

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

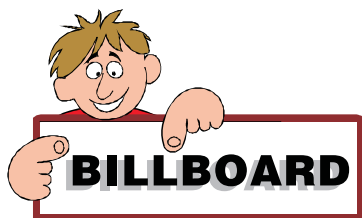
JUNE 2002

BOSTON COURSE - No. 5 OTU WAGGA WAGGA



Can anyone provide names for the personnel in this photograph?





VALE

George Clough passed away at the Trinder Home for the Aged on Tuesday 12th March 2001.

George served in 31 Squadron, and has been a long time member of our Association. Our sympathies go to his only daughter Fran.

FROM ROY INCHES

I am on a committee involved in a Hearing Aid Project, and I wonder if members are aware that DVA will provide you, at no cost to yourself, a cordless hearing aid device. This device will control the volume of your TV without interfering with the volume for people without hearing impairment.

Obtain a copy of your latest hearing test, and take it to the retailer, which is under contract to DVA. Usually these are Dick Smith Electronics or Tandy Electronics. Ring DVA (Rehabilitation Program) and they will send an approval to the retailer to supply a device to you.

Roy Inches.

ANZAC DAY PARADE

The Anzac Day Parade held in Brisbane was very well supported by the citizens of Brisbane once again. It appeared that there were larger and louder cheering crowds than in any previous year.



Some of the weary marchers after the parade.

The RAAF led the parade this year, and our Association was led by Bill O'Connor. Cadets from 219 Squadron carried our Banner, and did a very good job of it. We had five members unable to march, and they traveled in Jeeps in the Parade. Ron Snell came down from Townsville, and we had some Associate members and sons and daughters of members march with us.

At the conclusion of the March some of us got together for lunch at Greenbank RSL Services Club.

NEW PATRON

The Hon. Sir James Killen has accepted our offer to become the Patron of the Association, after the sad loss of our late Patron, Ray Smith. Queensland members are well acquainted with this colourful long serving minister of the Federal Government. His eloquent use of the English language, and ready wit enable him to present his messages in a rememberable manner.

He served in the RAAF as a Wireless air Gunner during World War II, and is very proud of his time in the Service. I am sure all our members will welcome him as our new Patron.

RECOMMENDED READING

You will find some notes in the following pages with reference to the Launch of Peter Dornan's Book, "Nicky Barr An Australian Air Ace." This is a great read and I recommend it to our members.

Should you want a copy, please advise me, and I will post you a copy, signed by the author.

The cost is \$30, which includes, GST, packing and postage.

PETER WHITE

OOPs !!!

Something strange happened to the last issue of **Whisperer**. It seems that the computer had a memory failure and left out some letters and words while leaving others in.

- Firstly, on page 6, we missed an 'I' in Beaufighter (shame) in the title.
- Our late Patron was still listed in the Committee.
- Worst of all we did not credit the author of the Goldfish Club article. Of course it was our President Ralph.

Sorry Ralph.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

On Thursday 9/5/2002 Peter, Joan & I attended a function at Kedron Wavell Services Club, at the invitation of Max Johnson the President of 467/463 Sqdns Assoc., to mark the 57th Anniversary of VE day. I was quite amazed at the numbers they mustered but then again as each Lanc. had a crew of 7/8 I don't suppose it was altogether surprising.

Sir James Killen KCMG was the guest speaker who regaled us with snippets of events that occurred when he was an MP & particularly as Minister for Defence. Jim, as most of us know, was a Flight Sergeant Air Gunner in WWI & has maintained a very real & abiding interest in the RAAF. Apart from all that, he is a raconteur par excellence.

Afterwards Peter & I approached him to ascertain whether he would accept the position as our Patron which invitation he graciously accepted.

Jim, as Minister for Defence in the 1960s, was responsible for the purchase of the F111's so that Australia acquired, under his stewardship, a substantial ability to defend itself unlike our position 60 years ago when a Japanese Battle Group appeared in the Coral Sea in May 1942.

I want to congratulate Fred Cassidy on his unceasing efforts to have the Council of the Australian War Memorial commit itself to acquiring a Beaufighter for display in Canberra & we wish Fred every success in his continuing endeavors. Peter and I discussed Fred's efforts with Jim, who suggested that if all else fails, we should alert all Qld politicians to the problem in the hope that political pressure may help to sway the AWM.

If Fred wants our help in this direction all he has to do is ask for it.

Regards, RALPH

COMMITTEE

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WE WERE THE FEW



**We were the few who flew in hostile sky
To keep this land of ours forever free,
While mates below tramped on foreign soil
Or sailed their ships on the unforgiving sea.**

**We were the few who strafed the aerodromes
Or dropped our bombs on ships & distant lands,
While mates below shipped in our supplies
Or spilled their blood on shifting desert sands.**

**We were the few who watched the tracer lights
Define the path of death & swiftly pass,
While mates below bombarded enemy shores
Or fought in jungle swamps & kunai grass,**

**And when the guns were stilled, across the sky
The doves of peace once more safely flew.
Record our names with the names of mates
Who fought below. Together we were the few!**

George Robertson.



Finding Beaufighter A19-130

I slowed my descent for the last 20 or so metres so Don could get the first glimpse of our 'target' 60 metres deep in Hughes Bay on Fergusson Island. I received the double thumbs up and a yell that I interpreted as success, our 'target' being A 19-130, a British made WW2 Beaufighter, Mark X. British built Beaufighters were prefixed A19 and Australian built were prefixed A8.

As I descended the last 20 metres the most amazing sight unfolded before my eyes: a completely intact Beaufighter lying on the bottom in an upright position. There were the engines, twin Bristol Hercules XVII (1720 hp) with their propellers bent backwards due to the water landing. The cockpit with the escape hatch missing and where the pilot W/C Clarrie Glasscock DFC clambered out shortly before the plane sunk beneath him. Two other crew members, Navigator F/O R.A. Kelly and passenger, Wing Commander J H Glasscock (the pilot's brother), exited through the upper hatch.

Number 30 Squadron moved to Port Moresby from Bohl River near Townsville, commencing on 17 August 1942. and then on 12 September to Ward's Strip eight kilometres north east of Port Moresby. From here they moved north again to Goodenough Island, arriving there on 28 July 1943. On 18 June of the same year W/C Clarrie P Glasscock DFC took over as 30 Squadron's new commander. The Squadron's wartime role was to blockade Japanese seaborne operations and to attack Japanese held airfields particular in the New Britain area.

A 19-130 was a brand new Beaufighter and took off at 0920 hours on 16 August 1943 from Vivagani strip on Goodenough Island for fuel consumption and armament tests. Basically a test flight.

Several minutes after becoming airborne and at a height of 400m the aircraft's starboard motor failed while crossing the west coast of nearby Fergusson Island. Not being able to maintain height with a full war load, it was decided to ditch in nearby Hughes Bay. After flying inland for a short period of time they crossed the north coast of the island at low altitude and prepared for a water landing. The forward escape hatch was jettisoned at 30m above the Bunai River mouth and power taken off 6m above the sea on a down wind water landing. No injuries were sustained and the aircraft sank in about 10 seconds.

The dinghy, which inflated automatically but was punctured by the tailplane as the aircraft nosed over before plummeting to the bottom, was abandoned, forcing the crew into swimming to shore.

A search was conducted by other flight crews of 30 Squadron in the vicinity of Fergusson Island conducted a search for the missing Beaufighter. F/Lt

together with W/O Hardman in A 1997 found the missing crew members shortly afterwards ashore in Hughes Bay. Subsequently a seaplane was dispatched and it picked up the three crew members and returned them to their Squadron at Vivagani.

As I looked around the sunken Beaufighter, into the cockpit and then into the observer's hatch, I noted very little marine growth. Everything was there just as the crew left it 55 years ago. Several large grouper had made the aircraft their home and smaller fish covered the site. In the cockpit you had to chase the smaller fish out of the way just to get a look at the layout of the controls, gauges etc. Three gauges are missing probably due to corrosion. The throttles are retarded and the propellers are in fine pitch, all relative to a fully controlled landing. Strangely, neither propeller was feathered.

Continuing along the wings, several pieces of wing skin are missing due to the hydraulic action of the water landing. The observer's .303 machinegun is also missing, jettisoned before ditching and the tail plane aft of the observer's position has been pushed back and is now beneath the rear of the aircraft.

After only eight minutes on site and finally with Don's alarm bells ringing, it was time to ascend. As we neared the surface and swapped to the 02 for a 20 minute decompression, Don was in seventh heaven over the find and was already planning the next day's dive when we would film it.

We did two more uneventful dives to film A19-130 and recorded 16 minutes of video. This will be passed on to the RAAF for their records. As a side note, on this expedition we found two other aircraft and plan to research their history and again write them up for publication at a later date.

My interest in A19-130 began with a chance meeting in a Sydney Dive Shop of a fellow diver who was interested in WW2 aircraft. He told me about a book he had just read about Beaufighter Operations in Papua New Guinea. The book profiled several WW2 ditchings and one of these was A 19-130. It went on to describe the circumstances relating to the mishap and I thought it would be possible to find the aircraft given enough research and provided that Hughes Bay was not too deep.

I contacted a friend, Don Fetterly of Tucson Arizona, to research this aircraft and to compile a report of the facts relating to the ditching. Some 200 pages later we had a working dossier and a base upon which to start our search.

Don's report is an in depth document comprising declassified Corona KH4A satellite imagery of Hughes Bay taken in the 1960s. Also included were the official

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

RAAF records of the incident and topographic models of Fergusson Island. All this information was important to start our search for A 19-130.

Armed with this dossier we planned our first outing to the area in January 1999 and entered Hughes Bay on the second day of the expedition. Nautical charts of the area were not detailed enough so the Corona satellite imagery became very useful. It was this imagery that provided us with a more accurate picture of the area and detailed search methods could then be put into place.

The search continued until day three when the local constable approached us. After determining our reason for being in the area he arranged a meeting with the village elders to discuss what they knew of the aircraft. The meeting was held on board the boat. I anchored off the river mouth on the south side of the bay, and was informed by the locals that the aircraft flew just above the trees at the river mouth then flew out into the bay and ditched. Without prompting, the villagers stated that they had recovered a window from the plane, which had been jettisoned as it passed over the coastline. This was in fact the pilot's escape hatch.

Later we were approached by a young man who told us his father had told him a story of a plane crashing in the water and the crew swimming ashore where they were cared for until a seaplane arrived and evacuated them.

With this newly gained knowledge we focused on the West Side of the bay starting at the river mouth and moving west. We continued the search for another two days before heading back to Lae. Our efforts at that time were to no avail.

With this information from the villagers we had now localised the area that we would search in future and plans for a return trip were made. It was imperative that we organise some type of sonar to aid in our search and the best type was a Side Scan Sonar, which images the ocean floor. This is where Don's great knowledge of missile technology would come in and he immediately set about designing one.

On arriving back in my home port of Lae, a number of calls were made to various dealers in side scan technology and I soon found out that the price was well beyond what I was prepared to pay. Another type was needed. It was then we decided to make one using an array method and a converted paper chart recorder.

Side Scan Sonar consists of two major components, a display unit and a towfish connected by a long length of cable. The tow fish is then towed behind the vessel at a predetermined depth. This then looks sideways from the vessel's course, and builds up a picture of the ocean floor.

We purchased several books on the subject but soon found out they were written for Einstein and not for the average homebuilder. However we persevered. Don modelled the transducer array and together we gathered the components to make a towfish. At its completion we had a very fine unit indeed, built of PVC pipe, wooden tail fins with the transducers epoxied into the side of the PVC pipe and connected to the tow cable.

By July 2000, 19 months had gone by and Don was on his way back to Papua New Guinea to join me once more to look for A 19-130.

I called into Alotau to drop off a team from the RAAF who had been attempting to recover four sets of human remains from another wartime plane I had previously discovered. This was an Australian Beaufort A9-217, located near the Trobriand Islands.

Don and I departed the next day for Fergusson Island. On our way we deployed the sonar equipment, which had not yet been tested, and found we did not have enough power in the chart recorder transmitter to obtain an image even in shallow water.

Drastic measures were called for so we used the vessel's onboard colour depth sounder and modified it in the field using a rather large soldering iron, a hammer and lots of improvisation. This did in fact work, and we had a nice clear picture looking out from one side of the towfish to distance of 150 metres.

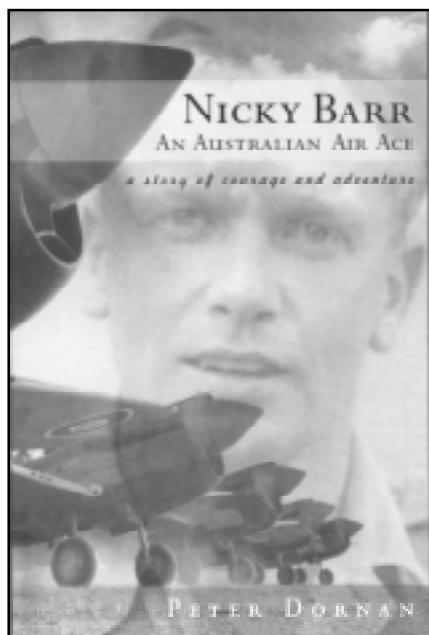
We entered Hughes Bay and prepared for the search. The tow commenced and after 10 minutes Don yelled 'Target, Target, Target'.

Now as every wreck finder knows You do not find a wreck after 10 minutes deployment so we kept on searching. Every time we went past this one particular area we received a reading. No matter which way we went the image was still there. So the next day after much discussion about the object and what it might be, we decided to convert the now 'Side Scan Sonar' back to a normal echo sounder to see if we had really struck 'pay dirt'. The colour sounder soon picked it up and what we had on the screen was a smallish 'object' rising about two metres from the sea floor, which was much denser than the surrounding seabed.

We worked the anchor as close to the 'object' as we could without actually fouling it. Enthusiasm was running high as we geared up for the first dive. Oxygen was placed at a depth of three metres along with spare tanks and regulators. The water was warm and visibility looked to be about 20 metres as we commenced our first dive.

ROD PEARCE

Book Launch



The launch of Peter Dornan's story of Nicky Barr was held at the auditorium of Brisbane Boys' College on Sunday 7th April 2002. The book titled "Nicky Barr, An Australian Air Ace" was launched by His Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Major General Peter Arnison.

It is a story of courage and adventure, and I found it compelling reading, and could not put it down, until I reached the last page.

Before the arrival of the Governor finger food was served to the many people who had attended. It was a time to meet some old friends, and listen to the music being played by the 2/14th Light Horse Regimental Band.

After the arrival of the Governor, all guests were seated except a small group of WWII veterans who were then led into the auditorium by Nicky, to huge applause from all present. The MC for the day was Chris "Budda" Handy, ex Wallaby front rower, who called for the Anthem, and we were led in the singing by Paul Neal. Paul is an international opera singer, and was also Peter Dornan's singing teacher, who then gave a rollicking rendition of two ballads.

Ms Jacqui Noyes recited the Poem "High Flight". Peter then spoke at length about the two years work to get the book to the publishers. Steve Bishop, an ex Wallaby forward, and a hero of The Kokoda Trail, then spoke and sang a not too bawdy ballad. It was greatly appreciated by all present. The Governor officially launched the book. Ms Jacqui Noyes read some chapters from the book, and Nicky then spoke about the work and co-operation with Peter to bring the book to fruition. On the completion of his speech, Nicky was given a standing ovation by over seven hundred who had attended.

Finger food was again served, while more than a hundred people who had purchased a copy of the book lined up to have both Peter and Nicky sign their books

PETER WHITE

ABOUT THE BOOK.



Old Mates: Peter was Nicky's observer when they served in 23 Squadron.

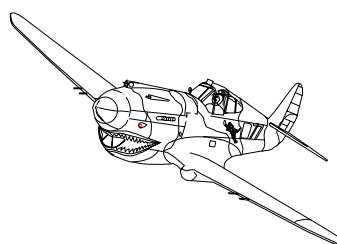
Nicky Barr never deliberately sought danger or adventure, but when confronted with it he had the courage to face it and survive.

In 1939, at the age of 23, he was chosen to represent Australia in the international Rugby world tour. The day after the squad arrived in England, war was declared and the tour was cancelled. He immediately signed up to become a fighter pilot in the RAAF, and while fighting Rommel's famed Africa Korps in North Africa, quickly rose through the ranks to become a squadron leader.

In the space of twelve months, Nicky shot down over 12 enemy planes, and was himself shot down three times. The third time, he was seriously wounded, then captured and sent to Italy as a hospitalised prisoner of war. He escaped four times-including one from a moving train. On the fourth escape he successfully evade capture and, together with a group of special commandos, took part in a series of clandestine operations behind enemy lines and helped fellow prisoners of war escape.

Nicky Barr earned a reputation among allies and enemies alike for his acts of bravery, his selflessness, his dogged determination and his infectious sense of humour. His is a story of adventure, war, courage and mortality, and the love for his wife that sustained him through it all.

Any member who would like a copy of the book, signed by the author, please advise me at 9 Scott Street Beenleigh Q 4207. Cost is \$30, includes GST, packing and postage



Keith Nicholson Remembers (Continued from last issue)



A string of kerosene flares was laid out for night flying and as I was the first to complete the night curriculum. I did several stunts as duty pilot for night flying. When I flew in No 73 Squadron, we were operating from bitumen runways at all the coastal aerodromes, Richmond, Nowra, Williamtown, Coffs Harbour, Moruya, Mallacoota, etc. and I think, that Camden was the only base without a runway.

The conversion course at No 5 OTU at Forest Hill was quite challenging, but we learned a lot from the experienced ex combat pilots on the instructional staff, who made a point of passing on their accumulated skills to us, their willing students. When No 3 Course ended on 8th March 1943 we had logged about 60 hours flying by day and 15 hours at night. Some crews were posted to No 31 Squadron at Coomale Creek near Darwin, while Ken and I were one of the seven crews posted to No 30 Beaufighter Squadron at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

I didn't have time to get across to Western Australia for a spot of leave so I went down to Melbourne to visit Frank Smallhorn's parents. Frank had been on No 16 Course in WA with me.

In Brisbane I joined the other aircrews posted to No 30 Squadron and we went up to Townsville in a troop train. There we spent several days at the Personnel Pool at Aitkenvale and on 26th March we flew to Moresby in a Short Empire flying boat, A18-14, flown by Flying Officer Cowan, alighting at Moresby Harbour at midday.

The six other crews who had been on my Beaufighter course and had been posted to New Guinea at the same time as Ken and I were:

Keith Eddison and Max Allott
Maurice Ball and Greg Hardman
Doug Raffin and George Dick
Ed Woolcott and Bob Hasenohr
Charles Harris and Don Miller
Harold Tapner and Bob Thomas

Ken and I were allotted to "A" Flight and were given A 19-96, a new aircraft just delivered, but Charles Harris took it up on the morning of the 30th, for what was to be a local area familiarisation, and wrote it off. He tried to close the top hatch during his take off run, lost control, swung to the starboard side of Wards Strip and slid through the jungle, destroying the aircraft.

We were then allocated A 19-50 but never got around to flying it on operations because it took a direct hit during a big Japanese daylight raid on 12th

April. All my flying gear was in that Beaufighter when it went up in smoke.

The next aircraft on the list was A19-74 which we regarded as "our" Beaufighter, and which we hoped to keep for a reasonable term. Being intensely interested in the aeroplane I spent a lot of time down at Wards Strip helping our ground crew with the maintenance. The ground crew of each aircraft consisted of an engine fitter, an airframe fitter and two armourers. Other specialist trades radio mechanics; electricians, instrument technicians and so on were part of the "pool" in each flight. The Beaufighter had two twin row 18 cylinder Bristol Hercules sleeve valve radial engines of 1700 horsepower, huge 14 feet diameter propellers, four 20mm Hispano-Suiza cannons in the belly and six .303 Browning machine guns in the wings. The total ammunition load was 1.4 tons.

'A' Flight was commanded by S/Ldr Ross Little, but F/Lt Keith "Grumpy" Eddison took over when Ross went home during April 1943 at the end of his operational tour. Unfortunately Grumpy didn't last long, being shot down over Lae in May, so F/Lt Maurice Ball became my Flight Commander. I got on OK with all of them, in fact I seemed to get on all right with everyone in the Squadron, possibly because I was quite flexible and perhaps too young to assert myself.

No 30 Squadron operated from Wards Strip. A single bitumen runway with a parallel taxi/crash strip, also with winding, sealed taxiways leading to individual aircraft revetment bays, which protected them from the blast of bombs or exploding aircraft. Wards Strip was located in a narrow valley, with cleared flight paths over jungle to the north, and south over low hills to the sea. In addition to the Beaufighter Unit, Wards was the base for the Bostons of No 22 Squadron, RAAF, as well as USAAF 5th Air Force Lightnings, Airacobras, Flying Fortresses, Liberators and Dakotas. The air traffic pattern was fairly heavy during both day and night operations, and Air Traffic Control was very basic. There was often a traffic jam when battle damaged aircraft had to be given landing priority, or when the runway was blocked by aircraft which had belly landed or crashed,

There were times when I had to stay around the campsite because a number of aircrew had to be on hand to fly our aircraft out to sea in the event of a raid by the Japanese. When we weren't flying we spent a good deal of time in the Operations and Intelligence Section reading the intelligence documents and the operational summaries. Stan Hutchinson was the Intelligence Officer and I regarded him as having a genuine interest in the job. His briefings were "right on" and he was always worth listening to. His debriefings were very

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

methodical and he managed to drag every scrap of operational information from crews when they returned from a raid.

The Army Liaison Officer was an important fellow in our unit, for we were doing quite a lot of support work for the Army. He always briefed us on which of the native tribes were friendly and could provide help if we were shot down. Captain John Court gave all the new crews a lecture on Army co-operation in PNG on 29th March.

I didn't have much to do with Adjutant "Curly" Wearne, but knew him as a most pleasant fellow. He had a difficult row to hoe with "Blackjack" as the Commanding Officer, and I'm sure he had to do a huge amount of work, because the CO didn't want to be tied up with routine administration. The interests of the CO were all the flying and operational side of things and the welfare of his personnel. I thought that Brian Walker was just the fellow to be CO of the Unit at that time. I liked him and thought that he did a good job. He was much like Johnny Miles, my instructor at SFTS, who was now flying Bostons in the neighbouring No 22 Squadron. They were both rough diamonds, but were dedicated aviators of exceptional ability. I looked up to both Miles and Walker.

Ken and I shared a tent at our June Valley campsite and we were not too far away from the Aircrew Mess, which I thought was a novel arrangement, since all the squadron officers used it and by all the NCO aircrew. It was a native style thatched hut, which accommodated a dining room and an anteroom, divided by a sago palm leaf partition. Our meals were pretty basic tinned bully beef, pilchards, meat and vegetables, carrots and the like. There was a lot of asparagus and plenty of concoctions using dried egg powder, which I didn't think, were too bad. It always seemed that the cooks turned on baked beans when we had predawn takeoffs. My sphincter muscle was well and truly tested by the beans when I was in the target area, what with all that adrenaline flowing and a heightened "terror factor" during combat.

There always seemed to be some kind of fresh fruit around, although not necessarily provided as part of the official rations. Bananas and coconuts came from the native villages. I went to Hanabauda and to the village near Rouna Falls a couple of times. We also went for a couple of trips around the harbour in one of the rescue launches from the Marine Section.

A fair bit of my time was spent down at the strip as well as in the Intelligence Section. Spare time activities included writing letters, small arms practice on the firing range, reading, sight seeing jaunts in the locality, visiting friends at other Australian and American units, attending boxing matches at the Works unit. Going to the open air pictures at 22 Squadron, and playing table tennis, Monopoly, and cards (mainly poker, blackjack and twenty one). Maurice Ball and I went to the Officers' Club Moresby several times. It had good food, good music and was patronised by nurses from the Army hospital.

Ken and I took off with nine other Beaufighters for our first operation on 9th April to attack Alexishaven, but we had to turn back soon after take off because the port motor started to smoke very badly. However, we went out in A19-11 the next day to attack Madang. Bob Bennett in A19-15 was my section leader, while George Gibson in A19-38 and Maruei Ball in A19-6 were Red Section. They 'did' the strip over while Bob and I attacked a heavy A/A battery and then went on to strafe a launch and some native huts at Amron Mission. American 5th Air Force Liberators were on that job too.

We took A19-74 to Labu Lagoon on 27th April, we had been briefed to strafe concealed barges and the CO, "Blackjack" Walker, led the formation of six Beaufighters. My log book entry suggests that we didn't find any targets that day.

On 3rd May we went down to Garbutt, Qld, with Brian Walker and ferried A 19-111 back to Wards. Five days later Ken and I went in A19-74 with seven other Beaufighters to do a strafing job on Madang, in conjunction with a formation of Mitchells (B25's) from the USAAF 90th Bomb Group. We approached from the landward side, barrelled down the strip and as I was firing my cannons I saw a couple of Jap fighters.

KEITH NICHOLSON
To be continued

A GREAT AIRCRAFT

The Beaufighter despite the French connotation of its name, was strictly a brutish, functional weapon and looked every inch of it. Yet in its ugliness there was an air of pugnacity which emanated an aura of sheer rugged handsomeness; the same charisma which inexplicitly attracts a beautiful woman to a boxer's, battered features gave Beau crews an affinity with their steed. The pug-nosed, hunched-shoulders appearance of a Beau proclaimed accurately its deadly fighting ability, a destroyer which packed the most

lethal punch ever fitted to an RAF fighter at that time. A Beau's 'caress' was usually fatal - as a host of enemies came to know to their cost. Nor was this toughness limited to appearance only. The Beau was built like a proverbial brick out-house (in the words of one Beau pilot), able to absorb a staggering amount of structural damage and still deliver a live crew from the debris.

CHAZ BOWYER



HOPALONG CASSIDY RIDES AGAIN ... Continued from last month

My first flight in a Beaufighter was with George Sayer, it was quite an experience, moving from the lumbering old Ansons, with about 150 flying hours in my Log Book. The Beaufighter was a beaut aeroplane, and I was really keen to do a good job. I would have been quite happy to go round the world in it. Few of the navigators had ever heard of the aeroplane before, but we soon made ourselves familiar with it and acquired confidence in both the aeroplane and our ability to do a good job in it.

The Squadron left Richmond on 17th August 1942; our aircraft was A19-11 and our passengers were 14814 ACI R B Meers (a fitter IIA), and 35170 AC1 L G Dusting (a fitter IIE). We were to stay overnight at RAAF Station, Bundaberg, but we didn't go direct because Mos wanted to fly over Roma; he came from there and his girl friend lived in the town.

We left Bundaberg for Townsville the next morning, and stayed at Garbutt for a couple of days, doing a few more aircraft familiarisation flights, before the Squadron moved to Bohle River.

We were nearly written off at Garbutt. We were just about to touch down when all the runway lights went out, and it's not hard to imagine how Mos felt at that critical time. However, he managed to get us down, heavily but safely.

While we were at Bohle River three Beaufighters were sent over to Milne Bay to do some maritime sorties. While he was taking off on the Squadron's very first war operation, Lenny Vial had the misfortune to prang his aircraft. The other two returned to Townsville two or three days later.

Aircraft, aircrew and some groundstaff of A Flight were sent across to Milne Bay on a fortnights detachment, leaving Townsville on 12th September. The rest of the aircraft flew across the Coral sea to Port Moresby. My first impression of our new operational base, Wards Strip, was that it was nothing more than an emergency landing ground; it had a bitumen surface, but was very narrow and very short. Of course, the airfield construction engineers widened, lengthened, and generally improved it as time went on. At first, the Beaufighters were just parked where they could be fitted along the taxiway loops, but gradually they were accommodated in revetments and hidden under camouflage nets

Our camp was situated in June Valley, about a mile or so up the dirt road from the strip. We were on the left hand side of that road 22 Squadron's camp was on the right. Their campsite contained a natural amphitheatre, this became the entertainment centre where the fellows could go to see the movies, to watch concert parties, and to yell their heads off at boxing matches.

The Barracks people put a spear down at the spot indicated by a water diviner and initially we hand pumped water up to a barrel which fed the showers. Later, they were connected to a reticulated system which had its source up at Rouna Falls. We had a 44 gallon outside our tent as our own private water tank.

Meals at June Valley seemed to be mainly a hard kind of biscuit, tinned Bully Beef or tinned Meat and Vegetables, served up in a variety ways. The two cooks who did a great job with the rations they were given, were a pair of gays known as Brenda and Lola. I wasn't keen on the tinned Pilchards or tinned Herrings in Tomato Sauce. and I certainly didn't take to the tinned Butter, it always seemed to be rancid. The powdered egg was off-putting too, but I didn't mind the tinned peas.

At one stage our ration supplies were so poor that we had something like 30 meals of nothing else but Bully Beef However, I'd rather have that than the fresh Zebu meat we were served when we went for a couple of days detachment at Milne Bay. Fruit juice was provided in the Aircrew Mess; it was some kind of red berry juice that was supposed to be loaded with vitamins.

I took part in some kind of trial where we were given carrot juice and sat in a darkened tent to see if our night vision became better. I never knew the outcome.

We had to take quinine tablets as an anti malaria measure, and these were put out on the Mess tables. To prevent dehydration, and replace the salt lost through sweating, we had to stuff ourselves with salt tablets. They were terrible things to take, and I used to have attacks of nausea and heave every time after swallowing the wretched things.

Our Air Officer Commanding, Air Commodore Hewitt, came across from his headquarters to visit the Squadron, and, at a parade, directed us to get rid of our beards. Many of the aircrew had begun to grow beards, and although it was against regulations, neither the Commanding Officer nor the Adjutant had worried about it.

Nearly every American unit had its own open air cinema, but it wasn't all that easy to get to their locations to see a show; someone had to organise the transport, someone had to know the unit holding the show, and most of all, someone had to know how to get there at night. You didn't necessarily end up at the show you set out to see, because you couldn't find the place, and often you'd end up watching a show from the rear side of the screen, maybe Claudette Colbert or Claude Raine in one of their epics you'd already seen a half dozen times.

On pay days we were issued with one or two razor blades, and sometimes with French Letters; we used

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these to keep the matches in our survival pouches from getting damp. We were also occasionally supplied, maybe, by the Salvos with a tube of toothpaste, which was too drippy and gritty for its intended use. The fellows used it to polish their perspex 'foreigners'.

Letters from home came up to Moresby pretty regularly, whoever happened to be around when the postal orderly sorted it out took it round the camp and handed it out. Quite often when you came back to the camp you'd find a letter or two on your camp stretcher. Newspapers and magazines were eagerly seized and passed on to others for them to enjoy.

I was probably a rather lazy young man. I don't think I played any sport up there, although there were some baseball games going on Don Angus being the principal organiser. Mos and I took ourselves off on walks in the vicinity of June Valley and Wards Strip, but the tropical heat and humidity made that a pretty uncomfortable activity. We often went swimming at Laloki, at Rouna Falls, and a couple of times we went into town and had a swim at Ela Beach, not that it was all that refreshing since the water wasn't very deep, was lukewarm and rather murky.

The Japanese raided Moresby quite often but they didn't take too much notice of our Ack Ack. One of those units brought down a Betty one night, and its pilot was captured. The first Japanese I ever saw was exhibited to us at Wards by some Army guy - I have no idea whether he was the captured pilot or someone brought across the Kokoda trail. I'm glad they brought him in to show us, because the Yellow Peril propaganda had led me to think that they were sub human. But I saw that enemy personnel were actually people, even though this one was a sorry looking skinny and woe-begone individual.

We didn't worry too much about the raids in June Valley, because the raiders were never directly overhead and whatever they dropped wasn't going to affect us. There wasn't any point in making ourselves uncomfortable in our slit trench when it was obvious that the Japanese were going for some other target. We looked on the raid as a short diversion, and took our canvas chairs outside our tents to watch what was going on. The searchlights and the AA puffs providing us with an interesting spectacle. Harry Suthons said that the biggest problem for the spectators was the shrapnel falling down when the guns of the Australian Ack Ack unit on the hill behind us were blasting away at the raiders.

Although no damage was done to our campsite, some of our aircraft parked at Wards were hit. Beaufighter A19-55 was written off during a night raid on 27th January 1943 and three others were holed by shrapnel from 'daisy-cutters'.

George Sayer was the Squadron's first casualty, being shot down in A19-1 with Archie Mairret during an attack on Buna late in September 1942.

George was a remarkable man. He was an Empire Air Training Scheme pilot, a contemporary of Truscott and Gibbes. He'd flown Blenheims in the Middle East, had been flying in Russia at one stage, came back through the Middle East on his way to Singapore, and then he was one of the group who sailed a small open boat from Java and made a landfall along the West Australian coast. And next thing he was sent to 30 Squadron still a sergeant. I believe he came from a well to do Melbourne family. George was the pilot of the first Beaufighter in which I'd flown, and although he was a nice little guy with a ton of guts, I'm thankful I didn't crew up with him: I wouldn't be here today if I had.

The early casualties in the Squadron were quite upsetting, because we'd known the fellows in Australia, and even though we might not have been bosom buddies, we'd lived with them at June Valley for a time. Archie Mairret had been on my navigator's course and was an especially nice fellow, somewhat older than the rest of us. Tom Butterfield, who had trained with Mos Morgan, bought it during an Army Co operation job near Kokoda late in October 1942. Rupert Wilson was his navigator. In mid January we lost Bruce Stephens and Stewart Campbell when their aircraft crashed into a hill near our strip and burst into flames.

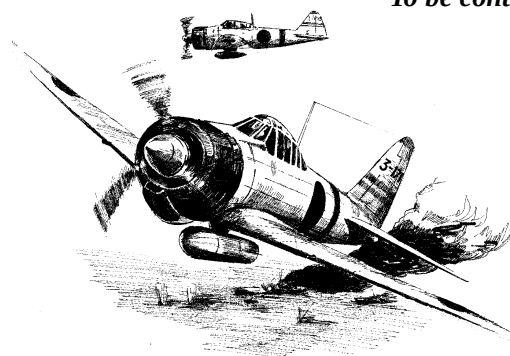
Later that year the wing tip of Bob Harding's aircraft smashed into the mast of the old wreck in the Harbour, killing Bob and another pilot Frank King. The two navigators - Hedley Cane and John Tyrrell - were rescued

The Squadron had a number of personable characters, including 'Blackjack' Walker, 'Curly' Wearne, 'Doc' Marsh, Arthur Ferrier, Bill Cosgrove, Don Bain, and Dick Beynon.

Bill Cosgrove and Arthur Ferrier had got hold of some hard liquor, and one night had positioned themselves around the camp's perimeter, calling out Blackjacks a bastard! Adjutant Curly Wearne took some tome to ferret them out.

FRED CASSIDY

To be continued.



Raymund Smith - Our Late Patron

Bank Clerk - RAAF Pilot - Barrister - MLA
Law Reformer - Alderman - Humanitarian - Mediator

Ray's experience at a court-martial, following a wartime training accident, which attracted National media coverage, was to shape his outlook on law reform and leave him with an enduring sympathy for the underdog.

The strength of character of a man, who suffered the questionable penalty of months in detention; and put the experience behind him to reclaim his flying commission and command a bomber crew in the air war against the Japanese, is worthy of our Nation's highest approval.

Ray's Wartime service and leadership in 60 combat missions was cool and skilful and his peacetime advocacy and spirit of mediation have brought.

Immeasurable benefits to the community and the Legal Profession. As his lifestory unfolds it will be seen that despite Ray's many achievements he has never lost his humility.

Raymund Percy Smith was born in Warwick, the third son of Percy Reginald and Anne [Kennedy] Smith. His mother's parents, John and Isabella Kennedy had migrated from Ireland and married in Brisbane in 1880. The Smiths came from Harden in Yorkshire and Ray's grandmother, Sarah Ann Baker from Longburton in Dorset where the family had lived since 1705. Upon arrival in Australia the earlier Smiths made their home in Dornoch Terrace, Brisbane.

Percy, Ray's father, an accountant with the firm of Kennedy Bowly in Warwick, became bookkeeper for the South British Pastoral Company at South Toolburra in the Toogoolawah district, before running his own accountancy practice in Toogoolawah. As his three sons grew up and needed access to higher education facilities the Smith family moved to Brisbane, where Percy joined the firm of Butler Brothers as their Accountant.

After commencing schooling at a small school in Clayfield Ray attended St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace, from which he gained his Junior Public Certificate in 1934. He joined the Queensland National Bank and served in offices at Brisbane, Biloela and Thangool, before resigning and joining the Shell Oil Company in 1937. It was important to Ray that being back in Brisbane, he was able to train for his pilot's licence which he obtained in late 1938. As an Aero Club member he was called up for medicals for the RAAF and, after tonsillectomy, commenced service in June, 1940.

Ray's initial flying training in the Air Force took place at Archerfield followed by service flying training course at the newly established Amberley Base. It was during the final training flight of that course that the aircraft he was flying collided with another Anson Bomber flown by O'Brien which crashed killing another trainee, Eric Girdler, the son of one of Ray's father's friends. Girdler did not have a parachute with him and the resultant publicity following that disclosure created a furore over the lack of parachutes. The Minister for Air, Mr McEwan was quoted in the Courier Mail of 26/03/41 as saying "The strongest disciplinary action will be taken." Ray was to experience the venom of that action!

At the completion of that training flight Ray was to have passed out as a Pilot Officer. As a commissioned officer he would have been entitled to a General Court Martial, but his commission was withheld and he was tried before a District court-martial. Although, at the inquest on Girdler's death the Coroner found that Ray was not guilty of negligence, that being the original direction of the Judge Advocate, Brisbane Barrister [later Judge] George Seaman, to the members of the court-martial, they rejected his direction. Mindful no doubt of the Minister's statement the D.C.M. adjourned the trial to consult higher authority in Canberra and obtain further advice and/or instruction. On resumption of the trial a finding of guilty was brought down and Ray was sentenced to six months detention. The sentence was carried out at the Army's Detention Barracks at Holdsworthy in NSW, an experience he put behind him.

On his return to Amberley and completion of his Service Refresher Course Ray was posted to the General Reconnaissance School at Laverton and transferred to Cressy in Victoria. He was selected as an original member of No.31 Beaufighter Squadron which was to operate in the Darwin area from Batchelor and later Coomalie Creek, an airstrip newly completed and still in service today.

Ray was transferred from that Squadron and underwent a conversion course on Beaufort Bombers at East Sale and a torpedo dropping course at Nowra in New South Wales. Whilst stationed there, on one training flight he was forced under extreme weather conditions to put his aircraft down on the nearly completed airstrip at Jervis Bay. The undamaged plane had to wait there until the strip was completed to be flown off and back to base.

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On completion of the torpedo dropping course he was posted to No.100 Beaufort Squadron based initially at Milne Bay, then Goodenough Island and Nadzab. From these bases sorties were carried out against Japanese installations in New Britain, particularly Rabaul, and against naval shipping. Some of these were without incident but others will always be remembered. On one attack against a Japanese cruiser he made a low level run and was credited by his crew and Squadron with dropping a stick of bombs down the cruiser's funnel, setting it on fire. On another occasion, when returning from a raid on Rabaul, loss of power in one motor at altitude saw his aircraft lose height and enter violent cumulus clouds which threw the aircraft about without any possibility of control. For what seemed an eternity they were tossed about and lost thousands of feet before Ray got engine power back and flew out from under the cloud.

"One of the luckiest escapes was during an encounter with an enemy aircraft. Our rear guns mounted on top of the fuselage were fitted with interrupters which were supposed to stop the gun firing when it passed from one side of the tail plane to the other, so that the bullets would clear the fuselage. On this occasion, as the gunner followed the enemy across behind us the gun didn't stop firing and severed the rudder and elevator control wires, which being under tension ended up as spaghetti in my cockpit. What was worse was that, unbeknown to me, the hydraulic line to the retractable tail wheel had also been cut allowing the oil to bleed out, thus preventing me from opening the bomb doors and getting rid of our bomb load. Fortunately I was able to steer the aircraft by using the motors and get into cloud of which there was, fortunately, plenty about. We made it back to Woodlark Island airfield where, when I found I couldn't lower the landing gear, and with a load of bombs, I was able by using the motors and trim tabs to make a belly landing without exploding the bombs.

"A further hydraulic failure and bomb hang up near Nadzab gave us another emergency and we again had to make a belly landing after two bombs had been jettisoned and one cut adrift through the floor with an axe, all because the landing gear would not come down. The loss of oil in the hydraulics and a failure of the fall back detonator which was supposed to blow the wheels down were responsible. During these emergencies Bill Davison did a magnificent job sending out distress signals as we lost height and our position was plotted at our base. In fact the whole crew was tremendous. We shared a tent with the squadron Chaplain, Christopher Debenham who always saw to it that there was a suitable meal for us on returning from such missions."

On completion of that tour of duty Ray was posted as a Pilot to No.4 Communications Unit with flying duties for RAAF Command. The Unit comprised one Beaufighter and two Beauforts which were called upon to ferry Staff Officers as required. He was demobilised in 1946.

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THE PERILS OF A NIGHT FORCED LANDING

I had recently crewed up with F/Sgt Theo Boehm to do a Beaufighter conversion course at 5OTU Wagga. We had set out on a night cross country flight, and everything was going OK. Suddenly all hell broke loose. The vibration was so severe that it rendered the radio and the inter-com unserviceable. We were later told seven articulating rods (con-rods in cars) had broken.

Theo was unable to maintain height and was trying to tell me to bailout, but with no inter-com I didn't get the message. I thought he wanted the course to fly back to Wagga, so I crawled over the ammo bins to the well behind him. As he saw me he yelled "I'm going to put her down, and with that switched on the landing lights, revealing us to be just above a forest of trees. I thought this is it!. Theo pulled the stick back and kept us clear of the trees, but whatever was on the other side of the trees we would have to wear.

Fortunately "Farmer Brown" had recently cleared this paddock and that is where we made a night forced landing among all the tree stumps. Just prior to landing Theo released his harness to switch off the motors to prevent fire, but we hit before he could snap back into his harness and he was thrown forward onto that wicked looking gun-sight. This tore his face about, which required many stitches. When we extricated ourselves from the kite, I lit a match for our cigarettes, and couldn't see Theo's face for blood.

Some farmers were out kangaroo shooting, and eventually found us with their spotlights, and took us back to a farmhouse, where the lady did what she could for us, and the farmer took us to Griffiths Hospital where they stitched up Theo's face. We spent the rest of the night at the hospital. .

Next day the CO of 5OTU, S/Ldr Bruce Rose came to pick us up. When he saw us, he did not ask how we were, but tore strips off us for not borrowing a razor, and having a shave. (Typical of ranks above F/Lt.)

Back to the RAAF hospital at Forest Hill for two weeks. When we were discharged we were paraded before W/Cdr Brian "Black Jack" Walker, who had just returned from 30 Squadron, in New Guinea. We thought we were going to get strips torn off us for pranging one of his kites, but the "kind old gentleman" that he was said "I suppose you blokes want some sick leave?. Of course we said no. After our sick leave we returned to finish our course at 5OTU, and were then posted to 30 Squadron at Goodenough Island.

The same night that we pranged F/Lt John Enquist and Sgt Joe Moyle were killed doing the same exercise. We eventually wrote of two more Beaus, one at Milne Bay and the other at Rockhampton.

BILL MASTERSON