

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

FEBRUARY 2003

No. 25 Beaufighter Course - 5 OTU



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





YOU CAN'T KEEP AN OLD HORSE DOWN

From June to November 2002, member Stan Curran did a study course to become a Queensland Justice of the Peace. He sat for the written examination and on completion during the last week in November was advised that he had successfully passed the examination. The incredible thing is that Stan has done this course at age 80 years, and passed the examination with a 100% result.

VALE

Chris, the only, much loved son of member Doug Tanner and his wife Val, died suddenly early in the morning of December 14th 2002. All our sympathies go to Doug and Val.

2003 AGM AND BARBECUE.

Due to President Ralph and his wife Joan moving to a new address in Surfers Paradise, a new venue for the AGM had to be found, because for the last few years it had been held at their home on the Nerang River at Bundall. Our grateful thanks were given to Ralph and Joan who had not only provided all the facilities, all these past years, but also did all the provisioning and the cooking. We had a stroke of luck as we were offered the use of the Air Force Cadets facilities at Archerfield aerodrome. Not only did we get the use of the facilities but Robert Williams President of 219 Cadet Squadrons Parents Association; a pastry cook by trade did the cooking. Two cadets were present to assist. The meeting once again was very enjoyable to all and we will be able to meet at this venue in future years.

Ralph and Peter gave their annual reports, and Stan Curran made a plaque for Robert, in recognition of his services. The present committee was voted into office for 2003 en bloc.

Pres. Ralph proposed that certificates of Appreciation be sent to the following: Doug McMillan, Stan Curran, Rob Williams and Hon Sec.

BATTLE OF THE BISMARK SEA

The 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bismark Sea will be celebrated at RAAF Richmond on Thursday 8th March 2003. The service will begin in the chapel on the Base, commencing at 1030 hours. Any members wishing to attend please advise me SAP for security purposes. It is hoped that our Chaplain Squadron Leader Cam Smith will be able to obtain leave from his new post at Tindall to conduct the service as he has done for so many years.

FUNCTIONS TO COME

AIR FORCE DAY

82ND BIRTHDAY OF THE RAAF.
MEMORIAL SERVICE

SUNDAY 23RD March 0900 hours
Queens Park George St Brisbane

ANZAC DAY

ASSEMBLE 0945 HOURS
GEORGE STREET

Members requiring transport please book with me SAP



SICK PARADE

Vice President Bill O'Connor has had replacement knees to both legs at Greenslopes Hospital. It was a pretty tough deal, as usually surgeons prefer to replace one knee at a time. Bill has managed it pretty well. He is now quite mobile and says he is certain to lead the association at the Anzac Parade this year.



AUSTRALIA DAY 2003 HONOURS LIST

In this years list the name Frederick George Cassidy was there stating that he was honoured by an OAM for his service to the community particularly through the No 30 Beaufighter Association.

This Award was thoroughly deserved, as members of the Association since it's inception some 55 years ago are well aware of Freddie's dedication to the welfare of the Association and it's members, as secretary and president for all of these 55 years, and it is great to see such dedication suitably honoured by our country.

Congratulations Freddie Beaufighter.



Kimbe Memorial



Those who were members of the RAAF'S No. 30 Beaufighter Squadron. When it was stationed on Goodenough Island in Sept. '43 will recall one of the most tragic events in the Squadron's history, which began in the early morning of 9th. Sept. when Beaufighter A19-132 was hit by ground fire in one motor while attacking gun positions at Palimalal

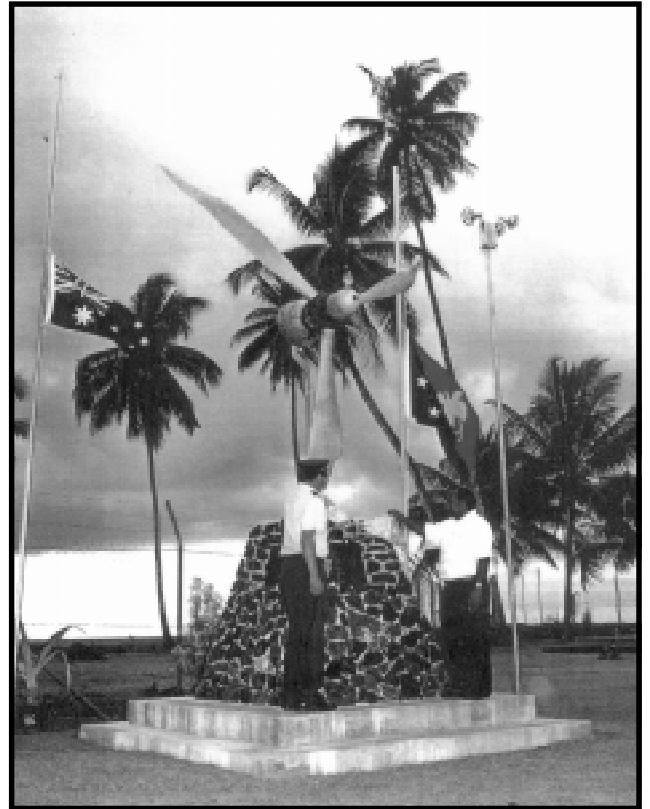
Jacquinet Bay on the south coast of New Britain, PNG

The crew of the aircraft comprised Flying Officer John (Joe) Newman, pilot, Flying Officer Ron Binnie, navigator and Captain Tom Gill, observer. As a member of the AIF Tom Gill was wounded during the Buna/Gona campaign on the main island of PNG in 1942. After recuperation Tom was attached to 30 Sqd. as Army Liaison Officer (ALO). The Allies long term plan was to recapture New Britain from the Japanese and part of this plan required Laos to be attached to those RAAF Squadrons that were operating over New Britain The duty of the Laos was to liaise with Sq. Intelligence in an attempt to keep abreast of enemy troop movements, shipping, road construction and equipment build up etc. ALOs were not required to fly on operations but ever the true soldier, Tom Gill insisted on flying as an observer on 30 Sqd. Operations. On Sept. 3rd. he flew with Rex Pitman and myself. 6 days later he flew with Joe Newman and Ron Binnie and the 3 of them were lost.

With one motor shot out A19-132 was unable to maintain height so it headed south over the Solomon Sea in the direction of the Sqd's base until it was forced to ditch in the sea. The crew was able to get into the aircraft's rubber dinghy, which was stowed on the top of the port wing; all the time being circled overhead by the operation leader, Flight Lieut. Arthur Thompson and his navigator Pilot Officer Peter White until fuel shortage forced the leader to return to base

For the next 2 days some 16 aircraft from 30 Sqd. and Bostons from 22 Sqd. and Beauforts took it in turns during daylight hours to locate the dinghy and drop extra dinghies and rations. But the southeasterly winds were blowing the dinghy inexorably towards the enemy held coast.

There was no Catalina Air Sea Rescue Service available at the time but on 11th Sept. a RAAF "Seagull" floatplane A2-19 with pilot Flying Officer Ronald George Bonython were obtained from "Communication and Rescue" to help in the rescue of the dinghy crew. 30 Sqd's Flying Officer Raymond Arthur Kelley who was navigator to the Sqd's Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Clarrie Glasscock., acted as navigator for Flying Officer Bonython. After takeoff the "Seagull" was not heard of again. It is assumed that the crew met its death in the Solomon Sea.



On 11th Sept 2 empty dinghies were sighted on the shore of New Britain. It is not known, whether the dinghies were blown ashore during the night and the 3 occupants got ashore into the jungle or whether the enemy intercepted them before they reached land. Some 56 years after the event I was informed that it was disclosed during the War Crimes Tribunal Trials held on the Admiralty Islands that the trio were captured and beheaded by the enemy.

As the main organiser in Australia for the Kimbe Memorial at no time did I think of the "Seagull" pilot and his role in the tragedy. He was from a RAAF unit that was unknown to me and he was called upon to do a particular job in an emergency. Few, if any, members of 30 Sqd. other than the Commanding Officer and some of the Intelligence staff would have been aware of his presence or his name, The Commanding Officer was shot down 8 days later.

In mid December 2002 an ex informed me 30 Sqd. pilot Charles Harris that he had just learned of the name of the "Seagull" pilot some 59 years after the event. Obviously Flying Officer Ronald George Bonython's name should have been included on the Kimbe Memorial. Now, more than 2 years since the unveiling of the Memorial it is intended that my oversight should be corrected. Charles Harris is to endeavor to locate relatives of R.G.Bonython and with their co-operation it is hoped that a bronze plaque will be prepared for attaching to the Memorial with the 29 other names of those from 30, 22 and 77 Sqds. who lost their lives during the aerial "Battle of New Britain"

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I suggest the plaque will read as follows.

In memory of Flying Officer Ronald George Bonython, RAAF No 416822, who, with Flying Officer Raymond Arthur Kelley, RAAF No. 1432, disappeared on 11 th. Sept. '43 in RAAF Seagull" A2 19 while attempting to rescue 3 members of No. 30 Beaufighter Sqd. afloat in a rubber dinghy after being shot down by ack ack and crash landing in the Solomon Sea south of Jacquinot Bay, New Britain, PNG.

"They lost their lives trying to save the lives of others".

Those with an interest in Kimbe, the Memorial, Hoskins Airport and the search for A9-33 may be interested to learn that in Aug.2002, Mt. Pago which is situated to the south of the airport erupted resulting in the evacuation of Hoskins Village and the surrounding area and the abandonment of the airport because of the continuing rain of volcanic ash as Mt. Pago continues to erupt. A new strip to service the central north coast of New Britain has just been completed on the Willaumez Peninsula at Talasea.

A hill approx. 3 kms. southeast of the village of Sarke on the east coast of Bergen Bay near the western end of New Britain has been pinpointed as the crash site of A19-33. Continuation of the search requires a survey of the circumference of the hill in a light aircraft to look for a clearing in the jungle large enough to enable a helicopter to land a party of 2 or 3 persons to contact local villagers re, aircraft wrecks in the area. Of the wrecks located to date the motors which weigh approx 1 tonne always remain: they are too heavy for the villagers to carry away and they do not rust.

The search came to an abrupt halt on Sept. 11th. 2001 when the only light aircraft then available at Hoskins was required elsewhere and the RAAF staff at Port Moresby who were interested in assisting in the search were required for more urgent national affairs The new airstrip at Talasea reduces the distance to the crash site by approx. 100 kms by comparison with the distance from Hoskins thus reducing aircraft hire costs, The search will resume when sufficient funds become available to do so.

W.G.ROBERTSON

EDITORS NOTE.

At the Association's AGM on January 16th 2003, a letter from George seeking assistance with his proposal to rectify his "omission" was presented. It was moved that we have the proposed plaque made at Worsels at our cost. I agreed to do this, and will see that the plaque is made and delivered for its journey to Kimbe.

Subsequent to the AGM, I received a letter from Ken Leonard, Secretary of 30 Squadron Association, advising they wished to contribute half the cost of the plaque. A cheque was enclosed. We will now jointly pay for the plaque. Stan Curran moved that he would make one of his special plaques of the 30 Squadron crest to be sent to George.

Hon Sec.

LETTER FROM PHYL BONYTHON

Re 12 Ragless St.,
St Marip.
S. Aust
5042.
16.1.2003.
Flying Officer -
R.G. Bonython 416822

Mrs. W. G. Robertson.

Dear Mr. Robertson,

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the information you have sent to me.

To have known nothing of Ron's last hours for 60 years, and then to receive your letters, has been of immeasurable comfort.

I cannot expect you to know just what it means, but at 83 yrs. it is of the deepest comfort to know of those last hours of the one whom I still love. May God bless you.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,
Phyl Bonython
(P.E. BONYTHON)

Combined Day at RAAF Amberley



Tuesday December 10th 2002 was the day The Pathfinder Force, Beaufort, Beaufighter and Boston Associations met for another great day at the Base. It is now clearly evident that the move from having separate days at the base each year to the combined situation has turned out to be a success. The advantage of this is that it draws less time from the Squadrons, makes it possible to increase the friendship between associations and keeps the group to a reasonable number due to the loss of members attending because of age problems.

The day started with a short Memorial Service conducted by Chaplain WCDR Paul Goodland, at the Memorial Rose Garden. Wreaths were laid on behalf of each of the Associations and the Air Combat Group. The new wall at the entrance to the Memorial has complemented the garden beautifully. It was very nice to have Ms Barbara Smith (an associate member) join us, as her



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Those of our members who were unable to visit RAAF Amberley on the 10th December last missed a pretty good show. The day commenced a brief Commemorative Service conducted by Chaplain W/C Paul Goodland after which wreaths were laid on behalf of the four Associations involved.

Subsequently the luncheon at the Officer's Mess was excellent & on this occasion there was no charge. No doubt Peter will be commenting on the presentation of our annual Trophy elsewhere in this issue & also on the passing out parade of 219 Sqdn AAFC.

On Thursday the 16th Jan. our 2003 AGM was at the HQ. of 219 Sqdn at Archerfield. While I would sincerely like to thank those members & their wives who attended Peter & I were quite concerned for those members who tried to make it but were unable to locate the Sqdn rooms notwithstanding the map placed in the previous issue by Peter. Unfortunately they missed out on a delightful BBQ.

Thanks to all the ladies who provided the succulent salads which helped in no small way to make the BBQ such a success & to Peter who as usual organised it

Stop Press ~ On behalf of the members of the Assoc. would like to congratulate Fred Cassidy on the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List. Fred, as some of you may not know, was for many years the hard working secretary of 30 Sqdn NSW Assoc. and more latterly has been its President. He is one person who has certainly earned his award. Very best wishes to our Fred.

Regards

RALPH

late father GRPT (RAAF rtd) Ray was our initial Patron. Ray played a prominent part in bringing to fruition the conception, design, and construction of the new wall.

After the service the shuttle buses took us to the Officers Mess where AIRCDRE John Quaife welcomed, and briefed us on the day's programme. Morning tea followed then back aboard the shuttles. First stop the firefighters new \$4.5 million training centre and a spectacular display of a simulated aircraft on fire, and a commentary on the methods used to combat such fires. Heard someone remark that he would not like to have to pay the bill for the vast amount of gas used to create the fires. Back on the shuttles and on to the F111 Simulator. We were very privileged to be there whilst two aircrew we being updated on systems. One of the instructors gave a commentary on what was happening. A great experience, and then it was back to the shuttles and off to the Mess for lunch and the presentation of trophies.

PETER WHITE

219 SQUADRON AFC

The Parade was held at the AAFC's premises at Archerfield aerodrome. President Ralph and some of our members attended at the invitation of the Commanding Officer FLTL Bob Haiduczok (AAFC). The reviewing Officer was GPCAPT H Bartholomeusz RFD.

The Cadets carried out the parade with a precision and skill, that one would expect from experienced members of the RAAF. Their dress and bearing was exemplary, and the Cadet Band did a splendid job.

Following the Parade the Reviewing Officer addressed the Squadron and congratulated them on their fine performance. The Annual trophies were then presented. President Ralph presented The Association's Flying Scholarship to CPLCDT John Williams.

We all then retired to refreshments and an enjoyable barbecue. Sec. Peter won the usual raffle this year. The prize was a huge basketful of groceries and Christmas goodies.

THANK YOU

Mr Ralph Ind, President
Beaflighter Boston Assoc

Dear Mr Ind & members

On the behalf of the cadets at 219Sqdn, I would like to thank you for going to our passing out parade and for giving up your time to come along and present your award in person.

It is an honour to receive this award and is greatly appreciated and will help me gain more invaluable hours in the air and put me one step closer to my pilot's licence.

I hope the Beaflighter Boston Assoc and 219SQDN continue to have a bright and happy future and many successful events together.

Yours sincerely
John Williams, 219SQDN

22SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

A plaque to commemorate the service to the nation during World War II by 22 Squadron has been installed in the re-furbished RAAF Memorial at the Australian War Museum. The service will be held on Sunday 16th March at Canberra. This is an important occasion in the history of the squadron, and Association members who would like to attend please contact the Secretary of 22 Squadron Association at PO Box 407 Jannali 2226

ACE BOMBER PILOT JUST A SCHOOLBOY

(an article from the Sunday Mail on the 3rd September, 1989)

As Ace pilot Tom Dobney flew over a war torn Germany, there was one big secret he did not want his four man crew to find, out. For the daredevil flier whose skills in the air had many times saved his comrades was a lad of 15 who had lied his way into the RAF to win a schoolboy dare.

Plucky Tom kept his secret so well hidden that he managed to bluff his way into the elite Bomber Command, where the casualty rate was so high that only two in 100 pilots survived the war and he even got introduced to King George VI, who never suspected he was meeting the youngest military pilot in history.

Today he's 63, retired from a job as a newspaper executive, and the proud father of his five grown up children. His youngest, Peter, is 22, and he hopes to follow his father as a pilot.

Tom's wartime adventures began when, as a 14 year old, he started to feel jealous of his older schoolmates who had joined the police, as messengers.

"All I wanted was a tin hat and a respirator I like them. But the police in our town, Nuneaton, just laughed at me and my young pal Cussy Coward when we volunteered our services and told us to come back when our voices broke."

So the two junior would be heroes had sat around just mopping until they spotted a RAF poster.

"Cussy then dared me to try and get into the Royal Air Force and become a pilot. We both sent off for application forms, but Cussy wisely backed out when he got his. I filled mine in and lied about my birth date."

The minimum entry age was 17 years three months but young Tom knew he could fool them that he was oldenough at his interview because he was two years ahead of his age group in school and had done his school certificates at 14.

"The results had been published in the Daily Telegraph, so I showed them the clipping at my RAF interview. They asked me for my birth certificate which I said that I'd sent them. The officer who interviewed me looked terribly embarrassed as he searched his files, but he accepted the clipping as proof I was 17."

Tom arrived at RAF Cardington in Bedford in. October 1940. "I was the most excited little boy in the world. My dare with Cussy had become a reality, although I do not know if he found out as I never saw him again."

Tom was sent with all of the other recruits to a camp in Morecambe, Lancashire, for square bashing and rifle drill. First he was made to work as a waiter in a pilots; mess in Scotland. "I should have taken it as a warning as every day there were faces missing at breakfast those who had got killed the day before."

But it wasn't until a few months later that his longed for flying training started in Newquay, Cornwall.

Flying lessons began at Staverton in Gloucestershire in a small Tiger Moth.

"I was so small I couldn't see over the top of the cockpit without cushions," Tom chuckles. "But I soon took to flying like a bird to the air, looping the loop, doing rolls and spins. I was addicted to Malteser chocolates and used to fly with a packet in my lap."

"I wasn't thinking like an adult it was a big adventure. But the truth is I was a damn good pilot most of my mates failed as the plodders were rooted out."

Just after his 15th birthday, Tom got the chance to fly solo.

Then came more training in Canada, after a perilous journey across the Atlantic in the SS Northumberland, tailed by German submarines.

Young Tom was soon nicknamed Ace by his comrades, having been first to win his pilot's wings and also the first to do a four hour solo flight.

In late 1941, at 15 years and five months, he was back in Britain, a fully qualified pilot and a sergeant. Tom's ship home had sailed into the middle of a raid by the Germans on Liverpool.

"As I saw the city go up in flames I realised what war was all about. I knew I must fight to save my country, no matter how young I was. So I joined 4 Group Bomber Command where only two in 100 survived the war and the average life in the air was just 11.7 hours."

Tom clocked up an amazing 40 hours flying on active service in the months before the secret of his age finally came out.

I'd hand picked a crew to fly over France and drop propaganda leaflets. All the blokes were much older than me but they seemed to trust me. Of course they would have had a blue fit if they'd realised I was still only of school age. But once in the plane I was a figure of authority, in full command."

"I had my first experience of being fired on from the ground then. The flak exploding around us was like pretty flowers blossoming until it got too close for comfort. Soon we were on bombing runs ourselves out over the industrial Ruhr Valley in Germany." But back at RAF Abingdon Tom's secret at last spilled out.

"The group captain called me in and said my father had found out what I was doing and had blown the whistle on my age." So Tom was immediately grounded. Tom stayed in the RAF for another five years ending up as an aircraft controller for the royal family's own personal flights.

He then went into the Metropolitan Police for a year, before becoming a journalist, editing a local paper and finally retiring as a national newspaper executive.

Today Tom lives up in Stockport, near Manchester, with his second wife Sylvia, and is so proud that his son Peter aims to join the RAF.

Papua New Guinea 60th Anniversary Commemorative Mission 2002

Visit to Papua New Guinea to dedicate memorials at Milne Bay and Popondetta.



Milne Bay Memorial

The mission party consisted of 20 veterans, (14 army, 3 RAAF, 1 Navy and 2 war widows). The break up was 4 from Queensland, 8 from New South Wales, 4 from Victoria, 3 from South Australia and 1 from West Australia. The Minister for Veterans Affairs, the Hon. Danna Vale M.P. and her husband Bob, and a staff of 31 made a total of 51 on the mission

We gathered at the Royal on the Park Hotel in Brisbane on Wednesday 30th October where we were put through medical checks, briefed by Paul Evans (Major General – Chief of Staff) and were hosted to a farewell dinner at the Victoria Barracks Officer's Mess.

Thursday 31st. October. Wake up call at 0500 hours, and departed Brisbane via Qantas flight QF349 (Business Class) at 1100 hours, and arrived Jackson's airport at 1400 hours, and checked into the Crown Plaza Hotel, Port Moresby. Further briefing by Paul Stevens and then on to a reception dinner at the residence of the Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Nick Warner.

Friday 1st November. Wake up call at 0500 hours and departed from Jackson's airfield in RAAF Hercules for Milne Bay. The commemorative ceremony for the dedication of this new memorial, which overlooks Milne

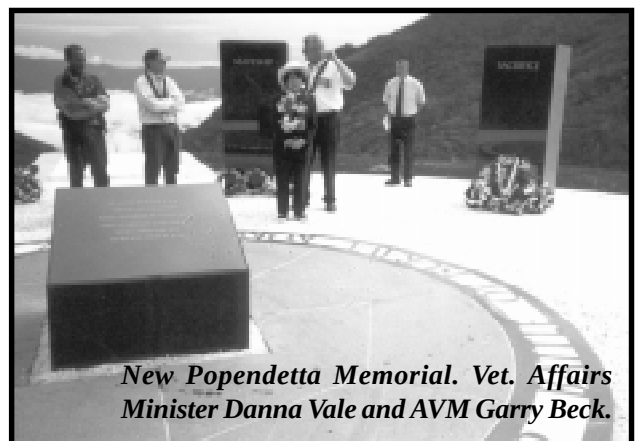
Bay at Alotau, was impressive. It was attended by a large crowd of locals, plus numerous Papuan New Guinea government officials. The address was by the Minister Danna Vale, and the response by the New Guinea Minister for Defence.

I recognised Milne Bay from the air but could not recollect the area from ground level. I don't think our memories of Milne Bay were very good, were they Fred? If my memory is correct I think the air strip was called Fall River then. We had morning tea at the Alotau International Hotel (situated adjacent to the memorial), after the service. We then visited two other small memorials en route to the air strip, namely at Turnbull Park and Gurney Airport. We arrived back at Port Moresby around 1600 hours, when a briefing was held, and later had dinner at the hotel.

I may mention here that security was very tight at Port Moresby due to the "Rascal" problem and we not allowed outside the hotel precincts. When travelling in buses supplied by the Australian Defence Force, we always had escorts.

Saturday 2nd. November. Wake up call at 4am and departed from Jackson's Airport at 0530 hours for Nadzab. Due to early starts breakfast was not available at the hotel, so we supplied with a boxed breakfast which consisted of a tub of yoghurt, chicken leg, bread roll, apple and a bottle of water. There wasn't much eaten

We arrived at Nazdab around 0700 hours and transferred to 2 Twin Otter aircraft for the journey to Girau airfield which is approximately 20 miles from Popondetta, where the impressive updated memorial is located. The dedication was again attended by a large gathering of the locals and government dignitaries. The address was given by the minister and was responded to by the Governor of Northern Province. The print outs for the service were in English and "Pidgin".



New Popondetta Memorial. Vet. Affairs Minister Danna Vale and AVM Garry Beck.

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Morning tea was provided at the memorial, which is situated in the middle of the town. The return to Port Moresby via Nazdab took around about three hours and we arrived in time for a further briefing. This was a very pleasant one for me, as I was one of the eight veterans selected for the helicopter journey to Isurava the next day. That night we attended the Port Moresby sub-branch's Annual Dinner at the Gateway Hotel situated at the airport. This was a most interesting evening and after the normal RSL ritual, singing and frivolity became the order of the night. We arrived back at our hotel around 1100 hours.

Sunday 3rd November. Wake up call at 0430 hours and boarded the 3 Bell Long Range Helicopters at 0630 hours. Each helicopter took 5 passengers. I was fortunate enough to secure the front seat next to the pilot and we followed the Kokoda Track up to Isurva, where we landed on a helicopter pad next to the memorial. This is a magnificent memorial built on the site of the original village. Again we were welcomed by the natives whose village has moved a couple of k's up the mountain. Wreaths were laid at the memorial which had been dedicated by John Howard in August 2002. We returned to Port Moresby around midday and attended a barbecue lunch with RSL reps. at Police Headquarters. After lunch we were taken on a cruise around the harbour.

Monday 4th November. Wake up call at 0600 hours and arrive at Bomana War Cemetery for a most impressive commemorative service, where the address was made by Donna Vale. Yours truly did the reading of the 46th Psalm. I visited the graves of 30 Squadron aircrew who lost their lives during my time with the Squadron, namely Butterfield, Harding, Jones, Mariet, Richardson, Sayer, Stephens and Wilson. Quite an emotional day. We departed the cemetery around 1200 hours, and visited a primary community school where the children showed great excitement.

A farewell dinner was held at the Crown Plaza and the evening finished with a rousing sing-along of old time favourites. Most enjoyable.

Tuesday 5th November. Wake up call at 0400 hours and we departed New Guinea for Brisbane on Qantas flight QF350. We arrived in Brisbane at 1000 hours, and after numerous farewells I arrived home at 1800 hours.

BOB BRAZENOR
Ex 30 Squadron RAAF

Photographs kindly sent by Bob Brazenor

The RAAF Memorial Canberra



*Per
Ardua
ad Astra*

*Through
Adversity
to the
Stars.*

Military jets and warbirds filled Canberra skies, while a full ceremonial parade on Anzac Avenue marked the dedication ceremony of the refurbished National Memorial to the RAAF.

The Memorial enhances the central sculpture of the original Memorial, designed by Inge King to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the RAAF. The refurbishment was designed by Robert Boynes. The sculpture features three black granite walls, containing images that reflect the service of the RAAF since World War I, as well as a glimpse into the future.

The three upsurging wing shapes represent the endurance, strength and courage of the Royal Australian Air Force. The bronze flight image in the centre of the composition signifies man's struggle to conquer the elements. The RAAF is one of the World's independent Air Forces, established in 1921, just after the first, the British Royal Air Force. Australian pilots were in active service in 1914 in New Guinea, and in 1915 the Australian Flying Corps was fighting in Mesopotamia (Iraq). By 1918 squadrons were in action on the Western Front in France. During World War II the RAAF served with distinction in the Middle East, Britain and the Pacific. The RAAF also served in the Malayan, Korean, and Vietnam conflicts, and more recently RAAF personnel have served in the Gulf War, East Timor, and numerous peacekeeping operations. The RAAF initiated a project to redevelop the Memorial in 2002, making it more identifiable and portraying more fully the history of the Service. The Memorial provides an enduring symbol of the history and the service of the Air Force and the more than 14,000 airmen and airwomen who made the supreme sacrifice in defence of the nation and world freedom.

At the dedication service a massive fly past took place to honour and recognise the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have served in the RAAF and the Australian Flying Corps. The flypast was led by the Roulettes, followed by a mass of aircraft, which were either current or representative of types of aircraft that have flown in the RAAF.

MEMOIRS OF THE LATE BOB WEMYSS



As a young lad, perhaps like many youngsters of the day, one of my consuming hobbies was making model aeroplanes, and this interest in aviation was furthered when I had my first flight in an aeroplane when I was age 14. I lived in Western Queensland and quite a few of the early fliers staged through Winton. In the early 1940's I was on the Atherton

Tableland managing an estate agency at William's Garage in Yungaburra, and when one of the recruiting trains came to Mareeba I went down there to make enquiries about enlisting. I was only interested in joining the Royal Australian Air Force because of my love of and deep interest in aviation matters right back to the age of six. I filled out an application form and submitted it to the recruiting officer

There was quite a delay between being accepted for aircrew training in the Air Force and receiving their letter enclosing a rail warrant and telling me to report to their office in Creek Street. There was an interval of something like 14 months. It's possible that they took trainees living closer to Brisbane before calling up those in the country. But I was certainly on a reserve for quite a long time.

After being sworn in with others at Creek Street, we were taken down to Sandgate where we were issued with our kit, and started on a three month course at No 3 Initial Training School. Units of the American Army Air Corps had just arrived in Brisbane and one of their Air Cobras crashed into the sea only about 500 yards away from the ITS camp. Some of the Air Force fellows waded out to the aircraft and collected some ammunition and there was quite a stink about that.

After that I was sent to the Elementary Flying Training School at Narromine; the School was equipped with Tiger Moths, and my instructor Sergeant 'Shagger' Ross forecast that I'd become a fighter pilot for sure. Not many of the instructors held commissioned rank, and I recall that one of them impressed on me that every flying instructor must be addressed as 'Sir' irrespective of his rank. Some of them were dedicated and conscientious fellows, but there were a couple at Narromine whose main aim appeared to be to scrub two of the four trainees they were given at the start of each course so that they could sit back and have an easy ride.

From there I went to No 1 Service Flying Training School at Point Cook, where, contrary to 'Shagger's' forecast I was trained on the twin-engined Airspeed Oxfords. Jim (Palmer? was my instructor there, and at about 35 years of age was thought to be nearly over the hill as far as flying was concerned. The Commanding Officer at that time was 'Speed' Le Good, and while I

was at Point Cook I saw an American flier practising skip bombing. At the graduation parade, the successful trainees, including myself, were presented with their wings.

My next posting was to No 8 Service Flying Training School at Bundaberg as a flying instructor for a short time, and then I was sent down to the Central Flying School at Tamworth to undergo a flying instructor's course on Airspeed Oxfords, after which I was sent back to Bundaberg.

The Commanding Officer was Jeff ('Horse') Atherton, who later became CO of a fighter squadron in New Guinea. He wasn't a flamboyant character by any means, but just to show the Yanks who were fiddling around doing beat-ups in their Black Widows at Noemfoor, 'Horse' took off downwind in a Kittyhawk, rolled over, extended the gear on the base leg, and on final leg rolled the right way up.

My next posting was to No 5 Operational Training Unit at Tocumwal, where Wing Commander Brian ('Blackjack') Walker was the Commanding Officer, and I have an idea that 'Torchy' Uren was the Chief Instructor. That Beaufighter training course included Gordon Fenton, and his navigator Rowley Nelson (both of whom were later posted to No 30 Beaufighter Squadron and were shot down at Boram in A19-146 on 13th July 1944). Then there was Bert Moody and his navigator Bert Aitcheson (who crashed on Bomberai Peninsula in A19-209 on 20th September 1944; the story we heard that both were captured, tortured by the Japanese, and then used for bayonet practice).

We went through the usual hardening course at Sandgate and then went through an involved business of getting up north to join No 30 Squadron - our next posting. I had a spot of leave in Brisbane, and was then put on a troop train which took me to Townsville, where I reported to the Transport and Movements Section for onward travel. We were quartered at some camp a few miles out of the city and as there was nothing at all to do but sit and wait for a seat on an aircraft going to Tadj, time hung heavily on our hands. However, eventually we were called out and put on board the Canberra and this took us across the Coral Sea to Port Moresby where we stayed for about three weeks. A message came through that a Beaufreighter would be coming through Moresby so I hitched a ride on that as far as Tadj. The Allied strip at Tadj was about 30 kilometres or so east of the village of Aitape.

Wing Commander Gibson and Corporal Murphine had been killed when their Beaufighter slammed into a bulldozer during take-off from Tadj, which was right on the water's edge. Gibson's fatal crash happened in A19-115 on 11th June 1944 - just two or three days before my arrival. Jack Sandford was temporarily commanding the Squadron, which was now under No 77 Wing. Gordon Fenton arrived a day or so after me

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and he eventually took over as Temporary Commanding Officer, but he had that post for only about five days, being shot down over Boram. Jack Sandford (who was doing a second operational tour in the Squadron) took over temporary command again until Carey Thompson arrived in October 1944.

Tadji was held by the US Army and the Nips were pushing hard against the small perimeter so higher command sent in more troops, but no more food. So for about three weeks we lived on tropical spread, flapjacks, and tinned meat once a week, although at other times although the food was adequate it wasn't exciting. Squadron personnel lived in American-style bell tents fitted with wooden duck-boards which were dispersed among the palm trees of a Lever Brothers plantation at Tadji.

I distinguished myself on my first operation in a Beaufighter by flying through the tops of the coconut trees at our target (either But or Cape Martin?) It was my first experience of anti-aircraft fire, and the stuff was coming up and it seemed to me that our best chance lay in keeping low and keeping y finger on the firing button during our run into the target. But not being used to the flying a fully-loaded aircraft in conditions of poor density/altitude, when I pulled out at a lower height than was perhaps prudent, the aircraft splurged and I went through the treetops about a metre from the tops. With negative G the carburetion system of the Hercules engine was such that it produced a momentary cut-out. My splurge caused both engines to cut for a fraction of a minute - although it seemed to be an abnormally long time. It seemed obvious that I was going to prang and as I had absolutely no intention of being burnt to death when the aircraft exploded, I put my hand down on the gang switches and knocked the master switch off so that there would be no hot things to light a fire when we crashed. But just as I did that one engine came on, followed by the other.

When we got back to Tadji we found that both engine nacelles were damaged very badly - flattened in some places - and I thought that I would be sent home in disgrace. I went to the Commanding Officer, told him about the damage, explained what had happened and said I had made an error of judgement, and expressed regrets. He told me to join the club; no pilot was regarded as operationally experienced until he'd been through treetops three times!

Since their arrival at Tadji from Kiriwina the Beaufighters had been strafing barges along the New Guinea coastline between Wewak and Muschu Island. They had been fitted with bomb racks under the wings at Kiriwina and on arrival at Tadji they started to do some bombing; they carried a pair of 226 kg bombs. I recall one Beaufighter sortie where I used bombs against Amahai No 1 Strip, which was heavily defended, and which I attacked the following day in a Boston. I don't think that bombing from a Beaufighter did much to impeded the Japanese operational effort; the bombs were

so small that they'd just make a small hole in the strip which could be filled by the next day. The smaller anti-personnel bombs were probably more effective; they had an extension rod stuck on the front so that they blew on impact and scattered metal fragments about at about knee height.

Gordon Fenton and Rowley Nelson were killed while on an operation on 13th July 1944. Two other crews were lost that night: Baldock and his navigator Abbott in A19-185, as well as Satchwell and his navigator McNamara in A19-174.

Ten days later the Squadron lost another crew when John ('Blue') Hutchinson and his navigator Roy Wagner crashed while taking off from the strip at Tadji in A19-173 on what was to be their second operation. The aircraft swung just after he started his roll, but instead of stopping the aircraft, which would have been the right thing to do when the swing developed, he elected to keep going, yanked it off and, veered off the flight path and clocked the top of the control tower. I was just behind him and stopped my roll when I saw what was going on; I got roasted by Ron Rankin, who was flight leader for that operation). He impressed on me that I was never to do that again when I was in his flight; if the strip was clear, then I was to go. Despite that particular ear-bashing, I got on well with Ron; he was a pleasant fellow, perhaps something of an extrovert, but an experienced Beaufighter man and a good leader. I got on very well with him.

BOB WEMYSS

To be continued

FROM JACK'S RECORDS

In March 1944 it was feared there was a Jap Naval Task Force loose in the Indian Ocean, and it was assumed that their target was the Freemantle/Perth area. 31 Squadron was deployed to Potshot (now Learmonth). With us was 18 Squadron (Mitchells).

The Spitfires were moved from Darwin to Perth and a Dutch Kittyhawk Squadron was moved from Canberra to Potshot. A lot of other movements took place, but what with the shortage of supplies and personnel, and a cyclone attacking Potshot, which put the strip out of action for two days, life was made rather tedious. It was a good operation in logistics.

The Beaufighters were to go into immediate operations with the ammunition they had in their magazines. Our replenishment ammo arrived three days after us, unbelted. The three Squadrons of Spitfires were concentrated at Guilford, and the Boomerangs were given the job to defend the Freemantle/Perth area. 25 Squadron Vulties were moved to WA, and were to make dive bombing attacks if the enemy force got within 200 miles of the coast.

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George Drury's Memoirs of the Battle of the Bismark Sea

Continued from December 2002 issue

Complete figures of Japanese and Allied forces in the Bismarck Sea Battle last week were released at General McArthur's headquarters yesterday. They reveal how crushing was the Japanese defeat which incidentally has not been mentioned by Tokyo radio. Here are the details:

JAPANESE LOSSES

Three light cruisers, seven destroyers, twelve transports sunk, 15,000 men drowned or killed, and 102 aircraft definitely put out of action.

ALLIED LOSSES

One bomber and three fighters destroyed, a number of aircraft damaged, some severely. All our planes, except for the four destroyed, returned to their bases. The allies had about 136 aircraft engaged in the attacks, and the Japanese about 150 (1 thought we had about 300, but that's what it says). The allies dropped 226 tons of bombs, and scored 80 direct hits and 63 damaging near hits. War correspondents say that the key to the allied successes was the High Command's accurate forecast of the enemy convoy's intentions and movements. I was in what we thought was dirt, but it wasn't dirt, it was about a foot of jungle swamp, 10,000 year old swamp. I will never forget it to my dying day. The stink, the stench of the rotten vegetation, and the insects swarmed up and it was a terrible feeling. Oh that smell! We kept there, face down, for I suppose about a quarter of an hour, and then we gradually put our heads up and a little bit more, and we could see the aircraft smoking (actually it wasn't smoking as it turned out later; it was steam coming from the hot engine in contact with the swamp). After about another quarter or half an hour I said to Dave, "Let's ease back." So we started to ease back towards the aircraft, and when we finally got back to it you could hardly see it as it was almost completely covered in trees and branches. We started to take the compasses out of the aircraft to enable us to set a reasonable course towards Dobadura camp and airstrip, when after a while we heard someone calling out. It was an American voice calling, "Are you there Aussies? Are you there Aussies?" It was like a miracle, and we couldn't believe it. Anyway we shouted back and he replied and we were only about 50 yards from each other, but we had to keep shouting to direct him to us. When he appeared it was an American sergeant. He'd been in charge of a native road gang, building a road not all that far from where we'd pranged, and he'd seen the aircraft disappear below the level of the trees and he'd started out towards our direction.

I left Dave with the aircraft, and this sergeant took me back to his camp and to his commanding officer. This commanding officer was something I will never forget; he was sitting on a small stool outside his tent and smoking a corn cob pipe, chewing tobacco and spitting at these lizards. He could knock them off at about four or five yards. It was incredible! Name was Lieutenant General Eichelburger. Later on, many years after the war, he became one of the five star generals of the United States. He was just so helpful, and offered us anything and everything. He managed to contact some of our own people and got us in contact with Pilot Officer Clark of the RAAF. He told a couple of his sergeants to get onto what they called the Repair and Salvage Unit. Their job was to try to salvage as much of the crashed aircraft as possible such as ammunition, radio etc and make sure that the IFF (indicator friend or foe code) was destroyed, and their unit generally just consisted of a sergeant and a fitter. We drew a diagram of where we thought the aircraft was. Lieutenant

General Eichelburger organised some food for us and I struggled through this terrible mud, sometimes up to the crotch, to get this food back to Dave. We then took the compasses and the clocks out of the aircraft. I've still got my clock. It's mounted in a horse stirrup which I had chrome plated.

GEORGE DRURY

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The whole operation turned out to be a fizzer. An air raid siren was sounded in Perth, but was cancelled when the offending aircraft disappeared off the radar screens. News of the emergency was leaked to the public in Perth and with the disappearance of all shipping from Fremantle and the calling up of the VDC there was some alarm in the public arena. As it turned out the Japs had no plans to attack Western Australia or anywhere else in the Indian Ocean and turned around and went to Singapore.

A quote on the conditions at Potshot...."On 10th March a severe cyclone struck the area, and turned the area into a swamp. The camp was flooded and stores and equipment stored in depressions were covered by four feet of water".

JACK BRASSIL

DON ANGUS MEMORIES

There were very few men belonging to No 30 Squadron when I arrived at RAAF Station Richmond on 12th June 1942, and although I was posted to that flying unit, neither I nor the other Wireless Telegraphy Operators had much to do with the Squadron during our first few weeks, because it didn't have its own signals office. Consequently we were employed on shift work in the Station Signals Office, handling inwards and outwards traffic in morse code. About six of the Squadron's W/T Operators were working in that office and living in barracks with the Station crowd: our bunch included Bruce Robertson, Ewen Blackman, and George Shearan.

We knew that we were to move out from Richmond to somewhere in the tropics when we were ordered to get rid of our blue uniforms, and were issued with Air Force khaki clothing instead. A mate took my blues home for me where they were kept in mothballs for over a year while I was away in the Islands. None of us were impressed when the entire Squadron was marched around the station in the middle of winter in those summer uniforms.

News that we were being sent north eventually filtered through to us (although the patrons of the local hostelry seemed to have known about it for some time). Following a parade after lunch on Tuesday 11th August, we were marched across to Clarendon Railway station - the Station Band playing 'Goodbye' (from *White Horse Inn*) — and boarded a special train chartered by the RAAF Movements people. The Squadron's heavy equipment and vehicles had already been put onto flat-top wagons at Richmond Railway Station. Our personal kit bags were taken across to Clarendon on trucks and loaded into freight vans attached to the train. It was a 'trooper', where each carriage had a corridor down the middle and three-tiered bunks down each side.

There were four or five officers and perhaps 300 airmen on board and we had a good trip that took us through Gosford, where we had the evening meal, through Taree where we were served breakfast, on to lunch at Kempsey, and then on to Grafton, where we had another good feed. The next day we detrained at Clapham Junction, where we boarded another train and were deposited at an Army camp at Ascot Racecourse in Brisbane. We had a very welcome breakfast there, after which we moved into our tents and hopped into washing our clothes, which were pretty dirty from the engine's soot and smoke.

We had two day's leave to look over the city and since most of us had never been more than a few miles from our home towns, everybody went sight-seeing. I visited the Air Force Club for a meal and then went to a dance at Coconut Grove during our first night in town. The next day I went to the Commercial Traveller's Club in Elizabeth Street, where I had a most welcome hot shower to remove the grime from the train trip. We

boarded another troop train for Townsville somewhere around 2200 hours, and we were all sorry to leave sunny Brisbane.

That trip wasn't as comfortable as the one up to Brisbane because of Queensland's narrow gauge rail system and because we had to sit up in seats — two opposite two. The few small fans in the carriages were going full blast all the time, but they did very little to cool us off. At the various stops, groups of nice ladies gave us cups of tea and biscuits, and a bit of cheer. Lunch was not ready when we arrived at Gladstone, so the Squadron Adjutant marched us around the town for about half an hour. The Adjutant - 'Curly' Wearne - was Officer-in-Charge of our train, and permitted us to get on and off only when he shouted the order "30 Squadron - Detrain!" or "30 Squadron - Entrain!"

The train pulled in to the Townsville station at about half-past six on 16th August, and Air Force tenders took us to RAAF Station Garbutt where we stayed for a day or two before moving to the dispersed strip at Bohle River, about 8 miles beyond Garbutt. One of our first jobs was to dig a trench near the tents which had been put up by the Advance Party. It had left Richmond about a week before us under the command of the Warrant Officer Disciplinary, Warrant Officer Ted Good, and had journeyed north by train from Sydney Central Railway Station.

Our 24 Beaufighters flew up from Richmond and landed at Bohle River shortly after lunch on the day of our arrival there. They had flown in a loose formation of three flights led by Squadron Leader Peter Parker, Squadron Leader Charles Read, and Squadron Leader Brian ('Blackjack') Walker.

The powers that be pulled the same caper on us at Bohle River as they had at Richmond, and the six W/T Operators in 30 Squadron were sent over to Garbutt to do shift work in the Signals Office there. We were barracked in the airmen's sleeping quarters on the Station, which were built high off the ground, had louvred shutters all round and were reasonably cool. During our stay there, Bruce Robertson and I drove round the Station in a W/T servicing truck and were astonished at the number and variety of American fighter and bomber aircraft that were being assembled or repaired in their huge workshops adjacent to the aerodrome.

There were a couple of air raid alerts while we were there, and we had to black the place out, but nothing came of them. Two of our Beaufighters had to fly across from Bohle River to be on air defence standby every night. I think they were sent up on only one occasion but it turned out to be a false alarm. Three of our aircraft were sent across to Fall River to do some operations from Milne Bay; one of them pranged during take-off, but Lenny Vial and Ralph Nelson got out without injury.

DON ANGUS

To be continued