

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

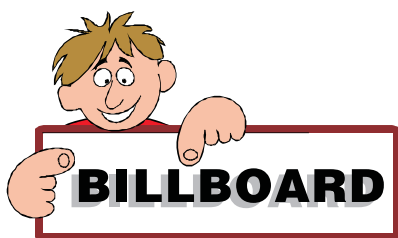
JUNE 2004



BELATED TRIBUTE TO A GALLANT AIRMAN

Family and friends of John Lyon at the Memorial Garden, RAAF Base, Amberley

**Bill O'Connor, Ken Clark, Stan Curran, Bruce Nixon,
Barbara Nixon, Peter White, Mae Lyon, G/Capt Osley,
Loretta Woods, Bette Wicks, Frank Beadle**



ASSOCIATION'S DAY RAAF AMBERLEY

I have received advice from Group Capt Kim Osley CSC ADC Officer Commanding No 82 Wing I will give full details including the itinerary for the day, in the September issue of Whisperer that the Combined Association's is to be Wednesday 15th September 2004 which will be posted about the third week in August.

BRISBANE ANZAC DAY PARADE



Some twenty members and friends attended this year's Parade which was led by President Ralph. No 219 Squadron AAFC provided a colour party of 4 cadets, who carried out their duties very well. We had six members who needed transport, and this year we were allocated one jeep and one very large truck. Whilst our numbers fall each year I believe we will continue to attend the parade for a few more years.

It was a great day and crowd numbers were obviously up again this year. There were large numbers of very young children sitting on the road at the front of the crowd, most of them waving a flag.

Another Edition of Whisperer is finally completed. It does not get easier. To those members who have contributed articles for past newsletters, I am grateful. If more members contributed it would make my job a lot easier. I am certain that all members must have had something that happened whilst serving in the RAAF that is worth putting into print. You can write, type or e-mail me.

Articles printed or reproduced in this newsletter reflect the memories or opinions of individual contributors and are not necessarily the opinions of The Beaufighter and Boston Association of Queensland, or the secretary/ editor. Other people's memories or opinions will probably differ from yours. It is an established fact that if there were twelve witnesses to an accident or event, they would give twelve different accounts of what actually happened, because they see it as it affects them personally.



SICK PARADE

- George Drury is making pretty good progress with his health problems, which is great news to hear. Keep boxing on George.

- Ron Snell was unable to make it from Townsville to the Brisbane Anzac Day Parade because of health problems. He is now well on the mend lets hope you are fit for 2005 Parade

- Ken Creedy has had serious surgery and is now on the mend.

FLU & PNEUMONIA SHOTS

It's that time of year again when you should be getting your flu shots. It is more important this year, not only because of your age, but because some of the rather nasty things that are happening in the Eastern countries may spill over in our direction.

So. Go get em" -that's an order.

A Snippet From History

Of the 157,646 Japanese troops sent into New Guinea only 10,072 came out. Sad yes, but remember this, they started the war in the Pacific which lasted for four years. Strangely those four years are not mentioned in Japan's history.

Young Japanese who visit Australia are surprised to find out that Japan was ever involved.

COMMITTEE

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President's Corner

Dear Members,

On Wednesday 31/3/04 Joan & I had the pleasure of attending a Cocktail reception hosted by AIR Marshall A.G. Houston, AO, AFC, The Chief of Air Force to commemorate the 83rd Anniversary of the RAAF which was held in ANZAC Hall, Australian War Memorial.

The highlight of the reception was the restored G for George & its new setting. Also on view was a replica of an ME 109 which was one of the German fighters which inflicted such losses on Bomber Command.

The acoustics display was also very realistic & at times quite eerie. I thoroughly recommend that any of our members visiting Canberra should visit the Australian War Museum to see the display which is repeated a number of times daily.

We were pleased to meet up with Fred & Wendy Cassidy where Fred was representing the 30 Sqdn Assoc. of NSW as its President. Fred also met the PM after the latter had accidentally spilt some drink on Fred's suit some people have all the luck!

Well ANZAC Day has come & gone. We had a reasonable representation marching behind our banner. I must admit we had at least 3/4 foreigners amongst us as 2 Mosquito & I Beaufort bods joined our ranks. I would like to thank all our members who made the effort to be with us including those who could not march but were in jeeps.

After the dawn service at Surfers & the Gunfire breakfast at Surfers RSL I arrived in Brisbane in time for the march. After our section of the march finished I shot off to Central just in time to catch a train to Nerang station as it was my intention to lay a wreath on behalf of our Association at the Civic service at Surfers which we have been in the habit of doing for some time now. However time beat me & Joan did the honours for us.

Later that afternoon I took the salute at the Mudgeraba Parade & delivered the address, No wonder I slept well that night.

Cheers, RALPH

From George Drury

I can't remember when I first found the following greeting. I found it fascinating, intriguing and charming. Could it be from the great Homer, or indeed from our finger-moving friend of old, Omar Khayarn?

'May the seed
which grows the tree,
from which your coffin will be made
be not yet planted.'

Memorial Service to Late F/Sgt John Lyon

A Memorial Service was held on the 18th March 2004 at the Memorial Garden at RAAF Base Amberley, where a plaque place on the Memorial plaque was unveiled.

Chaplain's Wing Commander Murray Earl and Wing Commander Paul Goodland conducted the service. In attendance were members of John's family, Officers from RAAF base Amberley and members of the Beaufighter and Boston Association.

The family members who attended were John's widow Mrs Mae Lyon, Daughter Bette Wicks, daughter Barbara Nixon, grandson Bruce Nixon, and grand daughter Lorretta Woods.

The RAAF officers were Group Captain Kym Osley CSC Commanding Officer 82 Wing Wing Commander Mark Bartetzko Base Commander Headquarters Combat Support Unit, Wing Commander John Martin Military Advisor Combat Support Unit, Wing Commander Alan Corr President of the Officer's Committee RAAF Base Amberley CO, and Squadron Leader President of the Officer's Mess Committee.

Mrs Bette Wicks, Group Captain Osley, and Peter White laid wreaths. Group Captain Kym Osley spoke and presented his book Uncle Joe's Story to Mrs Lyon. President Ralph Ind spoke on behalf of The Association. Mrs Bette Wicks gave a very emotional vote of thanks to all concerned and clearly expressed the family's feelings. To conclude a very memorable service Stan Curran presented 22 Squadron plaques personally made by him to each of the family.

A most enjoyable lunch was then held in the Officers mess, where the Group Captain Kim Osley's secretary Mrs Patricia Hawkins joined us. President Ralph thanked the PMC and his staff for a very good lunch.

After lunch family members and some of the association members were taken to the 23 Squadron hanger to view the restored Boston "Jessica", which had served so well with 22 RAAF Squadron in the South West Pacific during World War II. The grand children were allowed to board the aircraft and have a good look around this aircraft from the Squadron in which their grand father had served during World War II.

A visit to The RAAF Base Amberley's Memorial Garden is highly recommended to all members. The Garden is situated just outside the main gate to the Base.

PETER WHITE

LOCKHEED HUDSON A16-112 FLYS AGAIN



A Lockheed Hudson medium bomber has graced the skies over Amberley again, more than fifty years since the warbird saw operational service with No 8 Squadron. A16-12 was built in 1939 and acquired by the RAAF in 1941. After flying anti-submarine patrols off the coast of West Australia, this Hudson saw active service with No 6 Squadron at Milne Bay in New Guinea,

Now owned by Mr Malcolm Long, it is the last of the famous line still capable of flight. Mr Long an electrical engineer with a passion of aging warbirds contacted the Commanding Officer of No 6 Squadron to see if there was interest in the Hudson returning to Amberley. He was invited to take part in the Annual Combined Associations Day. This is a great event each year, where people from two important eras of Australian military aviation are brought together. This year the event was combined with the thirtieth anniversary celebration of the F111's arrival at RAAF Amberley.



Those of those attending this day will never forget the fly-over by an F111, a Caribou and a Lockheed Hudson as the last post was played at the Memorial service to start the celebrations.

This was followed by an exhibition of flying skill, when the Lockheed flew over again in low level close formation with an F111. Two incredible aircraft a generation apart.

At War's end, A16-112 was declared surplus by the RAAF, and was purchased by East West Airlines, and later flew with Ad Astra Aerial Surveys. Destined for disposal in 1975, Mr Long purchased the Hudson and began a 17 year restoration project that saw the aircraft take to the air again in November 1993.

Bound to be a crowd pleaser at historical events, the Hudson will participate in further air shows. Mr Long wants to train other pilots to fly the Hudson, and he is sure to have many volunteers.

A letter from Bette M Wicks

Dear Peter,

On behalf of my family, through the *Whisperer*, I would like to sincerely thank the Association for the beautiful service you held for my late father Flt Srgt John Lyon, and for all the trouble and care that you went to.

We could not believe that it would be so beautiful and we feel that at last Dad has received some recognition from his peers.

We were amazed to see the Officers from 82 Wing Amberley, that attended, and feel very honoured that they did, and that G.Captain Kym Osley and his wife attended, and laid a wreath on behalf of 82 Wing, they were so friendly to each and every one of us. I cannot remember all the names, but each officer made it his business to speak individually to us, and to express their opinion on Dad's story, and to say that they were honoured to be there. I thank them all very much, and hope they realise how much it meant to us to have them there.

Also the two Chaplains that officiated, they were delightful gentlemen, and the service they gave was first class.

I would also like to thank Stan Curran for the beautiful plaques that were presented to each of us, we were overwhelmed, it was a lovely gesture, they will hang in our homes with pride.

Thank you to all those who came to the service, members and their wives, some of you were not very well, and the fact that you came was really appreciated. You were all so friendly and made the day very special for us.

Also thanks for the beautiful luncheon at the Officers Mess, we did appreciate your gift to us of that great meal, and the drinks.

I would like to say a very special thank you to Peter White, as it was because of him that this day came about, he has gone to so much trouble, and been so caring about my Dad's treatment, you have been very special Peter, thank you so much.

My family could not get over the warmth and friendliness shown to us by everyone, the day will live long in our memories, and I feel that Dad will know that at last he has been recognised, by his fellow men.

Thank you seems so inadequate, but it is a really super big thank you from a family who appreciates all that was done, very, very, much

Sincerely

BETTE WICKS

Defence of Australia by the RAAF in WWII

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 refuelled 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 manoeuvrable 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 unescorted reconnaissance's, protected convoys of Australian troops, bombed, strafed, rescued hundreds and brought them safely to Darwin.

The record 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 defence of Rabaul to two Wirraways and one Hudson, all within seven minutes, the other three Hudsons 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 Hudsons 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, were 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. This was a vital but vulnerable airfield for the defence of New Guinea and Australia. No.32 squadron function was to reconnoitre 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 vigour, becoming "The Moresby Few" holding the forwarding push of the Japanese up until the arrival of 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, (44days) 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. 67th Air Division Navy XI Air Fleet, made up of the 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 defence of Milne Bay was a unique victory, with air force personnel sharing the same hardships as their army counterparts, in fact ground crew members of both No.75/76 Squadron had to take up arms to defend "Gurney" strip. During October 1942, two RAAF attack Squadrons arrived in New Guinea. They were No. 22 Squadron with Boston aircraft and No. 30 Beaufighter Squadron.

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The A.I.F. was pushing its way through the Kokoda Pass towards Buna, and the RAAF Squadrons acting as part of the USA 5th Air Force, gave them full support, by bombing 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 Straight on the 3rd 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 A20 bombers the convoy from high level. The entire convoy was sunk.

The RAAF 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 RAAF 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 Beauforts) were brought to Goodenough Island, supported by a third Beaufort Squadron (Torpedo Bombers). On November 8, Beaufort torpedo bombers attacked shipping in Simpson's Harbour, while the Beauforts also made many night raids over Vunakanau 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 program 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 nearby American where the frontline 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 refuelling 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 Hudsons 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 cooperation 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 air force in the world at the end of the war with over 50% of its aircraft being built in Australia.

RON NEWITT

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE WAR YEARS

Having completed his education in the depression years at Revesby Public (Dux) and Canterbury Boys High to Intermediate Standard (6xBs & 2x As), Fred was able to find work as a storeman in 2 Sydney Warehouses. He tried enlisting in the RAAF in November 1939 and was finally accepted for "rookie" training as a Guard on 29th July 1940 at Richmond A posting to Evans Head followed a bombing and gunnery school with "Fairy Battle" aircraft.

A re-muster to Clerk Stores enabled Fred to play cricket in the RAAF 1st grade side in the Lismore competition. Included in the RAAF team was Test players Bill Browns, Ernie McCormack and the brilliant 19 year old Ross Gregory later killed as an Air Gunner over Europe.

The treacherous surf at Evans Head saw Fred being rescued by 2 cricket mates. He fell asleep during the night on "battle guard"!

Wireless training at Ultimo, (Sydney) followed, with graduation at Point Cook, air training being done in Oxfords, DC2, Dragon Rapide and DH86B (4 engine biplane).

With 6 other Operators, namely Norm Creasley, Stewart Cameron, Rupert Wilson (all killed in 30 Squadron accidents), George Carnegie, Danny Box and Rod Sillett, Fred was selected to do a Navigators course at Mt. Gambier in Air Gunnery and Bomb Aiming at Port Pirie, graduation 25th June 1941.

So July 1942 saw 7 sprog Sergeant Navigators join the new 30 Squadron at Richmond. Fred was crewed with Flying Officer Bob Brazenor, one of several Pilots



Fred with his 31 Squadron pilot, Pat Boyd

fresh from Beaufighter operations in the UK. Wireless Operators familiar with 108213 gear in Ansons etc. had to retrain on the new AT5/AR8 gear, which had to be manually, tuned -no crystals!

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“Blackjack” Walker was the C.O. to lead the Squadron to Townsville on 17th August 1942 for 3 weeks tropical training. Whilst there, Bob and Fred were sent up to intercept a suspected Jap flying boat at night, only to find it was a U.S. Catalina. No one told the “would be attackers” it was only an AA exercise!

The 10th September 1942 saw the Squadron move to New Guinea with 6 aircraft, including Bob and Fred, going to Milne Bay to take part in the 1st land defeat of the Japs, with great credit going to No. 75 & 76 Kittyhawk Squadrons in brilliant co-operation with our AIF troops.

On landing at dusk, A19-151 was bogged, so Bob & Fred spent the night in a small hospital tent, one occupant being a small native boy, the only survivor of a Jap attack on a mission boat. The lad had lost a leg and gangrene had set in, making a most unpleasant welcome to Milne Bay. Many Japs were killed here and had to be buried by bulldozer.

From Moresby, 30 Squadron took part in the enemy’s defeat in the Kokoda, Buna, Gona and Lae areas, with allied armies facing enormous difficulties due to jungle and rain etc. The Beaus were used to destroy barges lines of supply etc. As a result, Japs were starving and resorting to cannibalism.

In November 2002 a party of 20 war veterans returned to New Guinea to celebrate 60 years since the Japs were defeated in the Milne Bay Kokoda-Buna areas and Bob was one of three veterans in that party. A great time was had by all!

Lae was a regular target for allied aircraft, and on one occasion Bob was able to escape a Zero attack and on another had to force land at Popondetta with one engine shot out. Jap raids on Moresby were frequent, with some of 30 Squadron aircraft destroyed or damaged. Coming in to Wards Strip (30 Squadron base) one

night, Bob and Fred were horrified to see a U.S. 4 engine Bomber hit a hill, bounce on to another and blow up with 10 crew and a load of bombs.

One of the 3 Navigators killed in accidents was Fred’s good friend and tutor, Stewart Cameron. Pilot Bruce Stephens crashed at Wards Strip on landing and whilst several air crews watched in horror the plane and crew were destroyed. Stewart had helped Fred in 15 months of training when one school report had stated “mathematics are disgraceful” he needed all the help he could get!

The “Bismarck Sea Battle” in March 1943 was the highlight of Bob and Fred’s 40 plus operations, mainly in A 19-15 testimony to great maintenance and a rugged aeroplane. In this crucial battle the Allied Air Fleet destroyed most of the 16 Jap Destroyers and Merchant ships, killing about 4000 troops and sailors and so

prevented enemy reinforcements at Lae. This battle has been categorized with Midway and Coral Sea as turning points in the War. Famous Movie Cameraman Damien Parer with Bob and Fred on one sortie.

Test and Ferry duties at Laverton for about 12 months (including being commissioned), followed by a 2nd tour posting to No.31 Squadron at Coomalie Creek (N.T.). Bob went to a Communications flight at Townsville. “Blackjack” grading him above average. Bob now lives at Mt Waverly (Vic) aged 81.

Fortunately again, Fred was crewed with a Beaufigher night fighter Pilot from the U.K. Squadron Leader Pat Boyd DFC AND Bar from 31 Squadron. Post War, Pat was Chief Test Pilot with TAA, but unfortunately was badly hurt in a car crash and died about 1982 in W.A. Pat’s cousin was famous Artist, Arthur Boyd.

Shortly before Pat’s arrival at Coomalie, Squadron Leader “Butch” Gordon DFC and Bar, was accidentally killed, so Pat was soon a Flight Commander, meaning he and Fred were leading attacks on Timor and other Islands sooner than expected. Navigation was so much harder than in No.30, as all targets were across the Timor Sea, always at low level.

When Dave Strachan and Jack Brassil lost an engine when attacking an Oil Tanker, Pat and Fred escorted them to a crash landing on the sandy Cartier Island in the Timor Sea. Giving top cover for 2 hours, Pat flew for 6 hours & 35 minutes back to Broome. Dave and Jack were rescued by an RAAF Catalina, which landed at Darwin on one engine, being very low on fuel.

In another tragic accident, 4 out of 6 aircraft were damaged over Soe (Timor) with Sergeant Ashbolt crashing into the sea, despite Pat’s advice over the R.T. Only the aircraft dinghy came to the surface.

In an “extreme range” attack on Maornere (Flores Island west of Timor) involving 4 Beaus, Pat shot down 2 “Betty” 2 engined bombers taking off. No planes damaged on our side. For this Pat was awarded the DFC and a well known Australian grazier wanted to pay Pat a reward for every Jap shot down!

A great “flap” occurred about 24th September 1944 when Wackett/Noble and Ritchie/Warner disappeared at night returning from an operation. Warner baled out and survived whilst no trace was found of the other 3. Fred was involved in 3 search flights and with Alan Cobb & Sid Green, spent 3 days in a radio equipped truck with 9 trucks of AIF troops in a fruitless ground search.

Pat was made Commanding Officer of 31 Squadron on 30th September 1944 and on 9th October 1944 flew to Noemfoor in New Guinea to prepare for a Squadron moves. In what was Fred’s last “op” and almost curtains for Pat and observer. A.O.C. Group Captain “Moth” Eaton, their machine was hit by AA over Timor, one engine feathered and Pat nursed the plane to Melville

Island, 350 miles from Timor. G/Capt Eaton's main concern was for his beloved pipe- little did he know that the 2 man dinghy was holed and the plane had 5 minutes of fuel left! 250 gallons had to be jettisoned because of a faulty cross-feed from the dead engine.

As a matter of interest, No. 30 Squadron lost 61 Air Crews and No. 31 Squadron lost 69, to either enemy action or accident.

In his official RAAF "Record of Service", Fred is shown as enlisting on 29th July, 1940 and discharged on 17th May 1945 (compassionate grounds).

Number of Operational Strikes 41 (30 Squadron)

Number of Operational Strikes 29 (31 Squadron)

Total Operational Hours 326 (Rank: Flying Officer)

Awarded: Mentioned in Despatches 2nd November 1945

Looking back now (2003) Fred attributes his survival to a great aircraft and great maintenance, 2 brilliant Pilots, training, experience, good luck and last but not least DIVINE GUIDANCE. He is thankful to be still enjoying good health. Married 61 years with 3 married daughters, 7 grandchildren (4 married) and 2 great grandchildren. Why shouldn't he be thankful?

FROM YOUNG HARRY'S DIARY

After two hours solo, it was traditional to have a second solo check and I was listed to have this check, first period of the day with F/O Thomas. But he got tooth-ache, so badly that he went off to the dentist first thing.

Most Tiger Moth instructors would have preferred to be on Active Service and many displayed this dissatisfaction but in different ways. Bad temper, bad language, alcohol, some decided if they became bad instructors and failed their pupils they would be posted away, hopefully to active service. Such fellows clouded the future of quite a few pupils.

But back to H.M.R. It was winter time and flying was behind schedule. Our Flight Commander had given himself a non-flying day, and in anticipation may have had a late night. He had a reputation for shouting, and even screaming, and I had overheard him do just that once or twice. He very reluctantly, and with expressed rancour, decided to take me on my second solo check.

I'm not certain of the sequence of events, but dozens of Tiger Moths all clambering to get airborne is not the best environment in which to nurse a hangover, and I tried valiantly to obey orders, albeit they were much louder and adjectivally much longer than those to which I was accustomed.

F/O Thomas was meticulous, and insisted on 'Taking over' 'Handing over procedures; but when we entered the slip stream of a preceding aircraft my new found instructor 'stirred the pudding' with the 'joy stick' (control column) and obviously, to me, had taken over control of the aircraft, so we wandered off aimlessly, until I was told in no uncertain terms that I was scrubbed. The Flight Commander flew us back to land and I was reminded very forcibly of his decision and told to get out of his sight. (Expletives deleted!)

I was trudging very despondently with my back to the flying area keeping to the right, when a familiar voice from across the road said "Good morning Rowell. Where are you off to?" It was my Instructor.

"I've been scrubbed, Sir!" "By whom?" "The Flight Commander. Sir." "Come with me."

Not another word between us, until outside the Flight Office. "Wait here" In the next twenty minutes or so I could not help hearing one raised voice frequently, but eventually Henry Maitland Thomas came out a little red faced but he quietly said "Get your flying gear and come with me." I did one quick circuit for him, and continued flying, mostly in command for more than 23,000 hours.

I am perennially grateful to HMT. The careers of many other trainees would have been very different had they had my good fortune in this and many other ways. About a year later in the Officers' Mess at RAAF Base Richmond, HMT was visiting over night on an Avro Anson ferry flight. He enquired about my progress "22 Squadron Bostons" (I nearly added 'Sir'). He looked a little wistful but added promptly, "Well done"!

And good fortune remained with me through active service and for many years in commercial flying. There was over a year as a Tiger Moth Instructor interspersed between those two experiences - and knowing what I knew I never once yelled at, or raised my voice to a trainee!



Boston being restored at RAAF Amberley on display King George Square, Brisbane

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Perhaps one early RAAF service story -

All Bostons were flown to Forrest Hill, Wagga NSW for engine modification etc. All were in various stages of disrepair. Sydney requested a Boston for its defence. We replied "None serviceable." But 'They' ordered "One Boston immediately to return to Sydney" There was a party organised for that night, and I was not known for 'leading the band' on social occasions, and I was very junior. So I was detailed to fly a Boston to Sydney, even though there was no compass in the cockpit; the back hatch was wired back temporarily; plus a couple of other minor defects. In addition, the weather was atrocious at Wagga, but forecast fine on the other side of the range.

As we were preparing to leave a Wing Commander virtually 'commanded' me to give him a lift to Sydney. I agreed - conditional on his possession of a parachute. He told me to get one for him, I refused. I was under orders to proceed with all haste. He arrived shortly afterwards having obtained his own chute.

So we set out me setting my Directional Gyro from the Navigators Compass. Turbulence was severe, and we experienced an upset. Later the Squadron song put it this way:

"Rowell's aeroplane had wings on then he flew into a cloud. When he came out bottoms up He nearly wore a shroud."

When we regained control, my Gyro had toppled (spun around and was almost useless), the intercom was U/S (there was no physical contact possible between crew positions in the Boston); all maps etc were now out of reach and at first glance both main planes looked bent. In fact both had been strained to the extent that a full span of camouflage paint had peeled off, and the bare metal looked like a bend.

I had flown over the area before, and when I found a railway line followed it happily. All went well until the train line disappeared into a tunnel but by then I had set my Gyro on a guessed-at heading, and in due course we landed at Richmond RAAF base.

I never saw that Wing Commander again, but my crew advised me that the chap's parachute was on the bottom hatch, and he was sifting on the floor leaning back on it. During the upset the temporary wiring attaching the hatch failed! The hatch and parachute and half the Wing Commander dropped out! I forgave the W/C for not thanking me for the lift and was glad the missing parachute was on his charge!

Perhaps as recompense I was given the task to look for submarines in Sydney Harbour a couple of weeks later. No restrictions on altitude - But DO NOT FLY UNDER THE BRIDGE.

I believe the morning traffic would have preferred us 'under rather than up, over and down again' with our

3,300 horse power. Two hundred mph, low level around Sydney Harbour was quite a thrill for a 21-year-old. Better than any Harley Davidson!!

The so called "Coast Watchers" of New Guinea did a marvelous job, but they were not confined to watching the coast.

We received advice that it would be beneficial if we (the Boston Squadron) attended a meeting of Japanese and Papuans at 2.30 p.m. s.w. of Lae. It was at the limit of our operational range, and a later appointment than we usually made, but it was decided it was a 'meeting' worth attending.

The reason we had for not accepting later 'appointments' was that we preferred to cross the Owen Stanley mountains through the rather tortuous Gap at 10/11,000 feet, rather than climb for a safe crossing at 16/17,000 feet. Daily thunderstorms and sometimes severe turbulence usually took the joy out of flying through the Gap, later than about 2 p.m. each day.

We kept the appointment but the trip outbound was too late for the Gap and it was probable (to me, anyway) that Moresby may have storms about for our return.

When our Leader was taking us in and out of cloud in formation, I decided to go it alone, and seek some top up fuel at Dobadura, which had very recently become available. We landed there re-fuelled and were about to slip over the mountains to home base at Moresby when said Leader arrived. He too decided he would be happier with more fuel but he had a 'sick' engine. He commandeered our aircraft and said he would send us a replacement engine A. S.A. P.

The Buna, Gona, Sanananda battles were ferocious, and cleaning up was under way, but Japanese bodies were to be seen occasionally during our wanderings filling in time inspecting areas the Squadron had bombed and strafed just a few weeks earlier.

Dobadura facilities for 'blow ins' were not five star, so we suggested it was advisable to keep up wind whenever the three of us were about. No change of clothes for several days however on our last day an Australian Army General approached me with the advice that he was not aware the South African Air Force was in New Guinea. I assured him that although I had a Pith Helmet on, it was indeed Australian issue. Undaunted, he requested a quick trip with us back to Moresby. I explained our facilities for passengers were non-existent, but I would expect my gunners would share their limited space with an Australian General for the 30-minute trip across the Owen Stanleys. I told him our expected departure time, and he was a few minutes early, and kept his distance until it was obvious we were ready.

I 'didn't' hear my junior gunner order the General "Hey you bring your clobber over here!" The General duly obeyed and when he had done so I tried to look as if

I had just noticed his arrival for take off.

My senior W.A.G., David Duncan and I both contracted malaria because of my decision to top up our fuel tanks.

Only one Boston arrived directly back at Port Moresby on that trip all others except one followed us in to Dobadura like 'Brown's Cows'. The exception, Les Kenway and crew, have not been heard of again, to this day. All the other later arrivals had a late evening meal at our Squadron's base. We had meat and vegetable M & V cold from the tin often, waiting for that promised replacement engine.

David and I were both alone in our respective tents NCO & Officers having separate 'wards' until I persuaded the Matron to allow 'fraternising'.

But this ended abruptly when the C.O. arrived to have a little piece of shrapnel removed from his calf.

I did not enjoy the manner of his dismissal of my crew member so I remained very very sleepy for the brief time we shared the tent/ward.

However, I will admit to some waking moments when I did overhear some very interesting conversations between the Air Officer Commanding and our C.O. Very interesting!

One of our Squadron aircraft crashed offshore but in shallow water a few miles east of Port Moresby. Immediate inspection revealed that there were no survivors, but retrieval of the bodies was delayed for two of three days.

This gave us time to attempt to arrange some refinements, with much better facilities than usual at previous similar events. Our facilities for such times were minimal, but I had observed a large quantity of quite elaborate caskets imported by our gallant allies. (No doubt Australians would have preferred such space was available for beer!)

I requested a loan of four. "No, sir, sorry!" But it was volunteered that no guards were on duty after midnight. We knew it was inappropriate when we scratched names on the metal plates provided. We used the best equipment to hand nails!

So next day it was off to Bomana Cemetery in our utility at high speed for reasons not obvious but quite positive. We were halted by the Military Police but before any admonition was delivered, the purpose of our mission, and the need for speed became obvious, and we were afforded a police escort.

But the best laid plan etc.etc. The gravediggers had not been warned of the much more elaborate than usual equipment we had acquired from our friends. The caskets would not fit in the holes prepared.

About the autumn of 1943 things began to settle down a little, and a Papuan Officers Association was formed

the opening dinner was to be a gala event. I shared a tent with the Squadron Doctor, so my transport to and from was assured in the squadron Ambulance; so long as I kept sight of the doctor. He had 'strayed' a little after the inaugural meeting of the Papuan Medical Officers Association a few days before All items on the not, too elaborate menu were numbered, and to help the locally recruited staff we were instructed to order by numbers displaying fingers to make sure we were understood. Three of number ten for instance, was simple, but when it came to coffee it was a pantomime everybody wanted it. Without a hint of a smile our mission educated fuzzy wuzzy waiter asked (after we had struggled with ordering coffee for fourteen) in perfect Oxford English "Black or White, Sir!"

At the close of this memorable night, one of our numbers, deprived of late of a regular intake of alcohol became well disorientated. What better transport than the ambulance? on the stretcher provided, and with small wheels to assist maneuverability! We arrived at the base of our scattered, hilly campsite, and proceeded to carry our friend to his camp on the crest of our hill. Half way up we had to lower our stretcher to relieve other pressures, in the pitch dark. When we returned to our labours, our stretcher patient had disappeared. His wheels had rolled him down hill, and the carrying process had to begin over again. Apparently he was oblivious to his plight, so we had not been able to home in on any cries for help. It took quite some time to locate him.

Earlier on our 'patient' had been scolded by a fuzzy-wuzzy waiter for attempting to overcome his impatience for food, by almost chewing the stalk off an arum lily, part of the table decoration. The Waiter's horrified protest of "NO, Turbid NO, NO, NO" aroused the interest of the whole assembly! Who would choose to be a waiter at an inaugural dinner at an Officers' Club? (P.N.G. of elsewhere?)

HARRY ROWELL



30 Squadron crews who took part in a raid on Rabaul October 1943

Some Bits & Pieces Collected on the Path

by George Drury

What about this 'Touch of humour'?

The following humorous dialogue comes from a lawsuit brought by a Queensland farmer after his horse was hit a by a car:

Defence Counsel: After the accident, didn't someone come over to you and ask how you felt? Farmer: Yes, I believe that is so.

Defence Counsel: And didn't you tell him that you never felt better in your life. Farmer: Yes, I guess I did.

Defence counsel sits down. Plaintiffs counsel stands up.)

Plaintiffs Counsel: Will you tell His Honour the circumstances in which you made the response?

Farmer: Yes. Not long after the accident, my horse, which had sustained broken legs, was

Thrashing around. A policeman came up to the horse, put his revolver to its ear and shot it dead. He then went over to my dog, which had a broken back and was howling miserably. He put his revolver to the dog's ear and shot it. Then he came to me and asked, "How do you feel?"

This next story was real. Pity the poor bastard of a repairman. The humour kills me...

'Anonymously, I think, from the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin, comes this story of a central west couple who drove their car into Rockhampton K-Mart only to have their car break down in the car park. The husband told his wife to carry on with the shopping while he fixed the car.

'The wife returned later to see a small group of people near the car. On closer inspection she saw a pair of male legs protruding from under the chassis. Although

the man was in shorts, his lack of underpants turned private parts into glaringly public ones.

'Unable to stand the embarrassment she dutifully stepped forward and tucked everything back into place. On regaining her feet she looked across the bonnet and found herself staring at her husband standing idly by. The repairman had to have three stitches inserted in this head.

Now look, anybody who has lived closely to the indigenous people of New Guinea, like me, would know that in the naivete shown, this story would be factual: -

'Terry Jackman did show me a very amusing clipping, which shows that you can't be too careful. In PNG, I think it was Port Moresby, Boroko Motors advertised six pictured cars for sale. Under the pictures went 'Finance or lease to approved clients; Trade-ins accepted' etc.

'The ad appeared and two cars were sold. It also happened that they were offered lots of boats as trade-ins which were no good to them. The boss of Boroko Motors rang the paper a few days later. "The ad went well," he said. "So run it again and across the pic of the Merc and the Ford put a "Sold" strip. And put the finance and trade-in bit except we don't want any more f ... boats (using the word in full frontal). The ad duly appeared. "Boroko Motors offer you a fine selection of executive driven motor vehicles ... Finance or lease to approved clients. Trade-ins accepted. No f ... boats.

From GEORGE DRURY



"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.