high altitude due to lack of oxygen, even though one retains a feeling of well being until unconsciousness sets in. My last entries were again scrawled all over the place, just as they had been on that previous flight many years before. Had I not rolled over and descended when I did, I undoubtedly would have collapsed unconscious within the next minute or two. That should not have been serious, because the aeroplane would simply have floundered around for a while until it stalled. Then it would have gone into a dive and would right itself as speed built up. It would then flounder again, repeating the same sequence again and again until it eventually descended to a height at which the pilot regained consciousness.

I was one of a group of mostly long term RAAF flying instructors, who were posted in August of 1942 to form a new Beaufighter Squadron, No. 31, at Waga in NSW, under the command of Wing Commander Charles Read, later Air Marshal, Sir Charles. When the Squadron was fully equipped, and after conversions and operational training had been completed, we were to fly to Coomalie Creek, a new airstrip located about fifty miles south of Darwin. All was complete by the end of October, and we departed in pairs from Wagga on 3rd and 4th November. Coomalie Creek was not quite ready, so we flew to Bachelor, a nearby strip via Charleville and Cloncurry.

Just finding our way from Wagga to the Darwin area was quite an achievement, because there were no radio aids, weather forecasts were almost worthless, maps showed large areas with very little detail and few of the pilots had ever flown such a long distance before. I think only two aircraft failed to make it on schedule. One of them as I recall, couldn't find Bachelor. It was late afternoon or evening, he was very low in fuel, and when he saw a clear area he made an emergency landing. In the hushed silence early the next morning he heard distant aeroplane engines being run up and tested. That gave him the right direction to fly, and having ten or fifteen gallons of petrol left in the tanks, he took off and landed Bachelor several minutes later.

The other casualty, if it can be called that, I think was Charles Read. Beaufighters were fitted with two sleeve-valve Hercules engines which were highly supercharged, partially because the sleeve valve system did not scavenge very well. Charles noticed a little roughness in one of his engines and decided to test the switches. One plug was definitely faulty and when he switched off the other one, the cylinder completely scavenged all the residual gases and filled itself with a nice fresh petrol air mixture. When he switched on again there was a "plonk" and he saw the whole cylinder punched out, right through the engine cowl and disappear overboard toward the wilderness below. I think he flew back to Longreach on one engine where repairs were carried out. From that experience we all learnt not to test the switches with a high manifold pressure.

The late Squadron Leader Doug Riding — father of the present Air Marshal Doug Riding — was our first operational casualty. Not shot down, but touched the sea with his wingtip while flying at about 300 mph near Timor. Our operations from Darwin took us mostly to the Islands of Indonesia, and I have some truly wonderful memories of that period of my life. Armed with four 22 mm cannon and six 303 machine-guns all pointing forwards, Beaufighters were used primarily to attack ground targets, so we flew at comparatively low altitude. This provided us with a grandstand view of the magnificent scenery from Millingimbi in one direction to Drysdale in the other, and also excellent opportunities to see much of the Territory within a hundred to a hundred and fifty miles radius around Darwin. I had the most glorious view of what is now Kakadu National Park, the great flood plains with myriads of birds, thousands of buffalo and the rugged terrain of Arnhem Land to the east etc. There is simply no way of describing the grandeur and magnificence of that vast area, much of which was then almost untouched by civilisation.

From war's end in 1945 until I retired from TAA in June of 1977, I visited Darwin many times. For two years after the war I flew with KNILM — who called themselves the 19" Squadron while flying in Australia.

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We were based in Brisbane and flew regularly through Darwin and then via various routes throughout Indonesia to Batavia — now Jakarta. After staging there for a few days we would return to Australia usually via different route to Darwin, and then back to Brisbane, or via west New Guinea then to Townsville and Brisbane. My contract was only for two years, after which I joined TAA

During my early years with TAA I frequently flew a DC3 from Adelaide to Darwin. That was a fifteen-hour flight and we often staged there for a day or two before returning. That enabled me to see much of what was taking place in the Territory, including the salvage of the sunken ships bit by bit from Darwin harbour by the Japanese. In our Beaufighter days, Darwin consisted of three streets of bombed out decrepit buildings and a harbour full of sunken ships. Since the War, I have been privileged to watch it grow, first to a respectable provincial city, and then to a modest Capital City. Having made my last flight there in 1975 or 1976, I am sure there will be plenty of surprises for me during my net visit.

With sincere regards,

GORDON SAVAGE.

WING COMMANDER BRIAN WALKER DSO

*A Great Commanding
Officer*

Continued from
September issue



From then on, for the next several weeks we were attacking similar sorts of targets. Sometimes it might be an aerodrome on the other side such as Lae or Finschhafen. In fact, we started to get a little bit tired of Lae because it was pretty heavily defended. Sometimes it would be escorting bombers on a shipping strike, and we would have the occasional trip which we called an armed reconnaissance, where you would go looking for targets of opportunity and attacking anything that looked at all suspicious. We were given an area and knew where our own troops were. When I was on one of these an ack-ack gun near Soputa opened up on me. For some peculiar reason, that made my British blood boil. "You so-and-so — you dare fire on me!" My method of attack on these anti-aircraft positions was to get as directly above them as I could — I had this idea that they wouldn't be able to train their guns on me — then dive into the attack, wait until I was almost into the nasty black puffs and then let go with all four cannons and six machine-guns. That generally stopped them from firing. But to my surprise I noticed

that every time I pulled out of that dive and made my escape from this area, the so-and-so's would open up again, firing at me as I went, and I got angrier and angrier and kept on attacking this position until I got directly above it. I knew I must be nearly out of ammunition and I thought, well, I'll wait until the last moment and then let fly. And of course nothing happened. I was right out of ammunition.

The aeroplane was in a very steep dive, and suddenly, without me doing anything about it, it was in quite a steep climb, and it was making a funny-peculiar noise. Both engines were still going. Then I realized that I'd run straight into an ack-ack burst and the explosion had altered the attitude of the aeroplane and then caused considerable damage to the front of the fuselage but fortunately once again it hadn't hit any vital spot. The aeroplane was making this funny noise because it was a bit like a colander, with air whistling through all the various holes that had been blown in the front of it.

No point in hanging about there any longer, so I made my escape as gracefully as I could, with a few sullen black bursts still following me, and went back over the mountains back into Moresby, landing as gingerly as I could. I got the gear and flaps down, and as I was running to a stop I noticed she was pulling badly to one side so it was quite obvious that tyre was going down. I couldn't taxi it so the ground crews came along, got a towing machine and even before we got out of it, they towed it off the strip.

Looking at it an aircraftsman asked, "Why did you bother to bring it back, sir?" I said, "Well, it's a means of transport, anyhow." But the aeroplane wasn't much good. I said, "You'll probably get a couple of decent engines out of it. They're both going." Then they showed me that one engine, although it had been running — the amazing thing with these sleeve-valve engines — most of the cooling fins in one cylinder had been shot away and you could see the sleeves going up and down when the propeller was turned. God, you can be lucky. I thought they might at least get one engine out of it, anyhow, and they'd certainly get a few bits.

This sort of business kept on going but in the meantime while we were doing all these operations I had also the responsibility of running the squadron. There were at least four hundred and fifty personnel, and my friend "Curley" Wearne was a great help. I can distinctly remember on one occasion when there was a terrific pile of correspondence in my inwards tray and all of a sudden there was a mild flap and they wanted some aeroplanes out on a job and it was my turn to go. So I called Curley in and picked up everything that was in the inwards tray and deposited it in the outwards tray and I said, "There you are, Mr Adjutant, you can attend to that! Anything that needs my special attention, bring it to me when I get back." I can remember him sort of muttering under his breath, but he didn't say anything, and I can imagine he was far too much of a gentleman to be at all really critical. But that was the sort of thing that had to be done.

One evening, at about nine o'clock, I thought I could hear some singing. After a while I thought I could hear the words, which were, roughly, "Black Jack's a bastard." So I called the Adjutant over again, poor man — as if he didn't have enough to do, because he was practically running the squadron for me — and I said, "You'd better find out who those are and see what was the cause of their obvious merriment." You've always got three or four trouble-makers in the squadron. He came back and said, "They've got some Jungle-juice, Sir." So I said, "You'd better tell them to shut up, or I'll have their guts for garters."

This kept them quiet for about half an hour and then out would come the noise again: "Black Jack's a bastard." So I sent Curley up again and after about two or three times I said, "Look, tell them they've got to stop, otherwise I'll cast them into clink." [I'd have had to make one, anyhow.] Curley went up and managed to quieten them and I said, "Now, you can tell me who they were, and what their names are, and I want to see them at nine o'clock in the morning outside my tent — in full battle dress." I knew that by nine o'clock they'd have a hangover and with full battle dress on I would think they'd feel the sun was starting to get a bit warm.

So, these half a dozen miscreants — and there were one or two well-known, high-spirited trouble-makers amongst them, including one Sergeant Pilot — arrived the next morning, and I just left them there, standing to attention, in the hot sun. I pretended to be busy and didn't take any notice of them. Then after about an hour or so when I thought these characters might be really feeling more than just a little bit sick, I went out, smartly brought them up to attention — one or two of them were wavering a bit at this stage — walked up and down and glared at each one of them in turn and said, "So, I'm a bastard am I." Of course none of them were game to say a thing, and I said, "I hope that what I've now done proves it. Now, bugger off." I think they were very relieved at being let off without being cast into outer darkness for a bit. But with senior NCOs and commissioned officers, I found that even with Air Force Regulations, your powers of punishment were extremely limited. You could only confine them to barracks give them about twenty-eight days CB, and that was all right if you had an appropriate place, but in New Guinea it was practically pointless. For instance, once when we were going in to attack Madang and were skirting around the back of Lae, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that two people suddenly left my formation. Now that is just one of the biggest no-no's that can ever happen. I mean, to have two of my aeroplanes — ! Then I noticed they were lined up to attack what they thought were a couple of Japanese bombers, which I could see, even from where I was, were B-25's. They were both good fellows. But that was a really terrible thing to do. So when we got back I dressed these two down as stiffly as I could and I thought, now, what can I do with them.

Ms L. Walker-Dean, Blackjack's daughter made it possible to publish the Beaufighter section of his book.

THE 22 SQUADRON LAMENT

*From Kamchatka down to Moresby, from Canton across to Leeds,
There are men who hit the headlines, by the merit of their deeds,
Every paper tells the story of sturdy suntanned Gods,
Who came from way down under and despite inhuman odds
Never hesitate or falter or stand asking what to do,
But it's hard to find a mention of the men of "TWENTY TWO"*

*Down at Airboard where it's busy, and the seats are wearing thin,
And the Squadrons bound for action, have been picked out with a pin,
Billy Bostock and Big Wigs and the great MacArthur too,
Rest happy in the knowledge that they still have "Twenty Two".*

*Other Squadrons, new formed units have departed for the fray,
And the Air Force band has played them to the station on their way,
While all along the tarmac, looking pitifully blue,
Stand the pilots and the groundstaff of the "Fighting Twenty Two".*

*All the fellows in the Squadron think they have the right to kick,
The indifference of the Airboard seems to them a "bit too thick",
"Why", you'll hear the airmen grouching "should they treat us all like dubs",
"Don't they read the Daily Tele? Don't they know about our subs"?*

*There have been a thousand rumours, we've had panics by the score,
But the Squadron's still at Richmond and we've still to win the war.
Every morning just at daybreak when the sun begins to rise,
You can hear the Bostons zooming up into the skies,
And the civvies cheer and tell their friends "These chaps will see us through"
But it's circuits and landings for the boys of "TWENTY TWO"*

*Men grow older up at Richmond and their frame work stands to bend
And their brows are lined with worrying, that when the turmoil ends
They'll be stranded with the Bostons and won't know what to do,
And the history books them the "FORGOTTEN TWENTY TWO"*

*And in peacetime in the taverns when the squadrons breast the bar,
Someone's bound to tell the barmaid, "I know who these fellows are",
They're the Dinkum Richmond Anzacs, but whatever else you do,
For heavens sake don't mention the "FORGOTTEN TWENTY TWO".*

SGT. ANON

ANNUAL ASSOCIATION'S DAY - AMBERLEY



Alan McKenzie of the 75 Beaufort Association talks with 150W Navigator FL727 Luke Warner.



Mr Bill Mingeley of the 467-469 Sqn Association lays a wreath during the ceremony.



GPCAPT Leo Davies shared stories with John Kinzely, John Lencicki and Colin King.



The 467-469 Squadrons (SQUAD) Association Trophy awarded to encourage excellence in non-commissioned officers and airmen in their early years of service, was presented to CPL Matthew Hume of 650W.



Right: GPCAPT Leo Davies of 62 Wing lays a wreath in honour of the fallen.



Maurice Duffell of the RAF Association Gold Coast talks with WGCNW Geoff Harland.



AC Alister Higgins with Ralph Ind, President of the Beaufighter and Boston Association.



A magnificent painting by Robert Taylor of Beaufighters of 455 Squadron, RAF, in a strafing raid over a Norwegian fjord.

Prints available from:

www.aviationartgallery.co.uk/images



AIRCORE Geoff Brown and Mr Allan Via presented the Air Crew Pathfinder Trophy to FL727 Matthew Mitchell from No1 Squadron for the most outstanding aircrew member in their first operational tour.



LAC Jay Rudzinski of 6 Sqn was presented with the Beaufighter and Boston Trophy by Ralph Ind of the Beaufighter and Boston Association. This award is given to encourage excellence in non-commissioned officers and airmen who are employed in non-technical combat support duties, which are in support of strike reconnaissance activities.



The winners of the Beaufort Trophy, awarded to the aircrew member whose efforts during the year have contributed most significantly to squadron flying operations, were FL727 Leo Luchman from 750W and FL727 Adrian Nelson from 650W.



Cooper Andrew Crapp from 1 Sqn was presented with the 'Good Show' award by AIRCORE Geoff Brown.

