

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

JULY 2000



Painting by
Gold Coast artist,
John Castle

Beaufighter of 30 Sqn. wins by a nose and two engines
from a Boston of 22 Sqn. in
the Great Air Race above Goodenough Island.

See story on Page 3.

President's Corner



I am extremely pleased to inform you that Peter's operation seems to have improved the old fellow quite a bit. He is even pottering about his boat in preparation for the bream season.. He also marched on 25/4/00 albeit, with some difficulty.

After all the effort Peter has put into the Association, he was naturally disappointed at the lack of response by members to the Anzac Day March and luncheon, however he is aware from his own experience that some members, a number of whom are walking wounded, are having extreme difficulty in fronting up for Anzac Day. This is the main reason why, at the previous AGM, members voted that we should not be represented at the traditional RAAF Week Parade, as the 1999 parade was so poorly attended by the Association.

No doubt you will have read Peter's article on the Association's future. The executive want to hear your views- I urge you to show your continued interest in the Association's affairs, by responding to the questionnaire.

While winding up the Association is an option, I believe such action is entirely premature. We must remember among other things, we have a continuing obligation to make the Annual presentation of our trophy at RAAF Amberley.

I am positive all members, who attended the 1998 and 1999 presentations, would agree that such presentations must continue. Again it would be nice to have greater representation in future.

Members- this is your Association, and I believe it behoves you all to make your wishes, as to the future, known to Peter by returning the completed questionnaire without delay. The Association's future will be the main topic at this year's AGM.

Regards

Ralph.

COMMITTEE

Patron	Raymond Smith	3263 1274
President	Ralph Ind	5538 5439
V. President	William O'Connor	3286 1067
Secretary	Peter White	3287 5488
Committee	Stan Curran	3388 6053
	Jack Chamberlain	3648 2194
	Les Turnbull	5537 7953

The Association's Future.

As a result of attendance's, Or the lack of it, by members, to the functions held, during the last twelve months I believe it is time to consider the Association's future.

Attendance figures to these functions were as follows:

Anzac Day Parade	6
Boat Trip	6
Memorial Church Service	3
Annual Amberley Day	9

The above are from a membership of 77, made up as follows:

Interstate members	6
Qld Country	25
Sth. East Qld	46

These figures indicate that we can expect members with local addresses to attend functions if able. The attendance's shown above paint a pretty sad story. I am aware that there are many good reasons for attendance's to be small. The main one being our age group with it's attendant problems and sicknesses. To offset interstate, country membership, and disability problems with members we publish a Newsletter four times a year, which is pretty well received and I am sure of interest to all members. There does seem to be a lack of interest by many members who are able to attend functions.

Recently I received a 31 Squadron Newsletter, which listed all it's members by States. In the Queensland section there were 30 names of members who lived in and around Brisbane. To this group I sent a copy of or Newsletter, together with an application for membership to the Beaufighter and Boston Association. Net result was one member. Not very encouraging at all.

The well being of the Association is something that is dear to my heart, and these attendance's clearly indicate that The Association's future should now be looked at, and some clear decisions be made.

In order to make such decisions, I ask members to make known their wishes, by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it SAP. This will enable some resolutions be made at the AGM in November. A questionnaire is enclosed showing some options that are open to us. Please study them and let us know your wishes.

PETER WHITE

THE GREAT RACE PAINTING

Associate member, Gold Coast artist, John Castle has now completed a painting based on the finish of a race between a Beaufighter and Boston at Vivigani strip, on Goodenough Island in November 1943.

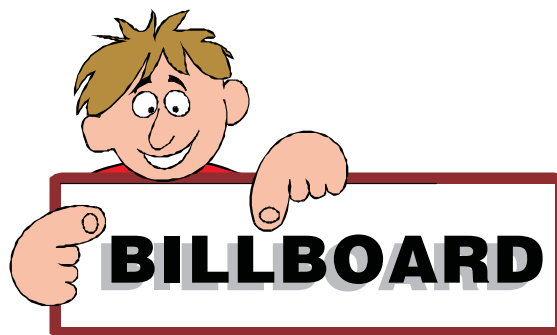
As members are well aware John has done a number of paintings over the past four year, and presented them to us, and he has now presented this one to us. It is a large painting, some 90cm X 90cm and beautifully framed. To enhance the painting we have used the same type of framing for two 20cm X.28cm frames, one telling the story the painting is based on, and the other gives relevant information about John, with a small picture of him. I have thanked John, sincerely, on behalf of members for this kind gesture. I am of the opinion this is probably the very best painting of aircraft that John has done.

President Ralph, Stan Curran, and yours truly, were invited to a meeting of The Aspley Solid Modelers Club, where we received, on behalf of the Association a beautiful scale model of a Boston, enclosed in a clear perspex case, and nicely mounted. The Boston is of the same scale, and mounted in the same manner as the Beaufighter presented to us last year. The aircraft is in the markings of Twenty Two Squadron, and in the numbers of the plane Bill Newton earned his Victoria Cross over Salamua in 1943. We had a most enjoyable evening, once again with this club, and President Ralph thanked them for their generous gift.

We took the paintings and the model to The Warplanes Museum, where Ralph presented them to members of the Museum. There were some twelve members of the Museum at the presentation, and we had a most enjoyable afternoon. These items are now in a most suitable place both from the safety and suitability situation. We are ensured that they will be well presented to the public and in safe keeping for future generations to see.

As an Association, we can be justly proud of the fact, that in our short life we have ensured that the part played by the Beaufighter and Boston Squadrons in World War Two, will be remembered, by the erection and placement of some five Plaques and Plinths and Paintings in suitable locations in South East Queensland. Before our inception there was nothing at all in place, to honour the part played by them.

PETER WHITE



VALE

Jack Farquahar, ex 31 Squadron died three weeks ago after a pretty long battle in hospital and at home. His sadly missed by his family. I have passed on our sympathy to his family

LEST WE FORGET.

SICK PARADE

Ron Wardlaw is making a good recovery after three weeks in hospital. On the phone the other day he sounded his usual cheery self. Will not be able to make Anzac Day in Brisbane this year. All the best to you and Elaine.

Roy Inches is still making a good recovery after his serious operation, Keep at it Roy.

Austin Donnelly is now at home after major surgery of quadruple heart by-passes. When I spoke with him last he was at home and taking a few steps with the aid of a walking frame.

Frank Beadle's wife having a pretty tough time of at home. Frank says he is chief cook and bottle washer, and taking good care of her. Keep up the good work.

A Senior's Day ??

I've become a little older since I saw you last, and a few changes have come into my life.

Frankly I have become a frivolous old girl - I am seeing seven gentlemen every day.

As soon as I wake up, Will Power gets me out of bed, then I go to see John. Next it's time for Uncle Toby to come along,, and he is followed by Billy Tea.

They leave me and Arthur Itis shows up, and stays for the rest of the day.(He does not like to stay in the one place for very long and takes me from joint to joint.) After such a busy day I am really tired and glad to go to bed with Johnny Walker. What a life! Ohyes, I'm flirting with Al Zymer.

STAN'S PAGE

'STILL' PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE A SORRY LOT

There is always an odd bod or two in a squadron. I'm thinking of Bert Sievers, our photographer in 31 Squadron at Tarakan Borneo.



The photographer has his own little dark room and does the lot, take photographs, develops and prints them. He also does all the chemical mixing and all the queer things that go on in a photo lab.

Bert Sievers came to me one day and said. "I'm going to make some whisky and I'd like your help." Well I was quite amused. I didn't know the first thing about making whisky and I told him so. Then he said, "I know how to make it, all I want you to do is to help make the still. It's very simple, I have the design and Ron Jones will help." Ron Jones was a Cpl Airframe Fitter. In those days they were called Fitter 2A's.

The "Still" was easy to make. It consisted of a Jerry can with a hole in the top into which a copper pipe was brazed. The copper pipe was made into a coil and passed through a tub of water for cooling then out to the discharge point. When distilling the mash (or whatever) was strained and put into the jerry can, the can was sealed, then a slow fire was put under the jerry can. When the contents began to boil, "Whallah" spirit was supposed to come out of the copper pipe. Come to think of it, it was just like a pressure cooker.

Bert had sole control of making the mash. Into a can (about six-gallon capacity) he put in a conglomerate of ingredients. I don't know just what went in but I can recall some. Yeast, dried fruits, tinned fruit, golden syrup, sugar and anything else he could scrounge. It was easy for Bert to scrounge. He was the only one who had photographs and they were excellent for trading items. All the ingredients had to ferment for two or three weeks. It looked and smelt revolting. The day came for the distillery to come into operation. I remember it was a Saturday a stand down day.

There was no attempt to hide what we were doing, as far as we were concerned there was no harm being done.

The still was set up in the middle of the camp, an audience had gathered, this would be interesting.

The mash was strained, the Jerry can nearly filled, some space had to be left at the top of the can, the fire was lit, and then we waited anxiously. After some time a few drips came from the copper pipe into the bottle. After a while the flow was a bit faster, however, the liquid was cloudy. Bert pronounced this was normal that the cloudy stuff was unfit to drink but it would soon become clear, which it did. The cloudy liquid was discarded and the beautiful crystal clear liquid was now flowing into the bottle.

At this stage we had to test the "Whisky." Some was put in a spoon and it was lit with a match. It burnt with a nice blue flame so was declared to be "Whisky". Then came the tasting, we each had a little sip. I'll never forget it, just a sip and it nearly lifted my head off. I immediately resigned from the company and gave my share to Ron and Bert.

It must have been way over "proof spirit". Incidentally I wonder how many know what "proof spirit" is? It is a standard mixture of pure alcohol and water (containing 57.3% alcohol by volume). The old sailors knew how to test this. They tested their rum by putting a small amount on some gunpowder. If it would ignite it was overproof, if it would not it was underproof.

The yield was two and a half bottles of whisky. The operation over the still was dismantled. I don't know what Bert did with it. It probably finished up looking as if it was some of his legitimate photographic equipment.

I went back to my tent. Bert and Ron took the half bottle and a bottle of lemon cordial to another tent to join in a game of cards while having a few drinks. About an hour or so later Ron was making his way back to his tent. I was watching him and he collapsed in a heap on the ground. I thought he was putting on a drunk act, but I began to have some doubts it was fairly hot lying in the tropical sun. I went and had a look at him. He seemed all right. I was still thinking it was a bit of an act. He was only a couple of feet from the shade of a tent fly, so I put my foot on him and rolled him into the shade just in case he was really drunk.

The next part I didn't see but it was well reported. Bert said he was going for a shower and then was going to do some "spine bashing" (lie down).

Our shower was a pallet to stand on over a ditch on the side of the road, a post to support a water pipe with a shower rose overhead. There were no women in the area so there was no problem showering on the side of the road.

Bert was showering with nothing to show who he was or his rank. Along the road came an officer dressed in a brand new smartly pressed jungle green uniform. We were reduced to ragged clothes - a mixture of Air Force, Army and American gear, whatever we could scrounge. We had been in a battle zone for some time and were a rough looking mob. The Officer was carrying in each hand beautiful leather bags, the type which unfold and become hanging wardrobes.

The Officer said in his best Oxford accent, "Excuse me my good fellow, can you direct me to the headquarters?"

It was too much for Bert. The "Whisky" had transformed him from a well behaved likeable person to a foul mouthed ruffian. He began his reply saying,

Continued on page 7

Hoskins Memorial Kimbe W. New Britain

Association member, George Robertson, ex 30 Squadron Beaufighter pilot, who flew many missions in this area, during World War II, brought this Memorial to fruition, after a lengthy task.

His task was monumental to say the least, however with great determination and hard work on his part it has now been erected and unveiled. His task was faced with many obstacles. Firstly by the tyranny of distance, and raising the necessary funding, with no contribution from Government sources, and the co-ordinating of all the facets of design and construction. One of the more difficult tasks was the recovery of the propeller of 30 Squadron Commanding Officer Clarrie Glascock's Beaufighter wreck, located in the jungle in the area, which was made an integral part of the Memorial. The Memorial looks magnificent in its beautiful setting amidst a grove of Coconut palms, less than one hundred metres from the sea, the waters of which were so familiar to the Beaufighter and Boston aircrews who carried out many missions in this area during World War II.

George advises that the Memorial was unveiled on Anzac Day 25th April 2000, by RAAF Wing Commander R Hodges. The unveiling was a great success, being attended by many ex-patriots of the Kimbe area, 15 relatives of the aircrew who lost their lives in this area the pupils and teachers of the Kimbe Primary School who sang the PNG and Australian National anthems, and the loyal hymn, God Save the



Queen. George and Don West, ex 30 Squadron Observer gave appropriate addresses.

PERER WHITE

Brisbane City Anzac Day Parade

The day started with threatening clouds in the sky, but no rain. We formed up in the usual position in George Street. This year we were the last cab off the rank. Army led off, (given the privilege because of their Timor efforts) followed by Navy. The Parade started right on time (1000 hours), and it was 1130 hours by the time we set off. A very long wait indeed. This was eased by the Salvo canteen, issuing hot coffee and biscuits. Toilets and seats were a bit hard to find.

Our modified banner was erected by Stan Curran, with a little help from yours truly. Stan had modified the banner, earlier in the year, which made it easier to carry, erect and disassemble. The Banner was carried by a colour escort of six Air Cadets, from Twenty Flight AIRTC, who once again did a splendid job, and are to be congratulated on their smart turnout and performance.

This year we were led by Vice Pres. Bill O'Connor, think Bill was having a little foot trouble for a while. Six of our members marched, and two, Stan Curran and Ron Snell, from Townsville followed in a Jeep. We were

joined by four other Ex RAAF blokes, who did not have a particular unit to march with.

We boarded the Crocodile River Queen Two, for the boat trip and lunch, where there were only three members, and on new member, Murray Broderick (Ex 31 Squad), and his twin, teen aged grandsons. We enjoyed a few drinks, but found the food was not up to the standard we enjoyed on previous trips.

It was interesting to note, the Club Crocodile had to use both their Boats this year, for Anzac Day, due to the great increase in patronage, from Army and Navy Associations, following what we had started some five years ago.

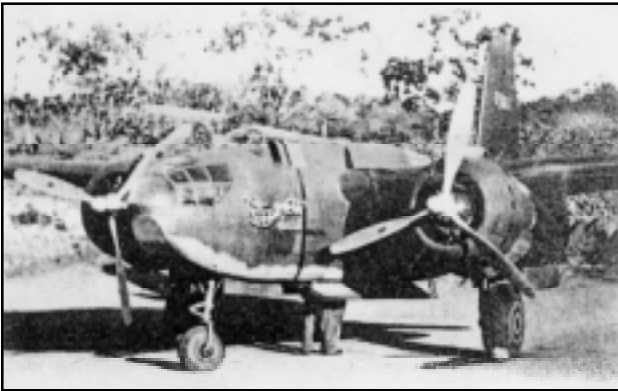
HON SEC.



PETER'S PAGE

THE STEAK AND EGG SPECIAL

Throughout the months June, July and August 1942, the 89th Bomb Squadron, 3rd Bombing Group, based at Charters Towers in Queensland, was preparing to enter combat. During August the Squadron and its Douglas A20 attack Bombers worked closely with No 30 Squadron (RAAF) Beaufighters in combined training operations in the Townsville Area.



After running three practice missions with the Beaufighters, the 89th and its A 20s departed for Papua New Guinea on August 29th 1942, landing at 3 Mile Strip, Kila Port Moresby. One of these A20s, serial number 40-166, was flown by Lt. Fred Klatt and earned the nickname "Little Hellion". It was to have a remarkable life and re-birth.

Two days later "Little Hellion" together with 12 other 89th Squadron A20s carried out the Squadron's mission, a coordinated strike with B26s from the 22nd Bomb Group against Japanese held Lae, PNG's second largest city. At noon just as the B26s had completed their bombing run at 6000 feet, the thirteen A20s swept in from the west at low altitude, attacking grounded aircraft, vehicles and buildings, severely damaging several Zero fighters and a Val dive bomber. All aircraft returned safely to the 3 Mile Strip, thus completing the first A20 mission in the South West Pacific during World War Two.

Over the next two months, "Little Hellion" took part on many bombing and strafing missions against enemy positions. On November 1st, "Little Hellion" carried out its thirteenth and last combat mission, with Captain D Williams at the controls.

It was part of a formation of A20s from the 89th Bomb Squadron designated to strafe the runaway at Lae. As the aircraft commenced their strafing run, about 20 Japanese Zero fighters intercepted. During the resulting melee, "Little Hellion" was damaged, Captain Ford nursed the aircraft back to the Seven Mile

Strip, at Port Moresby. Considered a write off, it was moved to the dump area, to be used as a source of spare parts. In early December 1942, the Commanding Officer of the 89th, Captain Christian Petri, came across the scrapped aircraft. "Little Hellion" was inspected, and found to be not as badly damaged as first thought. It was towed to the Three Mile strip, and positioned on empty oil drums. Other 20s yielded vital parts to complete the rebuild. More than two thousand pounds of surplus weight, including armour plate, guns, bomb racks and ammunition feed trays were removed.

New engines were installed, followed by a coat of foliage green paint. After two months of oil and sweat, that was conducted between normal maintenance work on the Squadron's combat aircraft, it was rolled out for the first test flight on February 4th, still wearing the Air Force identity 40-166. After a short ceremony, naming the aircraft "The Steak and Egg Special", in honour of its intended role of flying in from Australia, much needed fresh vegetables, eggs and meat, Captain Petri took the aircraft off on its first flight.

A number of teething problems delayed its first flight to Australia. Finally, on February 21, 1943, "The Steak and Egg Special" with Lt. H Brown at the controls, left for Australia carrying two men on leave, and the messing officer with two hundred pounds cash, to refurbish the Squadron's larder.

The aircraft returned on the 24th, and over the next few days the squadron personnel gorged them selves on the steak, fresh fruit and vegetables, much to the envy of other squadrons in the area. The "Steak and Egg Special" departed on it's next run to Australia on February 28th and returned to Moresby on March 18, bringing with it copious quantities of liquid refreshment as well as some solid food. This resulted in one of the best parties held since the Squadron left the United States.

Over the next six months, "The Steak and Egg Special" plied her trade regularly between Port Moresby, and Australia, although some flights were not without some problems, such as leaking fuel tanks, hydraulic problems and plenty of oil leaks.

In about August 1943, "The Steak and Egg Special" had the paint removed, and the aluminium highly polished, making it an extra fast aircraft, being able to fly in formation with P38 Lightnings. Its name was then changed to "Steak and Eggs". Being the only A20 in the South West Pacific in natural metal colour had its advantages. On a flight to Sydney in November, its Pilot, Capt. H.D. Brown, following a dare by Lt. Lauer sitting the nose section, flew "Steak and Eggs beneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge, before landing at Mascot. Several minutes later a B26 Marauder from the 22nd Bomb Group, also landed, and as this aircraft was in its natural metal finish, the blame for Brown's act was directed at this hapless aircraft and it's crew.

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Peter's Page Continued from page 6

"Steak and Eggs" continued to ply her trade from Port Moresby to Cairns, Brisbane and Sydney. When the Squadron moved to Nadzab in 1944 "Steak and Eggs" followed. (After all, the squadron's personnel considered it was the most important morale booster in the Squadron).

Finally its luck ran out. On June 11th 1944, whilst on another run to Australia, engine trouble ended the days of "Steak and Eggs". The aircraft was successfully crash landed on a low wooded island, north east of Cooktown. A passing Australian freighter picked up the crew. Only one crew member suffered slight injuries, during the crash landing.

Thus ended the career of a remarkable aircraft.

Stan's Page Continued from page 4

"My God what sort of a poofter have we got here? You Officers that come up from down south etc,etc." The Officer left Bert to his disgusting tirade. It turned out that the Officer was our new Adjutant.

I became aware that something unusual was happening. There was an Officer and two Warrant Officers at Bert's tent. Some of the fellows were gathering to look so I joined in. Bert was lying on his bunk with a towel over him and they couldn't wake him. Then they took the two bottles of whisky.

It was then I thought of Ron, I got a mate to help me put him on his bunk. They both slept well into the next day.

Bert was duly charged and awarded 28 days field punishment. It didn't worry him, he just had to do his job as usual.

About the same time another incident with grog occurred. One of the airmen had the ingredients for making beer sent from Australia. There was no secrecy about it the whole camp knew and were anxiously waiting for the results.

When the beer was brewed and bottled the Service Police swooped, confiscated it and charged him. They sent one bottle to the nearby hospital to be analysed and emptied the rest.

The Subordinate Commander was hearing the charge and asked for the evidence. Then it was realised that the bottle was still at the hospital. So he rang the hospital and said, "We sent a bottle of beer over for analysis. How was it?"

The answer came back. "Bloody great. Have you any more?"

Subordinate Commander,

"Case dismissed."

STAN CURRAN

Our Dunny - Charlie sometime sits and thinks

Thirty One RAAF Squadron camp at Morotai was made homely, by the presence of a large toilet, built as a bush hut, with a roof of tree branches and leaves.

Inside was a double bank of positions, back to back on a large wooden topped construction over a long drop toilet. It was well supplied with reading matter by the padre, and served very well as a place for talking, reading, meditating, or just thinking.

At certain times, petrol was put into the hole, and a controlled burn helped to keep the place clean. On one occasion it had been prepared but not burnt through because of some interruption, when a couple of blokes, who were smoking threw their matches in, and nearly blew themselves up.

One day the whole place was burnt down, as a prank, but everybody paid for it. The "dunny" was never rebuilt on the same grand scale, and was replaced by large drums in place over the long drop, with the seats cut into the tops. As a result they were too hot to use during the day, and we had to wait till they cooled off at night.

CHARLIE KING

ROCKET OPERATION C0029

This operation was carried out on 16th November 1944 against Japanese occupied buildings at Hatoelia Timor. Six 31 Squadron Beaufighters made the attack, accompanied by one B25 to obtain full photographic record of the attack. This Rocket Projectile strike was the first time rockets had been used in this theatre of operations.

The Strike was led by S/LDR P Boyd, with Group Captain Eaton, Commanding Officer of 92 Wing in attendance. The attack was made in pairs, four runs over the target were carried out. The Rocket Projectiles were launched in pairs. Hits were scored by all duties, and rockets were seen entering the base of the building, the sides and ends and, as well, two Rocket Projectiles scored direct hits on the roof. Violent explosions followed these hits, and the target was partially hidden by flying debris and dense masses of dust and smoke.

No 1 Duty's rockets undershot on the first run, but these scored direct hits on a large building which was in line with the main target. After the fourth run had been completed and all rockets expended, a fifth and final run was made, the Beaufighters coming in low and strafing with cannon fire.

There were no casualties, one aircraft received a .5 bullet hole in the starboard exhaust manifold. All aircraft returned safely.

Researched by J Brassil.

THE DAY WE FIRED THE ROCKETS.

Rockets and the principle of rockets is very old. The Chinese had them many centuries ago, and in fact Marco Polo is credited with bringing the knowledge to the Western World from China in the 12th Century. From memory, although I wasn't at the time, the Chinese used the rockets as a fireworks display in much the same way as British children celebrated Guy Fawkes Day.

It was left to an enterprising scientist, Sir William Cosgrove to develop the war rocket back in 1805, and it was used against the French in the Napoleonic Wars, with middling success. The Soviets used them extensively on the Russian front against the Nazis. They had a particularly lethal weapon, a wheeled vehicle with about twenty rockets attached, colloquially known as Stalin's Organ. These organs did a frightful amount of damage, when fired at oncoming troops and armour.

Sometime early in World War II, someone in England hit upon the idea of fitting the Beaufighters with rockets to use against trains, naval vessels or any exposed targets. The projectile was equal to a 6" naval shell, and a salvo of eight could do an awful lot of damage to a German troop train, or torpedo boat steaming up the channel. It wasn't long before the idea caught on in the RAAF and one day in 1944, several truck loads of strange looking equipment arrived at 31 Squadron base at Coomalie Creek, NT.

As engineering officer of the Squadron, I was let into the secret, and was informed that these plates, about four feet square, were to be attached to the underside of the Beaufighter mainplane, and then rocket rails fitted to the plates. This then was the launching platform for the aerial rockets. As it was the Beaufighter was a pretty lethal weapon, what with 4x20mm Hispano cannons and a nest of machine guns, the Beau packed a rather solid wallop. Add a few decent sized bombs, and the Japs did not think too kindly of them.

Pending the arrival of instruction staff, we set about fitting these ugly looking plates to a few aircraft. They certainly made the Beau a lot less easy to fly, so we proceeded with extreme caution. The next step was to find out, if we had fitted the equipment properly, and that the rockets would actually leave the rails.

One bright morning around August, 1944, we trundled a Beau along one of the back roads, behind the servicing party area, and pointed it towards the bush. This road ran out a few yards further on, but there was a track that led up a hill and into the next valley.

I posted a few of the fellows up on the top of the hill to keep a lookout while we prepared the aircraft for firing, and when we were ready we recalled them by Aldis lamp. When they were safely back in our area, we started the engines, and with Sid Sippe at the controls, we revved up the engines until it was blowing a fair breeze over the mainplane, and making quite a lot of noise. The tailplane was anchored to a large concrete block.

It was quite a gala atmosphere around the aircraft. We had collected every available fire extinguisher which we strategically placed around the Aircraft just in case the damn things didn't leave the rails, and started a fire. The rockets, eight of them fitted with concert practice heads, weighed approximately 50 pounds each. When everything had settled down, and all the observers were in place, the pilot pressed the switch, and with a mighty swoosh the rockets took off in a cloud of smoke towards Queensland, or out that way somewhere.

We stopped the engines and examined the aircraft. No damage, so the multitude dispersed to their allocated tasks. With a few official observers we jumped into the truck, and proceeded up the hill to inspect our handiwork. About thirty or forty minutes must have elapsed from the time of firing until we set off in the truck. By this time the NT bush had settled down to its peaceful quietude. Not a leaf stirred.

From the firing site to over the next valley must have been a couple of miles, and the going was pretty rough, so the total elapsed time from firing to when we reached the top of the hill must have been sixty minutes. The concrete heads certainly did their work. They had cut down trees that would have done a Gippsland timber getter proud. There right in the middle of it all was an Army Patrol that had just arrived, and were preparing to boil the billyo. And asked would we like a cuppa.

I diplomatically made some enquires and was told the the patrol just that minute arrived and that there was a nice clear spot for lunch.

Wonder how all the trees were chopped down? Must have been that thunderstorm and lightning the night before. None of our party let on and the Army Patrol went one way, and we back tracked over the hill to Coomalie creek, offering a silent prayer up to the saints that protect us from courts martial.

Later on, we took off those ungainly launching plates, and fitted the American Zero length launchers. Suitable targets were few and far between in our area, and the boys were much happier with the conventional ballistic equipment. The natives of Morotai were welcome to our original rocket launchers. They would make great barbecue plates.

In Frank's accompanying letter, he advises that his mate Bill Lyons was in the Army Patrol. The Patrol heard aircraft noises and a lot of banging and crashing, but didn't pay a lot of attention, hence the thought of a thunder and lightning activity at the time, and anyway, those air force blokes were always doing one crazy thing or another. The army patrol had never heard of rockets, and the bits of concrete lying around must have fallen off the back of a truck. When Frank told Lyons after all these years, how close they had come to being names on a War Memorial, his opinion of the RAAF wasn't at all enhanced and said "I always knew that you blokes in the Air Force were were a bit crazy".

ENGINEERING OFFICER 31 SQUADRON
F L W STEWART.

23 Squadron Memorial Service



A Dedication Service was held at the Cleveland Cemetery, on Friday 24th March 2000, for four aircrew of the Squadron, who were, Pilots: F/Sgts George Hardyand, F/Sgt. Gordon Williams: Observers: Sgts. Stan Pledge and Allan Lord.

They lost their lives in a aerial collision over the Brisbane suburb of Cleveland, during tactical air fighting practice. No damage or casualties occurred on the ground, as a result of the collision.

A suitable Plaque had been erected, and the unveiling was carried out jointly, by Federal Member The Hon. Con Sciacca, and the Redlands Shire Mayor, Mr. Eddie Santaguliana, who jointly funded the project. The Service was conducted by RAAF Chaplain Wing Commander Paul Goodland.

A Fly Over was carried out by a restored Wirraway aircraft from the Warplanes Museum at Caboolture. The Wirraway made a number of low passes, whilst The Australian Army Band played the tune "Those magnificent men in their flying machines". Many of those who attended adjourned to the Redlands RSL Service Club for lunch.

There was a very good attendance which included, local residents, RSL, RAAFA, 23 RAAF Squadron, 23 Squadron and our Associations. I met and spoke with five residents who witnessed the collision, who said it was still clear in their memories, even after fifty eight years. President Ralph, and Stan Curran laid wreaths, and a member of each of the families was presented by a special plaque made for the occasion by Stan. There were twenty one relatives who attended, half of them coming from interstate.

The occasion was well covered by the media, and a number of large colour photos, courtesy of The Sunday Mail were posted to the families.

PETER WHITE

Guard Duty.

What did you do in World War Two Daddy,
How did you help us to win,
Was it circuits and bumps all day, Daddy,
And how to get out of a spin?

Or did you drop bombs on Berlin, Daddy
And drive Hitler far off his rocker,
Or shoot Zeros out of the sky, Daddy.
Or send Jap ships to Davey Jones Locker?

We know you're as brave as they come Daddy
And you helped win the Second World War,
So tell us how you come by those medals Daddy,
The last Anzac Day ones that you wore.

Well; I was stationed at No3 WAGS, Laddie.
For more years than I can remember,
And the patriotic fire burning inside me, Laddie
Was soon reduced to a smouldering ember.

I was issued with a rifle and bayonet, Laddie
To guard female prisoners night after night,
They were kept behind wire netting fences, Laddie,
And they made a pitiful sight,

Their bedding was handfuls of straw, Laddie
And their beds were made of old packing cases,
The scraps of food tossed over their fence, Laddie
Were fought over and devoured without traces.

Each one had a daily work assignment, Laddie
Which they strained and strained to fulfil.
For those that didn't, soon lost their heads Laddie
At the slaughter house where they were sent for the kill

So I really wasn't one of the War's heroes, Laddie
But one has to obey orders, right or wrong.
I spent years guarding the CO's hens, Laddie
Because airmen's poultry tastes were quite strong

I often refight the war in my dreams, Laddie
With fixed bayonet as I guard the chook pen,
And female voices drive me far up the wall, Laddie
Until I wake cackling just like a hen.

Poet Unknown

It's sad to grow old

My hunting days are over,
My torch is burning out,
What once was my sex appeal
Is now my water spout.
My testes are like barnacles,
All shrivelled up and dry,
The only link I have with the past
Is my Air Force Association tie.
In days of old when knights were bold,
And paper wasn't invented
They wiped their ass on a blade of grass,
And Walked away contented.

RESTORATION OF A28-8 “JESSICA” Potted History

One of 22 Aircraft ordered by the French Government. The order transferred to Britain, after the capitulation of France. The order then transferred to the Netherlands soon after entry of Japan into World War II. Completed to Dutch specifications and with Dutch Insignia, and shipped to Java (now Indonesia). Too late, so the aircraft were dumped in Melbourne in April 1942.

The aircraft were assembled and prepared for allocation to 22 RAAF Squadron, as from May 1942. A28-8 was allocated to F/O Rowell during September 1942. Another pilot flew it to Townsville as Rowell was appointed Officer Commanding 22 Squadron road convoy on squadron move to Townsville.

Rowell flew it to Wagga for engine repairs on 9th October 1942. He experienced an engine fire after lift-off on a test flight at Wagga. The Squadron moved to Wards Strip Port Moresby on 2nd December 1942, and was on operations until 12th September 1943.

Rowell retained priority for command of A28-8, however Newton VC, Hampshire DSO DFC, Learmonth DFC & Bar, Craig DFC, Wines DFC, and others carried out operations with her.

The primary crew were Harry Rowell, David Duncan, and Doug Lyons, until David Duncan was injured when the aircraft was caught in searchlights during a night bombing mission on Lae, on 24th May 1943. SGT. A Taylor was killed instantly on this mission when he was temporary stand in for Doug Lyons.

The aircraft suffered damage, including frayed elevator controls. Harry Jameson was the new crew member.

The Squadron was transferred to Vivigani Strip on Goodenough Island in July 1943. A28-8 was attacked by three Japanese fighters on 7th September 1943, and

the crew claimed possible damage to one of them.

On 12th September 1943, she was one of four Bostons to attack, airfield installations at Gasmats, New Britain. When two of them were shot down, their crews are buried in Rabaul. A28-8 sustained damage to cockpit etc, by intense low level ground fire.

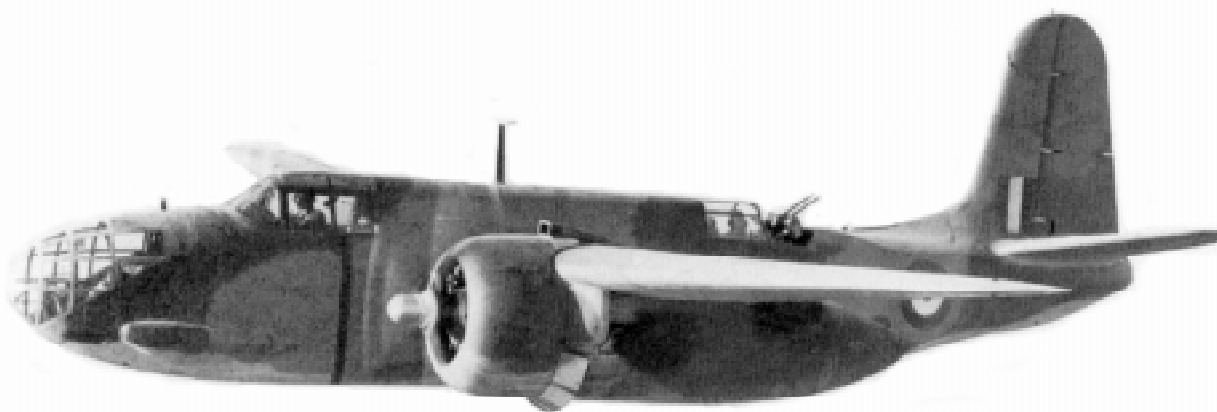
When “Gear down” was selected on return to Goodenough, damage to all hydraulics became apparent. The port main wheel, locked down, but the starboard main and the nosewheel went only half way. Severe manoeuvring did not change anything. On landing, touched down on port main, then slowed, and selected “wheels up”. She skidded to a stop on the belly, but not before the fuselage was broken through on the starboard side.

A28-8 remained in situ on Goodenough Island until 1987.

The aircraft was recovered and retuned to Sydney aboard HMAS “Tobruk”, and then spent some time, in the open at Richmond Air Base. Some work was done after transfer to Wagga. Later the restoration was made a major project for 23 RAAF Squadron Amberley Queensland.

A28-8’s role was Dive Bombing and strafing and mainly Army close support. The crew were initially, Pilot, Navigator-Bomb aimer, in the nose compartment. Before service in PNG this crew position was taken over by 4 x .5 Browning machine guns, added to the 2 x 2 x .303 Browning machine guns (both sides of the nose section), 1500 x 200 tonne load. Upper gunner 1 x 2 .303 Brownings on a scarf ring. The lower gunner 1 x .303 GO gun.

The incidents detailed in this potted history were those in which I was involved directly. As stated other crews operated her on occasions, but I am unaware of any other unserviceability due to enemy action. Harold Rowell



STAN'S PAGE MEKONG

One of the World's great rivers is the Mekong (may-kawng) it rises in the T'ang-ku-la Range in Eastern Tibet then flows southwards for about 4,180 km emptying in the South China Sea. In its middle course it forms the border between Laos and Burma and between Laos and Thailand.

Ubon where 79 RAAF Squadron was stationed from 1961-69 was in Thailand close to the Laos border and the Mekong river.

"Mekong" is also the name of Thai distilled whisky. There are several distilleries around Thailand. The whisky is distilled one day and the next day is on the retail shelves for sale. It is a potent drop, tastes awful and needs plenty of respect. While drinking Mekong it seems to have little affect but be wary, it has a delayed action and may impair your judgement, slur your speech and cause you to be a little unstable.

I'm not sure how many tours to Ubon I did - three or four. I was in the first contingent to arrive there. By way of welcome the local distillery gave the Officer's and Sergeant's messes about half a dozen cases of Mekong each.

Initially the Mekong was included in the bar stock and sold reasonably cheap but after we tasted it sales just stopped, so an open bottle was put on the bar for anyone to help themselves. The only way to drink it was to mix it with coca-cola to take the taste away; even then the bottle on the bar lasted some time.

One Saturday night it was quite in camp so a mate "Bodgie" Morris and I decided to go into the town of Ubon to have a look around.

The town was about a mile from camp. Outside the camp gate were always "Sam Laws" for hire. These are tricycles with a rider in front and a seat for two at the back. As the seat was built for Asians we always hired one each so that we had plenty of room and it was easy for the rider. They were very cheap.

Some of the shops were interesting; one was owned by a fellow who sold and exported animals. He kept some of the smaller ones in his shop.

One Xmas he was invited to the Officers Mess party and he brought a baby elephant with him. I don't know what happened to its mother. It had been hand reared and loved people. Of course everyone made a fuss of him and gave him cakes etc; I think he enjoyed the party most of all. The owner got "Sloshed" and when he went home he forgot his elephant. I recall the entry in the Orderly Officers logbook next morning. "REMOVED ELEPHANT FROM OFFICERS MESS".



We soon had enough of window-shopping and went in to a bar for a drink or two. The only thing to drink was mekong and coke.

It was still early so we decided to walk back to camp. About half way back we were passing a rather large house. There was a "Rip snorting party" going on. Singing and dancing some were on the front verandah and saw us, they came out and although we couldn't understand what they were saying it was obvious they were inviting us in. In fact they were not going to take a refusal. They took us by the arm and ushered us in. They were passing around all sorts of Thai food we had walked into a cornucopia. To drink we stuck with mekong and coke.

After awhile the noise seemed to abate. We noticed that a queue had formed and was going through a door to the next room. Our hosts insisted that we join the queue. We were wondering what was going on. If I had known what was in store for us I think I would have found some reason to stay out of the queue.

When we reached the doorway, I could see the head of the queue and there was a small table there with a washbasin and a glass jug of water on it a lady was standing by with small hand towels. What was going on? As we moved further I could see a man lying on a bed. Then I could see as each person reached the head of the queue, they would pick up the man's left hand off his chest with their right hand put it in their left hand over the basin and pour some water from the jug over both hands. Then put his hand back on his chest and dry their hand on the small towel that the lady gave them. It was then that I realised that the man was dead. We were at a wake!!! I was at the point of no return I couldn't leave the queue now it may cause serious offence, I would have to continue and perform the ritual. Both "Bodgie" and I performed with due solemnity, however, we were pleased to get back to the other room we needed more mekong and coke, As soon as we deemed it prudent we left the "Wake" observing the usual Thai custom when greeting or farewelling another person by putting our hands together in the prayer position making a slight bow at the same time uttering the Thai words that sound like "Swah-di-kup".

I slept sound that night to wake next morning with a Mekong hangover. Did that really happen?

STAN CURRAN

STARLIGHT

The CO and a Sergeant, found themselves sharing accommodation whilst on exercise. As they bedded down for the night, the Sergeant said: "Sir, look up into the sky and tell me what you see." The CO said "I see a million stars." The sergeant asks, "And what does that tell you, Sir?" The CO, "It tells me that there are millions of Galaxies and billions of Planets. It also tells me that God is great and that we are small and insignificant, and further tells me that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you Sergeant?" "Well sir, it tells me that somebody has stolen our bloody tent.

The Bridge at Maastricht

This is the story of a very gallant attack by five Fairey Battles, in the early stages of the Normanby landings. It is one that will be remembered "till story and song and glory and all things sleep." This is the simple but intensely dramatic account given by the Air Ministry itself.

All the bridges over the Meuse river near Maastricht, where the Germans were making their thrust to divide the Allied forces, had been blown up, except one. Over this bridge poured tanks and armoured units of the enemy advance. Stores, petrol, ammunition—everything came over that one bridge. It was heavily defended. A.A. guns kept up a barrage of fire, enemy fighters maintained constant patrols. Eight attacks were made by our bombers. The river banks were shattered by high explosives; fighters were shot down in flames; A.A. batteries bombed out of action. No direct hit was scored on the bridge. Still the enemy advances poured over the one crossing.

At R.A.A.F. Squadron Headquarters the Commanding Officer made a short speech to his pilots. The bridge must be destroyed. Volunteers were wanted. All the pilots stepped forward as one man. So they wrote their names on a slip of paper and put them in a hat. Five crews were chosen. They took off without waiting. Fighters went up as an escort and they made straight for the bridge at Maastricht. Our fighters took on the enemy's fighter guard, welcoming all odds to give the bombers their chance. Facing a blizzard of enemy fire the bombers dived low on their target.

Of the five crews, only one man came back. But the bridge at Maastricht was blown up.

Actually there were two bridges to be destroyed, and they were over the Albert Canal. Not the Meuse River. Pilot, Flying Officer D.E. Garland and Observer, Sergeant T. Gray, the crew of the Fairey Battle which led the formation, were both awarded the Victoria Cross, posthumously, for their gallantry in this forelorn hope

From "The Sky's The Limit" By J.M.Spaight.

I AM WHAT I AM.

Just a note to say I'm living.

That I'm not alone or dead.

Though I'm getting more forgetful
and mixed up in the head.

Sometimes I don't remember,
when I stand at the foot of the stairs,

If I must get up for something
or have I just come from there.

Before the fridge so often
my head is filled with doubt
Have I just put the food away
or have I come to take some out.

And there are times when it's dark
with my nightcap on my head
I don't know if I'm retiring
or just getting out of bed.

So, if it's my turn to write you.
There's no need getting sore
I may think I've already written
and don't want to be a bore.
So remember I'm thinking of you
and wish that you were here
And as it's nearly mail time
I must say "Goodbye Dear".

But as I stand beside the mail box
with my face so very red
Instead of mailing this letter
I've opened it instead.

I've grown accustomed to my dentures
To my deafness I'm resigned.

I can cope with the bifocals
But gosh I miss my mind.

Poet Unknown

HOMO ROOSTERS.

The Old Rooster was getting on in years
And in the pen he was in the minority,
And as often happens in the animal kingdom
Younger males kept challenging his authority.

To the latest challenger, the Old Rooster said,
"There's no need to fight over each hen,
Let's you and I race down to the back fence,
And the Winner will be the king of the pen."

The Old Rooster continued, "I'm a slow old bird,
And you are as fast as a deer,
You could give me a good yard's start,
I'm sure, And win by a mile, have no fear."

The Young Rooster agreed, so away they sped,
With the Old Rooster running hard,
The Young Rooster was a bit slow off the mark
And he was trailing the old bird by a yard.

Then a shot rang out from the farmhouse steps.
The Young Rooster fell with hardly a squeak.
And the farmer's son yelled, "Gee Dad,
that's the third poofster rooster I've shot this week."

The Old Rooster, having proved something he knew
Immediately stopped his running,
From long experience, he knew that youth and
enthusiasm
Are no match for old age and cunning.