

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

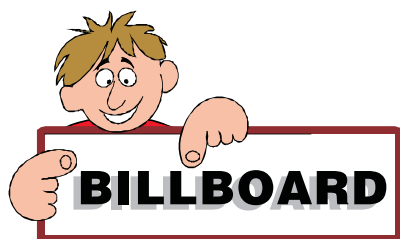
JUNE 2001

ANZAC DAY PARADE 2001



A good shot of all our marchers, which includes the jeep with
Charlie King, Ron Snell and Ron Collins





ANZAC DAY PARADE 2001



Some of our marchers, together with 19 Flt AIRTC Colour Party, who made it for the full distance.

The day was a fine warm and sunny day, with hardly a cloud in the sky. Stan Curran and I set up the Beaufighter banner in the designated spot in the parade for our Association. This task has been made very easy, by Stan's clever modifications to the banner frame, it is also easier to store. Two cadets from number 19 Flight AIRTC, carried the banner this year, and did a very good job, for which Vice Pres. Bill wrote their Flight Commander commending them.

Unfortunately our Patron Ray Smith was ill in hospital and was unable to lead the Air Force section of the parade as he usually does. Vice Pres. Bill led our Association again this year, and seems to be getting pretty familiar with the task. Thank you Bill.

We had the biggest number of marchers this year that we have ever had, and we were supported by family members, like the two grandsons of Geoff Rose, who marched with him. We also had some members who, unable to march were driven in a military vehicle. The vehicle was unfortunately fed into the parade in front of our banner, instead of at the rear of our marchers.

It was good to see Ron Snell from Townsville and Jim Hamilton from Mackay in our group. Bill Atkinson made it from Deception Bay Charlie King rode in the vehicle whilst his wife Bet, marched with her unit Association. Brisbane people turned out in record numbers once again, and it was good to be part of the parade.



SICK PARADE

Patron Ray was unable to lead the RAAF section of the Anzac Day Parade as he was hospitalized. He is making progress now. Judith does not keep the best of health. We wish you both the best.

Frank Beadle one of our few 93 Squadron members has had a knee replacement as is going along pretty well.

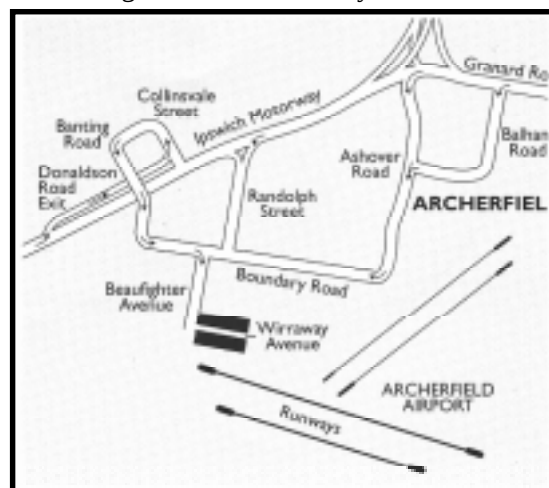
Austin Donnelly is making progress after suffering a serious stroke. Sent his apologies for his inability to make to the Anzac Parade.

HARTS FLYING FIGHTER COLLECTION ARCHERFIELD

A combined visit with Logan RAAFA, to the above collection, has been arranged for Saturday the 7th July 2001. The programme is as follows: Timed for 1000 hours. Members to arrange own transport, should you want a lift contact Hon Sec Peter. Conducted tour of museum containing some 15 WW2 fighters restored to flying condition. President Ralph will present Managing Director Nigel Amott with the 22 Squadron framed print. President Eric Cavanagh of Logan RAAFA will present a RAAFA Plaque - A lunch barbecue to follow at 19 Flight AIRTC meeting place. Cost \$10 (Pay on the day.) Cadets from this unit will also attend the visit in uniform.

This is a marvelous collection of warplanes and has just been recently opened to the public. Some 10,000 people attended the first day a few weeks ago. The location is on the South Western boundary of Archerfield aerodrome. Take Granard road from Beaudesert road and turn left at the lights at Ashover Road (the last road on the right before the Ipswich Highway). Follow the 'drome boundary to Beaufighter Avenue. (See map).

Please ring Hon Sec to advise your attendance.



Rain & Rainmakers

Stan Curran's story about the rainmakers took me back to '43. I was doing a refresher course on Wirraways at CFS Tamworth.

One day I was out doing a bit of flying with a bloke named Roy Little as safety pilot in the back seat. Through the old speaking tube came a request to hold it steady for a bit. I did for what seemed a long time, and then I turned to see what was going on. Roy was standing on the back seat with his harness off, and was watering the clouds. I suddenly found a very steady hand, and my interest in flying right.

When we had that downpour recently in Brisbane recently I was taken back again to '44 and '45. At Evans Head AOS in September '44 we were doing a night cross country on Ansons, and a full flight took off for Inglewood-Lowood-Ballina and home. A storm was blowing up and I flew out to sea to try to climb above it, and the mountains. We got around OK, but I didn't see any turning points. It was a wild ride in an old Anson and we weren't game to try to go back. One pilot got home early and he claimed to have turned over in the storm, and just pulled the stick back and dived out of it. We didn't believe him, but next morning the ground staff reported that his wing was about to fall off.

The 1945 storm was from Williamstown OTU on 22nd February. We had waited a week for nightly storms to finish. So this night they said we had to go - so off we went, all 22 of us. Allan Miller has told you his reason, and no matter what anybody says it was the worst storm I've seen. The rain and lightning was non stop, and the powerful engines of the Beau could not keep us on an even keel, and height.

First turn was Tamworth and I recognized the lit up swimming pool and knew we were right, but we turned on ETA for Narromine and returned to Base where we found the storm had gone and the winds changed. We were forty miles up the coast but were still one of the first home. On the tarmac we heard one plane go over with no lights and flew straight out to sea. He came back on reciprocal about twenty minutes later. My nav and his maps were almost as wet as if he had been outside.

A hell of a night!

CHARLIE KING

COMMITTEE

Patron		
President	Raymond Smith	3263 1274
V. President	Ralph Ind	5538 5439
Secretary	William O'Connor	3286 1067
Committee	Peter White	3287 5488
	Stan Curran	3388 6053
	Jack Chamberlain	3848 2184
	Les Turnbull	5537 7965

From Jack's Log Book

On 16th February 1945, Australian built Beaufighter, A8-139, was tasked for delivery to Morotai.

The aircraft left Laverton on 16th February 1945, but on the way down the strip it lost power in the starboard engine. This problem was solved and the aircraft and crew eventually departed at 11330 hours for Oakey. Further engine trouble was experienced at Oakey, delaying the departure until 1340 hours on 18th February 1945. We Made Garbutt, at 1640 hours and on landing the engine coughed and we ran off the strip. Departure from Garbutt was made at 1340 hours on 19th February 1945, arriving at Higgins Field three hours later.

The weather over Papua New Guinea delayed our departure until 0645 on 21st February 1945. Halfway down the strip, the starboard engine coughed again, lost power, and we did a 90 degree turn to starboard. The pilot pushed the throttle through the gate, took off some tree tops and the next view was the duty pilot's tower. The duty pilot was last seen half-way down a rope which was attached to the tower. The aircraft's undercarriage removed the anemometer and the windsock as the pilot tried to gain height. After about 15 minutes, the pilot approached the tower, requesting a shaken duty pilot if he could observe any damage to the

undercarriage. He replied he could not see any damage, and the undercarriage was retracted. Those of you who have staged through Higgins Field may remember how close those tall trees are to the edge of the strip. Squadron Leader Jack Sandford DSO DFC, in his forward to Neville Parnell's Whispering Depth said, "if there was nothing in the way a Beaufighter would always get off, even if at right angles to the strip." This has been proved to be correct.

We flew on to Hollandia, and landing and taxiing along the strip, the port undercarriage collapsed, the aircraft moved sideways and slid along and crashed into a very large drainage ditch.

After such a wasteful and eventful trip. The aircraft was converted to components on 7th March 1945.

The crew was:- Flt Lt Swaffield and W/O J Brassil.



Borneo Reflections Tour 2001

This tour was organised by Dr. Kevin Smith, author of the book "Borneo Australia's Proud but Tragic Heritage". Dr. Smith had travelled to Borneo on 5 previous occasions, and had met people throughout North Borneo who were either involved in the Sandakan tragedy and Death Marches or had personal knowledge of what happened in North Borneo to Australian Prisoners of War in North Borneo during World War 2. The Australian Travel Agent who organised the itinerary was Graham Wyles of New

England Travel Centre, of Armidale. The Borneo travel section of the tour was organised by Willi Teo, principal of Destination Borneo Sdn.Bhd. of Labuan.

The tour commenced in Sydney on the 20th of March 2001, with a Malaysian Air Lines flight to Kuala Lumpur via Melbourne, then to Kota Kinabalu and on to Sandakan where we arrived on the afternoon of the 21 st. and were booked into the Sandakan Hotel.

At Sandakan, we visited the Sandakan Prisoner of War Memorial Park and wreaths were laid at the Sandakan War Memorial. We went by fast motor boat to Berhalia Island in Sandakan Harbour, where both British and Australian prisoner of war had been held. We were then given a Civic Reception and morning tea at the Sandakan Council Chambers, and welcomed to Borneo by the Council President Datuk Adeline Leong. That afternoon we visited the OranUtan Rehabilitation Centre, and were invited to have afternoon tea at the Sepilok Jungle Resort which is owned by the Sandakan Tourist Minister Datuk Abdul Sheik Fadzir. On the 24th of March we travelled by coach to Ranau, following for the majority of the way the track taken by the Death Marches. On the way we paid homage at a spot where it is known one of our soldiers died, by sprinkling gum leaves brought by Dr. Smith from Australia for this purpose.

We visited the site of the Ranau Prisoner of War camp and laid wreaths on Private Cleary's grave. We were then booked into the Perkasa Hotel at Kundasang which is built on a mountain below Kota

Kinabalu, the highest mountain in SE Asia, being 4101 meters (13,455 feet) in height. The next morning we visited Amin Adihil's home at Ranau, and with the permission of his son accompanied him and his family to Amin's grave where we placed a wreath. Being a Sunday we visited the Ranau Sunday markets, and then went on to the Poring Hot Springs and the Kinabalu National Park, where we had lunch.

Hotel. On the morning of the 27th we had a bus tour of the city. In the afternoon nine of the tour took a separate bus trip to Papas and Beaufort, where we visited the grave of Private L..Starceovich VC.

On the 29th of March we travelled by ferry to Labuan Island and booked into the Waterfront Hotel.

The afternoon was taken up by a tour of the island. On the next day we visited the Labuan War Memorial Cemetery, where all Australians Servicemen who died in Borneo are buried or remembered on panels. Wreaths were laid at the memorial and on the graves of relatives of tour members. We then proceeded to the Surrender Point Memorial, and in the afternoon an extensive cruise of the Menumbok River. That night we were guests at a barbecue at Willie Teo's private home.

On the 31st of March we flew by Malaysian Air Lines to Kuching, capital of Sarawak.

On the 1st of April a separate tour was arranged to points of interest including the Sunday markets and the Cat Museum.

On the 2nd we visited and paid our respects at the Batu Lintang Prisoner of War Camp where Australian Officers were held prisoner and Captain Mathews was murdered by the Japanese.

We also visited the Heroes' memorial, paying tribute to those who died during the Chinese uprising.

Of the 17 men and women who took the tour, two were Royal Australian Air Force ex Servicemen and one was an AIF ex Serviceman. The other members had lost husbands, fathers, brothers, and uncles in Tarakan, Balikpapan, Labuan and North Borneo during World War 2.

ALLAN MILLER



Three ex servicemen who served in Borneo during WW2 John Loveband, RAAF, Allan Miller, RAAF, Pat Kelly, AIF, and Peter Allen who served in Vietnam place wreaths at the Sandakan War Memorial.

From George's Diary.

The Battle of the Bismark Sea.

Artist: Jeff Isaacs

From *The Battle of the Bismark Sea*
Australian Defence Force Journal



General MacArthur described it as “the decisive aerial engagement of the war” in the South West Pacific, historian McAuley says it was one of World War II’s “great historical moments” - a land battle fought at sea and won from the air. Yet the Battle of the Bismark Sea, fought more than fifty years ago, remains Australia’s forgotten victory.

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

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

My diary entry for February 28th, 1943, reads - “A slice of practise today, in the form of a coordinated attack with one formation of B17’s, and 3 formations

of B25s, and very interesting it was too. The two pairs of Beaus consisted of Little, No2 to him Bob Bennet and Bob Brazenor with myself as No 2 to him. We took off, formed up and choofed down to Hood Point, where the five formations positioned themselves and set course for the Port Moresby wreck. The B17’s went in first, bombing from 8000 feet and damned good bombing, then the B25’s were next, right after the B17s, but from 5000 feet. We then dived in a strafing attack right after the bombs, so bloody much “right behind” them in fact that the bombs were bursting around the wreck as we were diving which wasn’t exactly the most comfortable feeling in the world. However we gave it a good squirt, peeling off a few rusted plates. We then wheeled around so that we could see the B25 effort. The strafing formation which consisted of 4 B25 C1s, a plane fitted with long range tanks and eight .5s fixed in the nose to be used as a front gun strafier, dived in and played buggery with the wreck, but it was only a second class of buggery compared with the formation of which followed them in and skip bombed the wreck. One bomb hit the wreck amidships, sending skywards a column of rusty smoke. After the show we returned and landed.

On March 2nd 1943 :- “Pandemonium”. Yesterday afternoon a Jap convoy consisting of 7 transports, 4 destroyers and 3 cruisers with about 40 Zekes as top cover was sighted on the North Coast of New Britain heading this way evidently – Wewak, Madang or possibly Lae This morning the whole Squadron was briefed to do a coordinated attack beginning as soon as the convoy came within safe range. The attack was to be the largest air attack ever attempted in this area. About 70 aircraft would take part. The Beaus were to lead about a dozen B25’s (skip bombing) in, at mast top height as an ack ack diversion and to knock out as many guns and personnel on the warships escorts as possible and then strafe any transport which came into their sights. However the weather closed in and we had to return to Moresby.

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

I do remember a gradual build up of excitement. Although our Squadron had flown numerous strike missions, it had rarely seen a Japanese below the green carpet of trees. This time however the target would be clearly visible. I do remember the ground staff all gathering around to wave us off on March 3rd 1943 when we took off on the coordinated air attack on the Jap convoy, because it might have been expected that a lot of us would get the chop, although you didn’t adopt

Continued on page 10

DEFENCE OF AUSTRALIA BY THE RAAF IN WWII

Researched by Ron Newitt



At the opening of the war in the Pacific (7/12/1941) the R.A.A.F. had two Hudson squadrons (No.1 & No.8) and No.21 Brewster Buffalo squadron in Malaya. No.2 squadron with Hudson's and No.12 Wirraway squadron was based at Darwin. A handful of Hudson's of No.13 squadron were at Ambon. No.20 squadron equipped with modern American PBY Catalinas and a few Empire Flying Boats from No.11, squadrons were based at Port Moresby. No.24 squadron was based at Rabaul, with a small force of 4 Hudson's and 8 Wirraways the flight line facilities were so primitive that the aircraft had to be refueled using a native bucket line from 44-gallon drums. Throughout the disastrous Malayan campaign, the over-worked Hudson's and Buffaloes fought a losing battle, proving no match for the faster, more maneuverable Jap fighters. The R.A.A.F. was forced back to Singapore and then had to be evacuated. Again the Hudson's were called into service. They carried out long, unescorted daylight reconnaissance's, protected convoys of Australian troops, bombed, strafed, rescued hundreds and brought them safely to Darwin. The records of No.2 and 13 Squadrons operating from north-western Australia, is one of undying labour and courage. The Japanese attacked Rabaul on the 4 January. On the 15 January the Catalinas replied with an attack on the Truk Islands, five days later the Japanese made their first large-scale air attack on Rabaul. Eight Wirraways took off to intercept over 100 enemy aircraft. Three of the Wirraways were shot down, two others crashed landed and another was damaged beyond repair but they accounted for five superior Japanese aircraft (bombers). This reduced the air defense of Rabaul to two Wirraways and one Hudson, all within seven minutes, the other three Hudson's of No.24 Squadron had been damaged during the early attack's by the Japanese.

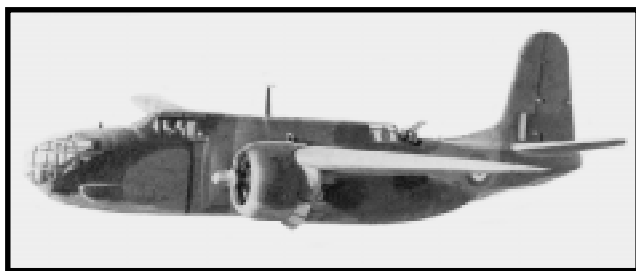
Squadron evacuation was commenced with the surviving aircraft flying out casualties and the remainder

of the Squadron personnel moving overland to be evacuated by two Empire flying boats to Port Moresby. Some of the No.24 squadron personnel and aircraft evacuated from Rabaul were formed into a composite squadron comprising members of No.23 squadron Port Moresby detachment, with 3 Hudson aircraft and crews, 17 Officers and 94-airman under the Command of Wing Commander John Lerew. On the 12 of February Lerew was shot down while leading a low-level attack by three Hudson's on shipping at Gasmata. Later in the month Squadron Leader Deryck Kingwell flew in another No.23 Squadron Hudson and crew also 4 Hudson's and crews from No.6 squadron arrived to be formed into No.32 squadron on the 23 February 1942, with Squadron Leader Kingwell as the C.O. Often overlooked by writers of Aviation History, after the demise of No.24 squadron all that stood between the Japanese and Australia, was the Catalinas of No.11 & 20 squadron and the eight Hudson's of No.32 squadron based in Port Moresby. Port Moresby had the only airfield from which the Allied air power could deploy from this was a vital but vulnerable airfield for the defense of New Guinea and Australia.

No.32 squadron function was to reconnoiter the build up of Japanese Forces and to attack the enemy when and wherever they could and to defend Port Moresby. This they did with great vigor, becoming "Moresby Few" holding the forward push of the Japanese up until the arrival of No.75 Squadron (March 1942). By early March, the Japanese had control of New Britain, and had occupied Salamaua and Lae on the Northeast coast of New Guinea. On March 21, No.75 Squadron with Kittyhawks arrived in Moresby, under Squadron Leader John Jackson. For a little over six weeks, (44 days) this small force of twenty five Kittyhawks held the Japanese Naval and Army Air Forces at bay not only did they defend Port Moresby they took the fight to the Japanese, they accounted for more than forty aircraft destroyed and a further sixty damaged. Only one Kittyhawk of the original twenty-five survived.

Note. Japanese Aircraft based at Rabaul were Army: Fourth Air Army. 6-7th Air Division, Navy: XI Air Fleet, made up of the 25-26th Air Flotilla. Around 400 aircraft in total. After the Coral Sea Battle, in which the Japanese lost a large naval force (the turning point in the Pacific war) they attacked Milne Bay. (25 August 1942) Reformed and re-equipped No.75 Squadron with No.76 Squadron moved to Milne Bay to protect Port Moresby's flank and to act as a springboard for actions against the Japanese in Northern New Guinea and New Britain. They stood in the Japanese path once again. In three never to be forgotten days of fury, the Kittyhawks and the Australian army ground troops smashed the Japanese land forces at Milne Bay. The successful defense of Milne Bay was a unique victory, with air force personnel sharing the same hardships as their army

counterparts, in fact groundcrew members of both No.75/76 Squadron had to take up arms to defend "Gurney" strip.



During October 1942, two R.A.A.F. attack squadrons arrived in New Guinea. They were No.22 squadron with Boston aircraft and No. 30 Beaufighter Squadron. The A.I.F. was pushing its way through the Kokoda Pass towards Buna, and the R.A.A.F. squadrons, operating as part of the U.S. 5th Air Force, gave them full support - bombing and strafing, supply dropping and flying out wounded. Before the end of the year the Japanese had lost Buna and Gona and were being pushed back along the coast towards Lae and Salamaua. On March 1, 1943, a Japanese convoy was sighted in the Bismarck Archipelago. A R.A.A.F. Catalina played an important part in the shadowing of the convoy. When it turned into Vitiaz Strait on the 3 of March, aircraft of the R.A.A.F. and U.S. took part in an attack. Beaufighters, Bostons and Beauforts leading in low-level attacks on ack-ack batteries and the convoy while the U.S. Mitchells, Fortresses and A20s bombed the convoy from high level. The convoy was entirely sunk. The R.A.A.F. grew in strength and stature, assembling two squadrons at Milne Bay, one Beaufort and one Hudson. The Beaufighters and Bostons were moved to Goodenough Island in the D'Entrecasteaux group, along with a squadron of Kittyhawks. A spitfire and a Kittyhawk squadron were moved to and based on Kiriwina Island. From these bases, the R.A.A.F. took control of the sea-lanes south of the Solomons and along the coast of New Britain. Towards the end of 1943, the Beaufighters and Bostons moved on to Kiriwina, and the two bomber squadrons (now Beaufort) were brought to Goodenough Island, supported by a third Beaufort squadron. (Torpedo Bomber).



On October 12, the Beauforts made their first night raid on Rabaul. On November 8, Beaufort torpedo bombers attacked shipping in Simpson's Harbour, while

Beauforts made many such night raids over Vunakana and Lakunai airstrips at Rabaul. Meanwhile, Beaufighters, Bostons, Kittyhawks and Spitfires were flying daylight actions against Japanese supply dumps, staging bases and transport areas on New Britain in preparation for the Allied assault on New Britain. U.S. troops made the Arrow landing on December 15 and the Cape Gloucester landing on December 26. No.10 (Operational) Group established itself at Nadzab and operated from Newton airstrip, built by R.A.A.F. works wing. Vultee Vengeance dive-bombers and Kittyhawks began operating from Nadzab on January 13. The R.A.A.F. squadrons based on Kiriwina and Goodenough kept up a steady programme of telling strikes on Japanese positions and lines of communication. Early in March the U.S. troops landed on the Admiralty Islands. Ground staff of No.77 squadron were landed on the beach during a Japanese counter-attack and were forced to take defensive positions and act as ground troops. One of the first Australians ashore asked a near-by American where the front line was. The G.I. replied: "Boy, you're right in it." On April 22 the R.A.A.F. No.62 works wing with Wing Commander Dale as the O.C. of No.6 & 7 construction squadrons (who had also built Newton airfield at Nadzab) and an advanced party of No.10 (Operational) Group, which was now operating as the First Tactical Air Force, landed with U.S. infantry at Aitape. The Americans were simultaneously landing at Hollandia. Two days later, the airstrip was serviceable and R.A.A.F. Kittyhawks of 78 Wing flew from Cape Gloucester. A flight of No.78 squadron Kittyhawks took off five minutes after landing and refueling to patrol over Hollandia.

No.9 Operational Group comprising No.22 Boston No.30 Beaufighters and a Beaufort squadrons moved to Nadzab, concurrently with the withdrawal of No.10 Group the three Vultee Vengeance squadrons. (No.21, 23,24.) from Nadzab. The No.9 Group aircraft were used to strikes on Wewak, But and Dagua in daily raids. During May, the Americans further extended their hold on New Guinea with hard fought landings on Wakde and Biak Islands. The Kittyhawks of 78 Wing were used as top cover and for strafing positions. At Sarmi No. 80 Kittyhawk squadron was called in to dive-bomb the Japanese during a strong counter-attack. After the operation the U.S. commander sent a message that the counter-attack had been broken thanks largely to the efforts of the R.A.A.F. Over Biak the Kittyhawks of No.78 squadron (4 Flights of Four) encountered a dozen Japanese aircraft. In a short dogfight they shot down 7 Oscars and 2 Kates, damaged 1 Oscar and 1 Kate. For the loss of 1 Kittyhawk flown by Flight Sergeant "Happy Harden." On July 2, Noemfoor Island was occupied, and once again advanced works wing units of the First T.A.F. made the landing on D-day. They repaired the Kamiri airstrip and the first R.A.A.F. planes landed on July 10. The Beauforts had, by this, arrived at Aitape and were busy smashing a threatening Japanese

counter-attack from the direction of Wewak. In constant attacks, the Australian built Beauforts and Beaufighters cleared the way for the A.I.F. landing at Wewak. R.A.A.F. airfield construction squadrons did good work throughout these landings, going on with the Americans to Morotai, in the Halmaheras. The Americans thought so much of these squadrons they had a R.A.A.F. construction unit with them when they landed in Mindanao in the Philippines. First T.A.F. with its Beaufighters, Bostons, Kittyhawks and Spitfires, settled on to Morotai Island, and from there, neutralized a huge area including the Celebes, Borneo, and as far as the southern Philippines. Throughout the whole campaign, R.A.A.F. Catalinas of No.11, 20, and 40 squadrons operated on vital missions, reaching as far as the China coast to mine sea channels. No word of praise can be too high for the Catalina squadrons. They reached out to enemy harbours, on searching, mining and bombing missions. No Japanese base in the S.W.P.A. was out of their reach. From Darwin, an almost separate war had been waged. The R.A.A.F. used Hudson's during the early stages, against the Japanese Navy 23rd Air Flotilla of the XI Air Fleet based in Timor. Then Beaufighters, Kittyhawks, Beauforts, Spitfires, Mitchell's, Ventures and towards the end of the war Liberators. They helped to prevent the downward thrust from Timor that the Japanese had planned. They repeatedly bombed Ambon, and Japanese bases in Timor, including Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies. The long-range work carried out by the Catalinas in the early part of the war and later by the Liberators & Catalinas ended the Japanese air war in this area. Spitfires did an excellent job of protecting Darwin from Japanese bombers, after their arrival. Australian built Mosquitos of the R.A.A.F. photo reconnaissance unit carried out a dangerous job with outstanding success, photographing the enemy's positions as far away as the Philippines. In Bougainville, Boomerangs and Wirraways were used in army co-operation work, with R.N.Z.A.F. Corsairs. Working with the Australian ground forces, they flew hundreds of sorties as the eyes of the army. The battle hardy Australian divisions landed in Borneo in April 1945, after Tarakan had been pounded consistently for weeks beforehand by U.S. and Australian Liberators, they bombed strategic points, prior to the landings at Labuan and Balikpapan and Kittyhawks, Spitfires and rocket firing Beaufighters covered the landings troops, strafing and wrecking enemy transport and communications lines. An intensive pre-invasion bombing by R.A.A.F. Liberators, at Balikpapan paved the way for a good beach landing by the A.I.F. At the close of the war, wherever Australian troops were operating, the R.A.A.F. was working with them.

The R.A.A.F. was the 5th largest airforce in the world at the end of the war with over 50% of its aircraft being built in Australia.

PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

By Stan Curran

*Continued From
April Edition*



ACROSS THE PACIFIC

In America the search was on for a suitable aircraft they found that the Australian explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins had two Fokker aircraft ideal for Smithy's plans. Wilkins offered him one for 3,000 pounds, it exhausted all their capital.

They were getting heavily in debt. Anderson left and returned to Australia. When it seemed that they were in a hopeless situation in debt to 8,000 pound a huge amount for that time. They were introduced to a wealthy American shipping magnate Captain G. Allan Hancock who was interested in their proposed flight. Hancock invited them to go on a two weeks cruise on his yacht the Oaxaca. The good fairy was looking after Smithy, Hancock offered to buy the Southern Cross from Smithy for 8,000 pound enough to pay their debts then an offer of additional finance for the flight the only condition was a film should be made of the flight. Unbelievable luck especially as when they returned from the cruise they found that the Southern Cross had been seized to pay their debts.

The Southern Cross was fitted with long range fuel tanks, and they gained the service of additional crew an experienced sea going navigator Harry Lyon and a first class radio operator James Werner.

Their next big problem was noise they found the only way they could communicate was by writing notes.

Both Smithy and Ulm had been studying navigation and Smithy had spent many hours instrument flying.

The aircraft was carrying a huge amount of fuel and was grossly overweight, after a very long take off run they became airborne and slowly climbed out over San Francisco harbour.

The flight was planned for three hops, touch down at Honolulu and Suva then Brisbane.

Smithy and Ulm shared the flying with Smithy doing the blind flying. In the open cockpit they were most uncomfortable, cold and at times soaked with rain, in the cabin Lyon and Walker were much better off.

After twenty-seven and a half-hours in the air the Southern Cross touched down at Honolulu they had travelled 3,381 kilometres.

The leg to Suva was the longest, again very much overweight it took a long take off run to become airborne.

To climb to 300 feet it took six minutes. Overladen and in rough weather the aircraft was hard to handle it took thirty five hours to fly the 5,265 kilometres. From Suva they had the shortest leg of 3,000 kilometres. They crossed the Australian coast at Balina and landed at Brisbane. It had taken twenty and a half hours.

From Brisbane they flew to Sydney and were welcomed by an estimated crowd of 300,000.

Captain Hancock presented Smithy with an unconditional gift of the Southern Cross. Smithy was appointed an honorary Squadron Leader and Ulm an honorary Flight Lieutenant both were awarded The Air Force Cross. The government presented them with a cheque for five thousand pounds.

Ulm's newspaper contacts paid off. The Sydney Sun and The Melbourne Herald launched an appeal which raised about twenty thousand pounds.

Hitchcock and Anderson thought they should have shared in the flight and some of the spoils, both initiated lawsuits for compensation but the lawsuits were dismissed.

Smithy and Ulm must have been sympathetic toward Anderson because they jointly gave him one thousand pounds.

Smithy and Ulm were on a roll in all they had collected a huge amount of money, they had an excellent aircraft with long range fuel tanks so decided to continue to make aviation history by flying on to England their ambition was to then fly the Atlantic to America and be the first to fly around the World.

Mascot aerodrome had a limited take off run, a large portion of it then was Chinese market gardens. I remember it well when I was only 14 I would save up five shillings, ride a pushbike to Mascot and go for a joy flight.

With the long range tanks full and the aircraft requiring a long run. The aircraft had to go to Richmond for take off.

For this flight Smithy hired H.A.Litchfield as navigator and T.H.McWilliams as radio operator.

THE SOUTHERN CROSS IS LOST

On the morning of March the 30th 1929 The Southern Cross took off carrying two and a half tons of fuel to fly non-stop to Wyndham in Western Australia.

Ninety minutes after take off McWilliams accidentally released a safety catch when opening a window to take a drift reading and lost the 90 metre (long-wave) radio aerial. He sent a message to Smithy "Long wave radio aerial lost. Shall we return?" Smithy decided to continue, to return and land they would need to dump a lot of fuel. They were able to send messages but unable to receive them. Unknown to them they heading into a dreadful storm.

North of Alice Springs they met the storm, it was preceded by dust and the rain mixed with the dust made a sticky mess on the windscreen they were unable to look out to take sightings. Smithy suspected the compass was faulty he was flying blind through a violent storm.

Through the night they were violently buffered with the storm even at dawn they still could not see out to take a bearing. They were lost the aviators worst fear especially over West Australia.

When the weather cleared they sighted a mission station, they didn't know at the time that it was Drysdale mission station, they dropped a note asking for the direction of Wyndham. The people on the ground didn't see the note but thought they were looking for a suitable place to land. They formed up in an arrow pointing to where the aircraft could put down pointing south west.

After about three hours further flying they sighted another mission station they knew they were in serious trouble. They were to find out later that they were over Port George mission station. They dropped another note asking for the direction and distance to Wyndham. The answer signalled back was 400 kilometres east. They could hardly believe it but turned east. After about 20 minutes flying they realised that they didn't have enough fuel to reach Wyndham so turned back again for Port George. Fuel became critical and they made a forced landing. they had sent a radio message saying fuel was low and they were about to land.

The Southern Cross was undamaged, they had been in the air for 28 hours. Ulm opened the emergency locker it should have been full of emergency rations, it was empty. It seems it must have been emptied at Richmond. Their total supplies were a few sandwiches, four kilos of baby food a special request from the postmaster at Wyndham for his child, one kilo of coffee, a packet of biscuits and a flask of brandy. Luckily fresh water was nearby. They brewed some weak coffee and laced it with brandy, Smithy made a joke about drinking Coffee Royal. The incident became known as the "Coffee Royal Affair". It would be 13 days before they were rescued.

The power to operate the radio came from a small generator fitted to the side of the fuselage, it was driven by the slipstream turning a small propeller. Now that they were on the ground they had no power to transmit. They tried various ways to drive the generator with no success.

The loss of The Southern Cross was a national disaster. There was a public outcry a Citizens Committee was formed to raise rescue funds. Very soon they had the sum of 7,000 pound and hired a six cylinder De Havilland 61 named Canberra and a very fine pilot again with World War 1 experience. The big aeroplane with its 450 HP engine left Richmond to search for The Southern Cross.

The Prime Minister ordered HMAS Albatross carrying six aircraft to depart Sydney and join the search.

This is where the Westland Widgeon 111 comes back into the story. With some of the money Smithy and Ulm had given him Keith Anderson had bought the Westland Widgeon 111 and had named it "Kookaburra".

Anderson had fitted long range tanks to the "Kookaburra", he had monitored Smithy's radio reports and knowing the area well he was certain he could find him first. The ill feeling between them was forgotten a fellow airman was in distress and needed help.

Anderson had monitored Smithy's radio reports, he knew the area where Smithy had radioed from. He had flown many hours over the area when he was flying for West Australian Airways, and was certain he could find him first. It would be to his great credit if he could.

Although Anderson had an aeroplane he did not have the funds to finance a search. Anderson was a friend of John Cantor owner of The Customs House hotel in Macquarie St Sydney. He persuaded Cantor to support a private search. Cantor together with some friends agreed to assist by paying for the fuel and a mechanic. In repayment he wanted the first news if The Southern Cross was found, probably to sell the story to the newspapers recouping the funds.

To be continued ...

BISMARCK SEA - Continued from page 6

that attitude in those days – you were going to come back, you knew you were going to come back, of course you were going to come back. The thing that stands out most vividly in my memory, which is not written in the diary, is the build up of the feeling as the air strike force was gathering over Cape Ward Hunt. The Beaufighters were there first, and we just gently circled round and round. I think our position was at 6000 feet. There was not a cloud in the sky, and we'd seen coming through the gap in the Owen Stanleys another squadron of B25s or A 20s; then the B17s would be coming through and they would get up to their allotted height and gradually circle and circle and circle. Then the Lightning fighters right on top and right at the appointed minute, this air armada consisted of about 300 hundred planes – I can remember the excitement, the magnitude! On the European scene 300 aircraft wasn't much, because they used to send 1000 bomber raids from England over Germany, but we had never seen anything like this before. We couldn't imagine in our wildest imagination that anything like this could happen. Then this air armada started going along the north coast of New Guinea and we sighted this Japanese convoy which was bringing 15,000 crack Japanese marines from Rabaul to land them at Lae, and thus commence the drive towards Australia. We were instructed to get the transports.

Well it worked out well. I don't think we made any mistakes. Probably some of the bombers were a bit ahead of their schedule and bombs were falling around the Beaufighters, but as soon as we got in sight of the convoy it was always the Australian's strict procedure to keep strict radio silence. You wouldn't say a word unless it was a dire emergency. But as soon as we got in sight the yanks came out on their wireless systems and were yelling "Get in there, boy! Get onto them! And Go Go!" and really this did build up a great excitement, and the adrenaline was pumping... We came down to the right of the force and turned through onto the transports which were in the centre. There was a row of cruisers in the front, then a row of destroyers, and then two rows of transport ships with 15,000 picked Japanese Marines on board, then another row of destroyers and another row of cruisers. We went in so low that one line of Japanese ships firing at us were really firing at the other line of Japanese cruisers and destroyers. I have just tried to describe the terrific feeling of intense excitement that had built up. In my diary I wrote "I've seen on the movies, shots of wheeling destroyers, of the sky filled with ack ack bursts, of warships firing broadsides, of the sky filled with milling aircraft, the ships being blow up by bombs, but none so exciting as those five minutes running through that convoy".

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

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

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Without A Moon

From the 18th August the Squadron was out in force at night on armed recces along the French and Italian coast. We were still carrying 60 lb HE rockets with instructions to attack any ships we saw, and if there were none, to fire our rockets at a ground target; eight 60 lb HEs could do quite a bit of damage, especially as they could be aimed very accurately. On this particular night we patrolled the area Cap D'Antibes to Imperia (passing Monaco) and as we saw no ship, fired our rockets at Imperia Harbour.

Our night shipping technique relied on there being a moon path. We tried to develop a way to carry out shipping strikes when there was no moon, by co-operating with the Wellington Squadron. The method was based on a similar operation developed by Coastal Command in the UK with the code name 'Want Willey'. The technique was that a reconnaissance aircraft (in our case a Wellington) fitted with ASV radar would locate and identify a target, then call up the Beaufighter Squadron which would home on to the Wellington by WT D/F. When the Beaus were close to the recce aircraft, the leader of the strike force would transmit the code word (in the case of the UK Beaus "Want Willey"), and the recce aircraft would drop flares over the ship or convoy. The Beaus would then go in and attack by the light of the flares. We attempted this type of operation on a few occasions, but were never really successful. Either the flares went out before we got within striking distance of the target, or we could not identify a target. We did not persevere with this type of attack, for one thing it was extremely dicey as the attacking aircraft were as well illuminated as the target, and the fact that the flares had been dropped alerted the gunners on the ships that an attack was imminent, and the element of surprise was lost. On the occasions we did not see a ship we attacked land targets.

On the night of the 26/27th August four of our aircraft carried out a shipping strike in co-operation with a Wellington, on four ships off Lavagna in Northern Italy. Two of us had a go at the merchant vessels in the convoy, and between us we registered eight probable underwater hits. We were now back to using 25 lb SAP heads. As would be expected, the intelligence report records that there was intense accurate medium and light AA but all four aircraft returned safely.

On the night of the 1st/2nd September four of us took off just before midnight and flew to the Gulf of Genoa. As usual we flew individually, and three of us managed to find the same target, a convoy consisting of a Heavy Escort Vessel (probably a destroyer) and

four vessels it was escorting. I reported in my log book that there was obviously radar-controlled flak, and the Squadron Intelligence Report refers to 'intense accurate medium' ('Medium' refers to their range and size of the ammunition, not the quantity.)

On the night of the 3rd/4th of September, three of us attacked four ships which we estimated to be in the 1,500 ton range off Sestri Levante, using 25 lb rockets. Two of us scored 'probable' underwater hits. Later the same morning before it got light, four other aircraft were scrambled to the same area but found no ships moving. However they saw some shipping in Sestri Levante Harbour and attacked.

One of the pilots then went round again and made a canon attack on the harbour, but we was hit by flak and was seen to fly out to sea and burst into flames as it hit the water. It was reported that there was intense and accurate AA from vessels and shore batteries. The pilot of the aircraft which was destroyed was one of our most experienced pilots, but presumably in the excitement of the sortie he didn't carry out the unwritten motto of the pilots of the Squadron 'He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.' Perhaps our greatest 'defence' was being able to mount a quick attack without giving the enemy gunners on ship or shore pre-knowledge that we were coming. Once we had attacked we had given away the surprise element and were a sitting target if we came round a second time.

The following night, three of us (including Sqd Ldr Rose) flew to Cape Mele, and I spotted three ships, so went in right away and attacked the middle one, which we estimated to be a coaster of some 800 tons. There was accurate fire from all three vessels, which, of course, drew the attention of the two other Beaus. When Sqd Ldr Rose went in to attack there were only two ships afloat.

Yet again the next night (three in a row) four of us attacked four ships with 25lb RPs off the coast of Genoa. I quote from the Intelligence Report;

4 Beaus attacked 4 ships approx. 1,000 tons each. Position 4423N 0901 E. 10/10 cloud obscured moon and attack was carried out on flak from ships. Possible RP strikes on two ships. Intense accurate light and medium AA from ships, heavy AA from shore.

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and possibly worth a fortune. Anyway, I'll read from this cutting from my photograph album

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 four destroyed returned to their bases. The allies had about 136 aircraft engaged in the attacks, and the Japanese about 150 (I 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 the key to the Allied successes was the High Command's accurate forecast of the enemy convoy's intention and movements.

THE JET ENGINE IN WORLD WAR II

The jet engine was not an overnight achievement in any of the three countries, which had flown aircraft fitted with such power powerplants by the time the second World War was just 19 months old. Indeed, the principle of jet propulsion had been demonstrated back in the 1st century AD. When a Greek called Hero of Alexandria had built a steam powered model utilising a pivoted hollow metal sphere, with nozzles around its circumference, which spun it around. Frenchman Rene Lorin had expounded the basic principles of using the exhaust gasses of an internal combustion in 1913. Dr A A Griffith of the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Establishment had begun in 1925 research into the gas turbine engine, as a source of aircraft power, albeit via a propeller, and Frank Whittle patented his pure jet practical designs in 1930.

Although it was to be some between them and the first airframe application of the Whittle design. The gap was in fact 11 years, by which time Germany's Ernst Heinkel had flown his He178 powered by a jet engine designed by Dr Hans-Joachim Pabst von Ohain (August 1940), and the Italian Caproni Aircraft Company had installed its jet engine into an aircraft designed by Secondo Campini (August 1940).

Germany got its second jet aircraft the Heinkel He260- into the air in April 1941, and the world's fourth jet aircraft, the Gloster E28/39, powered by a Whittle W.1 centrifugal flow gas turbine engine, lifted off from British soil for the first time on May 15 1941. In America the Bell Company was engaged in the design, building, and testing of the first American jet-propelled fighter, the P-59A Airacomet. The aeroplane (very much the same design as the Bell Kingcobra) Fitted with two jet units, built by the General Electric Company to British designs, made its first successful flight on October 1st 1942, using the Whittle jet engine as the prototype of the American power plants.

The basic principle was the of a rotating impeller flinging incoming air outwards centrifugal to produce a pressure rise before combustion and then expansion took place. This style of engine was soon replaced by the axial flow type, due to the latter's ability to provide higher pressure ratios therefore efficiencies. As its name suggests, the "axial flow" compressor's airflow is in the direction of engine's axis, and its alternate fixed (stator) and rotating blades (each one a compressor stage) before combustion takes place, means the potential for greater power.

Of course Heinkel-Hirth in Germany did not have its own way in jet engine design, with BMW building a seven stage axial compressor turbo jet unit, the 003A1. The project was begun in 1939 and first ran in 1940. Daimler-Benz started development of the 007 turbo jet, and one unit was built and ran in the Autumn of 1943. Work on the project was stopped by the German Air Ministry because the design was more complex than those of other German firms. The 007 unit had several special features, the compressor and ducted fan being mounted on the two contra-rotating drums. The inner drum (spool) carried nine stages of compressor blading, while the outer drum carried eight stages of blading internally, and three stages of blasting externally.

The turbine was cooled by partial admission of 30% of its circumference of air drawn from the ducted fan air circuit, the remaining 70% received the working gasses. Four tubular combustion chambers were used. Work on the development of jet propulsion was undertaken by the Junkers Company in 1937. By the end of 1939 the designing of a full scale turbo jet had begun. It was not until the Meteor fitted with the Derwent 1 engine that it achieved a top speed of 485 MPH in January 1945. In many ways the more advanced Me 262 and the Meteor never met.

RON NEWITT