

The

WHISPERER

The Newsletter of the Beaufighter and
Boston Association of Queensland

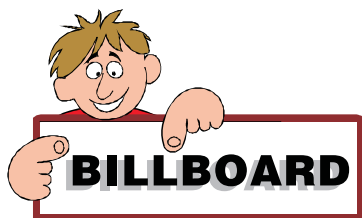


MARCH 2002

COMMITTEE FOR 2002



Back row: Pres. Ralph Ind, Les Turnbull, Stan Curran
Front row: Vice Pres. Bill O'Connor, Sec. Peter White, Jack Chamberlin



AGM and BARBECUE.

This years AGM, was once again held as a barbecue, at the home of President Ralph, and Joan's home on the Nerang River at the Gold Coast. The business was conducted by Ralph in his usual good style. President's and Secretary's reports were given, and the present office bearers were all re-elected.

A very good attendance was had. Some 28 members and partners were present and once again it was a happy and enjoyable day. Nicki Barr and his lovely wife Dot were invited guests, and both seemed to be enjoying themselves very much.

Our late member Graeme Hunt's widow, Nella and son Bruce, with his wife Helen attended. Bruce brought along some operational photos, of Thirty Squadron Missions together with a piece of the wing tip, that penetrated the cockpit when a wing tip was opened up on Graeme's Beau during a mission on New Britain.

Once again the barbecue was great. Ralph, complete in his butcher's apron, once again did a sterling job. Joan worked pretty hard to set everything up, and ensured everyone enjoyed themselves. Ron Snell made the long trip by car from Townsville, and said he would be back as usual for the Anzac Parade in April.

Daisy Curran drew the raffle, which once again was a numbered print of Brian Wood's painting of 22 Squadron Beaufighter, A9-61, which he painted for Eddie Morton. The winner was Harry Rowell of Perth. Congratulations Harry.



SICK PARADE

Bill Atkinson at Deception is recovering from a spell in hospital. Was good to hear from you sounding a bit more like your old self.

Ron Collins rang to advise he was not up to scratch, and would not make it to the Barbecue.

Austin Donnelly is still making a recovery from his recent problems.

George Clough is going pretty well at The Trinder Nursing Home.

VALE **GRAEME HUNT**

Died suddenly on 15th December 2001. His funeral Service was held at the Church of England Tweed Heads, on Wednesday 19th December 2001. A large number of friends, associates and members of his family attended. To honour Graeme's memory The Association was represented by Pres Ralph and wife Joan, Sec. Peter and Frank King.

During his service in the RAAF, Graeme did a tour of operations with 30 Squadron during 1943-1944, taking part in many missions against the enemy. He was a well respected pilot in the Squadron, and had a great love for his Beaufighter.

Our sincere sympathies go to Nella and the family, on their devastating and sudden loss.

RAY SMITH.

After a long illness our Patron, Group Captain Ray Smith, RAAF (Rtd), passed away peacefully on 10th February, with his family present to say goodbye. A private cremation service was held at the Gold Coast, on Wednesday 13th Feb, and a Memorial Mass was conducted by Chaplain Group Captain Paul Goodland at St. Kevins Church on 15th Feb. 16, 2002.

Ray agreed to be our Patron in 1995 and gave us great support. He has a history showing courage and determination, suffering serious setbacks and fighting against terrific odds to resume his service in the RAAF. I have sought permission to publish extracts from his Biography in our Newsletter. I am sure members will find the story of Ray's battle against severe odds, and his achievements will be of interest.

His drive and tenacity to have a Memorial wall established at the Memorial Rose Garden at RAAF Base Amberley, is typical of his strength of character.



Sec. Peter White, Patron the late Ray Smith, Chaplain Paul Goodland, Pres Ralph Ind.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

My contribution in this edition must necessarily be brief" hurrah" did I hear someone say?. Peter has a very full compliment of articles to print & in any event has covered most of the important items elsewhere.

However I would like to thank all those members & their wives who attended the AGM and BBQ on the 10th February particularly the ladies who brought along so many goodies to eat. We were graced with the presence of Nicky Barr & his lovely wife Dot. I am sure every one enjoyed themselves. I was very honoured to be reelected as your President.

I am sure we were all very saddened by the untimely death of our Patron Ray who overcame the curse of unwarranted severe political interference in his early RAAF career & went on to a very distinguished career in the Airforce & in civvy street. Vale, Ray Smith-we will remember you!

Regards

RALPH IND

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A reminder that subs for the year 2002 are due. If you have forgotten, subs are \$10.

The raffle has been drawn.

COMMITTEE

Patron		
Raymond Smith		3263 1274
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Ralph Ind		5538 5439
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Les Turnbull		5537 7965

COMBINED ANNUAL TROPHY PRESENTATION AT RAAF AMBERLEY



The presentation of trophies to members of The Strike Reconnaissance Group was held on Tuesday 4th December 2001 at RAAF Base Amberley. The Commander ACDRE Dave Dunlop, welcomed us at morning tea in the Officers Mess.

We were then taken to view the new F-111 Test Facility, a new \$25m purpose built facility designed to test the structural integrity and durability of the RAAF's F-111 fleet. This Cold Proof Load Test facility built by Lockheed Martin Australia, and commissioned on 26th July 2001 is designed to proof test F-111 airframes as part of managing the aircraft's structural integrity. This will ensure the fleet remains viable until the planned retirement date of year 2020.

We then visited the training area, where personnel are trained in all aspects of maintenance procedures that are carried out by RAAF personnel. Here we were given a run down on the new procedures developed to clean out the fuel tanks of the aircraft. This as a result of the recent enquiry into the health hazards to staff having to spend long hours in the tanks and breathing the fumes of chemicals used in the cleaning. Must have been a pretty lousy job.

We were then returned to the mess for lunch. After lunch trophies were presented.

President Ralph presented The Beaufighter and Boston Shield and a personal inscribed pewter pot to SGT S Whinfield.

The Pathfinder trophy was presented to FLTLT Scott Stewart (1 SQN), by President Alan Vial

The 467-463 (Lancs) Squadron's trophy was presented to CPL L V Sweeny

(501WG) By Assoc President Max Johnson.

The Beaufort Trophy was presented to FLTLT G E Braz (1 SQN), by President John Lemke.

Speeches were made during the presentations and we departed for home after a very successful and enjoyable day.



1940

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Soon after World War 2, No 22 City of Sydney Squadron was reformed and equipped with Tiger Moth, Wirraway and Mustang aircraft. The Squadron was formed up at Bankstown near Sydney but soon after moved a little further out to Schofields.

The role of the Squadron was to train Ab Initio (from the beginning) pilots, continue the training of some ex wartime pilots who were in the reserve and train some ground staff.

I had a lot of admiration for the ab initio pilots. They had been carefully selected from Sydney University students. All were studying a branch of engineering and some already had a degree in science. All were well behaved young gentlemen. I got to know them very well as I instructed them on the three engines fitted to the aircraft.



The ex World War 2 pilots were CAF reserve and were required to serve so many days a year, normally at week ends but sometimes they would come in during the week when they were on leave from their work. All were Flt Lt or below.

It seemed a bit unusual one day when I was told a Wng Cdr Gordon Steege was going to fly a Mustang. None of us had ever heard of him. Surely he wasn't a CAF bloke with that rank. To us he was a bit of a mystery.

He arrived at the flight office to sign the EE77, which certified that the aircraft was ready to fly. He must have borrowed a flying suit. It had no rank or anything to indicate who he was. We went out to the aircraft and I helped to strap him in the cockpit. Then I positioned myself on the tarmac to give him the OK to start the engine. When I was strapping him in I noticed he had a book on his lap now he seemed to be reading it. He looked up and beckoned me up to the cockpit and then he said "How do you start this thing?"

STAN'S PAGE

I took him through the starting procedure and started the engine. Then I jumped down and removed the chocks when he waved them away. Then I gave him the thumbs up indicating it was OK to taxi.



2001

As I went back to the hangar, imagine my thoughts. This fellow was going to fly one of the fastest fighter aircraft in the world and he couldn't start the engine! I decided to watch the 'take off'. No problem - he made a nice take off. I lost interest and went back to what I had been doing.

Some time later the duty pilot rang the flight desk. The Wng Cdr couldn't get the undercarriage down, can you send an airframe fitter up to advise him. Cpl Ken Piggot sped up to the tower in the hangar jeep. In the meantime the word was getting around that there was a Mustang unable to get the wheels down. An audience was gathering on the tarmac to see the landing. Later we heard that Ken Piggot had told the Wng Cdr how to lower the wheels and the Wng Cdr said "It doesn't say that in the Pilots Notes." The Cpl said "I'm sorry Sir, I'm only an airframe fitter and haven't read the Pilots Notes, but believe me I know how to lower the wheels." The wheels came down.

Next thing was to land the aeroplane. Would you believe it was a perfect landing? I never forgot the incident, Wng Cdr Gordon Steege just seemed to disappear but his name was imprinted on my mind.

Twenty-five years went by. When I was SENG0 at Darwin, another officer Flt Lt Geoff Edwards and I shared the ownership of a 22 ft half cabin cruiser. We were both members of the Darwin Trailer Boat Club. The club regularly held game fishing tournaments. Other than sharks the usual game fish we caught were Turrum, Queen fish and Spanish Mackerel averaging about 16 lb. To score maximum points we fished with 6 lb classlines. The C.O. and the O.C. were also members of the club so they knew all about what sort of fun it was.

The C.O. rang me one morning and said "How would you like to go fishing for the day?" I told him I couldn't think of anything better. He then told me an Air Commodore was visiting and was at a loose end for the day. Of course the answer was "Great, I'll get Geoff Edwards and we will take him out for the day." He then told me the Air Commodore's name was Gordon Steege! Unbelievable that we had both been in the Air Force for the last 25 years and I had never heard of him since the day I had strapped him in a Mustang. We had good fun fishing (see photo), then Gordon Steege disappeared from my life once more.

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Just recently Peter White and I heard that the *War Diaries of Sqn Ldr John Jackson DFC* had been published by his son Arthur and daughter Patricia. We had their telephone number so telephoned Patricia and asked whether we could purchase a copy each.

Subsequently we had a delightful morning with them and were able to get a copy each. The books were signed by both Arthur and Patricia.

The book is an excellent read. It is an absorbing account of the early war days in The City of Brisbane No.23 Squadron, then in the Middle East in No.3 Squadron and finally 75 Squadron in New Guinea.

Imagine my surprise when Gordon Steege popped up again, more still he was mentioned no less than fifteen times - this man who I had only met twice before over 55 years and never seen in uniform. If I had I would have known that he had a DFC. No wonder he could fly a Mustang!

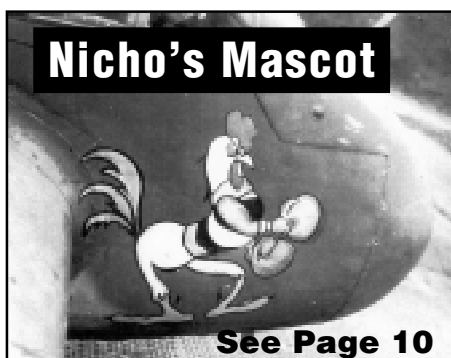
Now I know a lot more about both Sqn Ldr John Jackson DFC and Air Cdr Gordon Steege DFC. Gordon Steege may have reached higher rank and possibly received higher merit before finally retiring. Both men were National heroes in 1941. John Jackson had shot down 6 EA (Enemy Aircraft) Gordon Steege had shot down 8 EA.

The following is an extract from Sqn Ldr John Jackson's diary dated 21 April 1941.

"Gordon Steege, my flight commander, has been awarded the DFC and it is a greatly merited award. He has led us sortie after sortie - he has eight EA to his credit and several more unconfirmed. His leadership has been very sound - few realise the terrific strain and responsibility imposed on the leaders of our patrols. The safety and result of each patrol are mainly due to the leader's initiative and the slightest false move might result in disaster. Gordon has undoubtedly proved himself an exceptional leader and we are all very pleased that at last he has received some recognition of this great service."

It is now a long time since I first met Gordon Steege and then we only had two brief encounters. I wonder where he is now? Perhaps he is still flying.

STAN CURRAN



AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE CADETS PASSING OUT PARADE



President Ralph and Hon. Sec Peter were invited to attend the Annual Passing out Parade of 219 Squadron (Air Cadets), which was held at Archerfield aerodrome, on Saturday 1st December 2001. The weather was fine, but very hot, and must have made things difficult for the cadets.

The Cadets carried out their Ceremonial Parade with precision and attention to drill and dress that would do credit to a RAAF Squadron. In the dim past I have taken part in some parades that would have been put to shame by the performance of these cadets. The reviewing Officer was GRCAPT H Bartholoeusz RFD and the Officer Commanding was WGCDR (AAFC) R B Wilson. GCAPT Bartholoeusz strongly commended the cadets on their performance, in his speech at the conclusion of the parade. It was very appropriate that the parade was held at the aerodrome, with the sounds of aircraft taking off and landing, lending to the whole atmosphere of the parade.

At the conclusion of the parade, Awards and Trophies were presented. President Ralph and Secretary Peter presented The Beaufighter and Boston Association Trophy and a Plaque to Cadet CPL Steve Mehan. They also presented four certificates of proficiency to other cadets, and then accepted a Cadet Squadron Plaque and Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of our association. At the conclusion of speeches and presentation, the Cadets formally marched off. It was a pleasure to see the performance of these young people and the enthusiastic way they carried out their tasks.

Afternoon tea and refreshments were then served in the AIRTC Mess at Archerfield.

PETER WHITE



FREDDIE (BEAUFIGHTER) CASSIDY REMEMBERS

I joined the Air Force because my father joined the Army again, in the Second World War. I wanted to join the Army with him but he said 'No! You're not coming into the Army'. So I said "Well I'll join the Air Force; I want to fly.

Early in 1941 I took myself down to the Recruiting Centre in Plunkett Street, Sydney. My mother wasn't too happy about me enlisting, and insisted that I must enlist in a non-flying capacity. The Recruiting sergeant said he could enlist me straightaway as a Service Policeman. But a copper's life held no attraction for me at all.

Did I know Morse Code? Yes, I was a Boy Scout and had my wireless badge. He gave me a short test (probably six words a minute) and then told me to file down a small piece of metal into a prescribed shape. That apparently showed my aptitude for training as a wireless operator!

Having eventually got my call-up papers, I joined other recruits at Central Station for the trip to RAAF Station Parkes where we did our rookie training. We spent about four weeks learning to swing a rifle around and making sure we didn't have two left feet.

Next thing I know I'm off in the train to Melbourne on a posting to No. 1 School of Technical Training, to learn how to be an AC1 Trainee Wireless Operator.

All the instructors at the Melbourne Technical College were civilians except for Warrant Officer Joe Reynolds. He used to threaten us with being remustered to a messman if we made the slightest hiccup in our course -and that was the last thing in the world that I wanted to be. Boy, did I work. I worked night and day to pass that radio course! Our barracks were in the Exhibition Building at Carlton, a huge barn of a place in which nearly a thousand trainees lived while undergoing their courses. That cavernous place was noisy, windy, and so very, very cold. Everything was open, and what little privacy there was came from 6 foot high plywood partitions in which some twenty of us airmen lived. We slept on straw palliasses laid out on the wooden floor.

We marched to the Melbourne Technical College for our lectures where we practised sending and receiving Morse code, learning about messages, and about signals procedure. We also had lectures on radio theory, as well as electricity and magnetism.

At the fortnightly pay parade I was handed two pounds two shillings by the paying officer. I got a guinea a week to live on, having made an allotment to my mother to pay for some insurance policies I had taken out before the war. I managed quite well on that amount of cash.

The trainee wireless operators who completed the course in Melbourne went to the RAAF Signals School at Point Cook: I trained on No. 55A course at that School. Four times a day we marched to and from our barracks to the school area along the airfield perimeter road - about two miles. Our drummer banged away at his drum for those marches.

The day I arrived at the Point a trainee pilot pranged his Wirraway. I rushed over and climbed up on the wing to rescue the poor fellow but was pushed out of the way by others. When they got the pilot out of the cockpit, the only thing that was holding him together was his flying suit. That wasn't the best introduction to flying with the Air Force.

Our days at the Signals School were occupied with sending and receiving messages, becoming familiar with Direction Finding gear and with the relevant airborne and ground equipments.

The radio sets were the T1082 and the R1083 - Royal Air Force sets of some considerable vintage, and which were fitted in our Ansons and Oxfords. We did some air exercise in a DH 86 and a DC2.

We were all treated to a proper graduation parade when the Commanding Officer presented us with our insignia - a metal badge (referred to as a handful of sparks) to be worn on the sleeve. On that day we were remustered as Wireless Operators, and promoted to Leading Aircraftsman rank. It was a very sad day when I left Point Cook, for I was called in to the CO's office to be told that my father had been died in Damascus.

Cootamundra was my next posting, where I was employed in the W/T Section carrying out servicing and repair on radio equipment and sometimes flying in the Ansons as the Wireless Operator. After about seven weeks in the W/T Section I was surprised to receive a posting to join No. 21 Course at No. 2 Air Observer's School at Parkes. There were three other W/T Operators posted to that navigation course - Hedley Caine, Bill Cameron, and Archie Mairet.

The air exercises were done in Avro Ansons; and most involved using an RAF bombsight to do a two-fix wind-find, followed by a three-fix wind-find; the drift values were transferred to a Course and Speed Calculator to get the wind direction and speed.

The next posting was to No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School at Evans Head. I did not mind the old Fairey Battle, but being a little bloke I had some problems in handling the Vickers GO gun and swinging it around to take aim to try and hit the drogue. The rear cockpit was completely open, and for obvious safety reasons, the gunner had to clip a monkey strap

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on to his parachute harness. On one occasion the Fairy Battle and I parted company in the air. We hit an air pocket, and while the aircraft dropped suddenly, I stayed in the one place. So there I was, totally out of the cockpit, flying - all by myself.

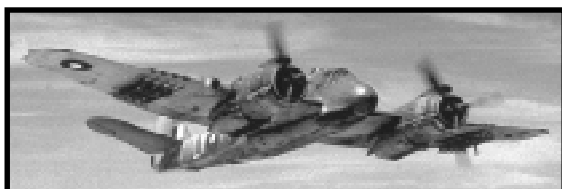
We had a graduation parade at the end of the course when we were presented with our Observer wings and our sergeant's stripes. Because of my W/T qualification my navigator qualification, and my bombing qualification, I was categorised as a Navigator (BW). Oh, I was so self-conscious, I was a senior NCO and wearing a flying badge at the ripe old age of nineteen. I was more embarrassed than anything else.

On graduation I was posted to No. 30 Squadron at RAAF Station Richmond, and I can vividly remember that long walk from Clarendon railway station through the main gate of the Air Force base and up to the Sergeants Mess. Well, wasn't it great. Straight from the Airmen's Mess to the Sergeants' Mess, on my own, knowing nobody, and not sure about what to do. To get into that lovely two story brick building, where I was given a room to myself. How long had this being going on? I asked myself.

The next morning I reported to the Squadron Orderly room and got myself cleared in. Together with other Navigator (BW)'s that had arrived, I was taken over for radio instruction by Flight Sergeant Lennie Greenhill and Warrant Officer Harold O'Connor. Two totally different individuals. Lennie, being something of an unsmiling autocrat who didn't suffer fools gladly, while Caesar maintained a more relaxed attitude, being very friendly and prepared to have a bit of a laugh. Perhaps Caesar was a little bit scruffy, but you could warm to him, for he was a person's person. We held both of those fellows in awe for they had both been in England flying in the Sunderlands of No 10 Squadron. They set up classes and taught us about the AT5/AR8 radio sets with which our Beaufighters were equipped.

How did we get crewed up? When we first got there and the pilots were doing their familiarisation and conversion flights, a navigator was told off to go flying with each one. It worked out that during the first couple of weeks I flew with George Sayer, Ron Downing, and Mos Morgan. Mos and I had got to know each other in the Sergeants' Mess, and one night he said 'Would you like to fly with me?' I didn't have to think too long before I replied 'Why not?' We flew together from then on, completing two operational tours in Beaufighters.

FRED CASSIDY



The Rescue of S/Ldr I Loudon DFC.

His Squadron know him as the "Boong" and he is quite candid, for he was born in New Guinea. His father was a Major in ANGAU. Loudon is only 22 and has spent fifteen months rising from Sgt's rank.

Recently he had an exciting week.

He was promoted to S/Ldr. Then he had to bail out of his Kittyhawk because of flak over Cape Hoskins, New Britain. Over 130 miles from the coast he bailed out, near a USA torpedo boat, and he was picked up within nine minutes. Next day he was paraded for the announcement that he had been awarded the DFC.

Loudon was in Spitfires in Britain in 1941-2, and returned to convert to Kittys, then he went through the Battle of Milne Bay with 75 Squadron. In 1942-43 he flew as No 2 to Bluey Truscot, and was with Truscot when the Ace was killed in a training accident.

His torpedo boat rescue was quite a show. When he bailed out he was trailed by a RAAF Beaufighter which was looking for another Kitty pilot. Half an hour later the Beaufighter crew located the other Kitty pilot who had been floating about for 24 hours, some 50 miles away. They intercepted a US Catalina and directed it to the dinghy. The second lucky Kitty pilot was W/O J Arthur.

Loudon's Kitty had been hit in three places by flak. Oil covered the windscreen and blotted out his vision, but he tried to get as close to home as he could. All the while he had been giving a breezy play by play description on the R/T. First he thought he would bail out at 20 miles from the New Britain coast. After 100 miles he commented "This kite is still flying, but I don't know why". Told he would have to change course 30 degrees, he was seeing nothing but oil at this stage, he replied "Ruddy poor navigation, that". When everything that could go wrong had gone wrong. "how's that for organisation".

The torpedo boat told him to change course as the vibrating engine lost power and shuddered. He jettisoned the hood, which struck him over the right ear as the slipstream carried away the hood. Then he rolled the Kitty over and fell out. The US Catalina intercepted by the Beaufighter crew has saved 18 lives, including 9 members of another Catalina and 5 members of a Beaufort crew.

In the Beaufighter crew concerned in the rescue were F/Sgt T Boehm and F/Sgt W Masterson, with W/O West and Sgt J Leary as lookouts. The Beau crew said, their diversion to the Kittyhawk was responsible for the discovery half an hour later of Arthur. This event took them sufficiently off their original course to see him some 300 to 400 yards away. They could easily have missed him, as several aircraft had already done, had they continued on their exact course.

Arthur said he had seen aircraft within 200 yards of him without being sighted. He watched a Catalina for 2 hours on the first afternoon and that night he saw it pass practically overhead on its way home. He saw 2 Beauforts miss him by 200 to 300 yards, two Kittys pass right above him and a Beaufort about 400 yards away. Next day several other aircraft came near, but not until the afternoon did 2 Beaufighters appear and find him. "From then on" he said, "everything was apples. Soon there were Beaufighters, Bostons, Beauforts and a Catalina about me".

The second Beaufighter was piloted by F/O B Albrecht and F/Sgt J Carrol. Altogether it was an exciting day

From BILL MASTERSON.

How I qualified to join the Goldfish Club

During the twilight of WWII at least 2 Beaufighter Sqdns Nos.22 & 31 suffered a series of engine failures mostly on take-off. In one day alone on Tawi Tawi Island. 22 Sqn lost F/O Dick Scott an old friend & a very good pilot, 31 Sqn lost two Beaus on takeoff while a Beaufreighter also crashed on takeoff, the crew being incinerated. At approx. the same time I also lost an engine on takeoff when I had bombs on board & finished a screaming heap on Sanga strip (the late Lofty Hayes wrote an article about the incident).

Sabotage was suspected but as far as I am aware no one really knows the real reason, although I believe Stan Curran may have his suspicions.

Back on Morotai in July 1945 22 Sqn lost 3 Beaus in 10 days which were mostly attributed to engine failure with the possible exception of Chesty Bond. The last of these 3 prangs was my 2nd engine failure in 6 weeks, in other words it was beginning to become a bit of a habit I could well do without.

I had been rostered to carry out an armed recce over Tarakan in A8-188 on the 20th July with Jack Chamberlain. On taking off from Wama strip. As I became airborne I noticed that my airspeed indicator was showing zero in other words it was US. Normally this would not have mattered all that much in fine conditions but we were required to fly on instruments through a tropical weather front, with its attendant problems, en route to Tarakan so I decided to land in the hope that the problem could be rectified urgently. On the downwind leg I rang with a request to clear the strip as I would be approaching more quickly than usual.

While descending rapidly on final approach & very near the northern end of the strip a Yankee DC3 came from nowhere, without any permission from the tower, & cut in right in front of me, obviously the pilot hadn't seen A8-188 or heard any of the radio traffic. You can guess what trumps were at that moment

After narrowly avoiding a collision I found the Beau about 50 feet above the deck & in attempting an overshoot procedure as I pushed the throttles through the rated gate the port motor cut out & almost instantly my airspeed became dangerously low with 40% flaps & the undercarriage down. Turning starboard against the good motor (recommended procedure) was a no no as I would have collected the ground sloping up to the Pitoe strips so I made a very shallow turn to port with the Beau close to stalling and on straightening up found I was unable to gain any speed or height & had no alternative other than to ditch which I did about half a mile east of Wama strip.

On ditching my harness gave way, my nose collected the gun sight & I was knocked semi-conscious-my nose was not a pretty sight as I found out when I finally got

back to shore. After fumbling to open the top hatch, I guess more by good luck than good management I floated out of the Beau which then sank like a stone. I still had my parachute & raft strapped to me. Being only partially conscious I vaguely remembered feeling for the CO2 bottle to inflate the raft. I also vaguely remembered the instructions not to open the bottle quickly because of the venturi effect.

As I was under water mostly by this time & trying to gulp for air & instead swallowing much more water than I could cope with, I turned the handle of the bottle slowly to the point where it simply came away in my hand with no gas escaping to inflate the raft. At that stage with so much salt water inside me & as I was sinking I felt I had it.

Fortunately, in the meantime, sensing I was in some trouble my navigator Roger Blunt who had not been injured & who was some distance away because of the fast current with considerable effort on his part was able to swim to the point where I had sunk & was able to drag me to the surface & support me until I was fully conscious. We were rescued by canoe parties & taken back to shore.

Roger for his sterling efforts & quick thinking in saving my life was awarded the B.E.M. Unfortunately he died from Multiple Sclerosis some years ago & I lost a true friend.

You know the old saying "it is better to be born lucky than rich"- I believe it really does apply to me but at least I finished up with a commendatory endorsement in my log book & well after discharge about May 1946 I received notice, much to my surprise, that arising out of the incidents surrounding the ditching I had been mentioned in despatches. So far as I was concerned I was simply glad to be alive.

On the lighter side, to this day the number of hours I spent sitting on that bloody CO2 bottle, all to no avail, doesn't bear thinking about - my God it was hard as all of you who experienced it can attest!

It might be of interest to some of our members to know that the Goldfish Club is about to publish a book of the memoirs of its members.



I'm not selling sex.

I'm selling condoms

with free demonstrations!

Some Serious Eavesdropping (Sigint)

Sigint is the code name for signal intelligence. Sigint operations were so secret they were given their own classification of "ultra secret". The word ultra signified the intelligence was derived from interception, and decoding of Japanese military and naval messages. This short story is about my involvement in this field, but first I must outline briefly the formation and situation of Central Bureau and its composition, so that a full appreciation of what follows may be gained. General MacArthur released orders for the for a joint American Australian Sigint organization be formed and it was to be set up in Melbourne and given. the low key name of Central Bureau, and under the command of a Major General S B Aiken. The experienced intercept Kana operators were integrated into the new central Bureau. The RAAF at the time were training further Kana operators including thirteen WAAF personnel.

The formation and history of Central Bureau is available on the internet and the unabridged version makes interesting reading. The 30 year security ban applied to the Central Bureau, and the release of information is still being made each year. The Defence Signals Directorate who now runs this type of operation states that some of the information will never be released.

I now enter this narrative with a short history of my involvement with Sigint, with some of the incidents, which took place

I was attached to an AIF unit (51 Wireless Section), a veteran unit from the Middle East, including Crete and Greece.

I was a wireless telegraphist, who joined 31 Squadron at Wagga Wagga after completing my course at Ballarat. The Squadron then moved to Bachelor Northern Territory, and then to Coomalie Creek after the strip was constructed. I was quite contented being part of the Squadron for several months, and I certainly did not like being sent to NWA HQ to work in that signal office, and was completely unaware of what lay ahead. So far as my memory serves me, I was at NWA for several weeks, when one morning one of my mates came to my tent and told me he had taken a signal from Air Board. This signal stated that I, together with 5 other WT's had been vetted for security, and was to be attached to 51WT, to learn all the necessary procedures to be passed on to numbers 2 and 3 Wireless units when they arrived some time in the future.

I tried everything to have this move cancelled, but all to no avail, for about a week later the six of us were transported to this unit, which we did not know existed. We were taken to the tent office of the Senior Intelligence Officer (which we found out later to be his status,) Major Geoffrey Ballard. He was a very stern

but a friendly six foot six inch, who wasted no time in mincing words. He said that we had been thoroughly investigated, and he would explain the whole show to us to stop any guessing on what went on at this unit and what our duties were to be. He showed us the Operations Room, where there was a huge map of the South West Pacific area, and on which was printed myriads of tiny flags, identifying the Japanese units by name. Then came a lecture on what was being received by their Kana operators, both air and ground crew, and what was disclosed by breaches of wireless silence.

Our duties at 51 were to encypher and then transmit the material intercepted to Central Bureau which had been moved in July 1942 from Melbourne to Brisbane. The unit had been set up in a huge house at 51 Henry Street Ascot, close to Eagle Farm Airport. There were also HF/DF stations situated at Broome, Darwin and Groote Island. When a call sign could not be identified, a signal was sent to all three stations so a fixed bearing could be made to obtain the transmitter's location.

Some of the glaring breaches of breaking wireless silence by the Japanese were as follows:- When the balance of power started to move in favour of the Allies, for a major raid on Darwin or major New Guinea targets, they would move their aircraft down from what was then Saigon the day before the raid was planned to take place. The crews would chat all the way down, and were monitored by 51WT and 55WT in New Guinea. On one such movement the Japanese moved over 200 aircraft to But airfield in Northern New Guinea in preparation for a big raid on Port Moresby. Aided by the flagrant abuse of wireless silence, the aircraft of the Australian –American Air Forces surprised the enemy and destroyed over 200 aircraft on the ground, and of course the raid never eventuated.

On the first day of every month, the controlling station of a Japanese network would call up every station in the network, and give each their call sign for the month, making it easier for our operators. The weather was discussed in their plain language, and our translators would piece their conversation together. An example "It is raining heavily here", a free weather report in the days of no satellites. On one particular occasion, the controlling station transmitted a coded message, which was logged by our operator. The receiving station then said he did not have a new code and asked for it to be repeated in the old code. The Japanese operator agreed and after some minutes transmitted the message in the old code. Our cryptos had already broken the old code, and now were able to break the new code.

There were numerous instances such as these. 51 Dealt only in low grade cyphers and intelligence gained

Continued on page 12

Keith Nicholson Remembers



NOW

Flying Training School. My instructor there was Flying Officer Damien Miller of the well known aviation family. He was a very experienced pilot who managed, with a mixture of patience and dedication, to get me to the stage where I was safe to go solo in a Tiger Moth, after 11 hours of dual instruction.

Having successfully completed the eight weeks of elementary flying training, I was posted to No 4 Service Flying Training School at Geraldton, where my instructor for the next sixteen weeks was Flight Sergeant John Miles, he too was a most experienced pilot: he had about 11,000 flying hours in his log book and had flown transport aircraft in New Guinea and had also flown as a mercenary in several foreign uprisings. It was my good fortune to have this very able pilot as my instructor; he gave me some special training after I had satisfactorily completed the flying training syllabus. Thanks to his tuition, I was given an 'Above Average' assessment at the end my time with No. 16 Course, and was appointed to a commission as a Pilot Officer on 6th March 1942. At that stage I had about 150 hours in my log book, plus 60 hours as a passenger (crew) and 15 hours in the Link Trainer, in which we learned Instrument flying. My next posting was to No 14 Squadron, a unit equipped with Lockheed Hudsons and based at RAAF Pearce. During my three weeks there I flew as a second pilot on long range armed reconnaissance patrols over the Indian Ocean.

The General Reconnaissance School at RAAF Station Laverton was the next unit to which I was assigned, and I travelled from Fremantle to Melbourne aboard a large passenger liner, Monterey, escorted by the cruiser HMAS Canberra. After some 4 weeks at that school, five of us told the CO that we would prefer not to spend the war flying maritime reconnaissance tasks and asked to be sent to other flying jobs. For this we received 'punishment postings' as staff pilots to various training schools, mine was to No.1 Air Observers School (1 AOS) at Cootamundra. I flew trainee navigators around that part of New South Wales in Avro Ansons from May to September 1942, after which I was posted as a foundation pilot to the newly formed No 73 General Reconnaissance Squadron at Nowra.

The Squadron's main task was convoy protection, and our anti- submarine patrols in Avro Ansons covered the area between Mallacoota, Victoria, at the SE tip of the continent, and Coffs Harbour in northern New South Wales, usually involving flights of about 5 hours duration. We operated from such aerodromes as Nowra, Camden and Williamtown, as well as various Advanced Operational Bases (AOB's) along the coast of NSW. Our Ansons were brand new from assembly at Richmond, and carried 2x250 pound anti sub depth charges, forward firing and turret mounted machine guns, a 3 person life raft, long range radios, large and small cameras and a drift/bombsight.

The Ansons weren't equipped with auto pilots so I taught the other two crew members, navigator P/O Mason Nell and wireless operator/air gunner Sgt Jim Bembrick, to fly the aircraft. In this way I was able to get occasional relief from the controls and in fact we could each take over any duty on a patrol, including reading messages from the escort flagship in Morse Code by Aldis Lamp or by International Flag Code signal. In 4 months from September to December 1942 we flew 58 anti submarine patrols, in addition to the numerous flights by day and by night, travelling between patrols, to and from the various AOB's. My Flight Commander was concerned with flying standards only while I was on patrol around the convoys, and not with any travel flights, but with the proviso that I didn't blot my copybook. So to relieve the boredom and tension of long flights and to practise low-flying over the sea, I always beat up the convoy and flew back on the wave tops. Little did I realise that this low flying experience would prove to be so useful in No. 30 Squadron.

In December 1942 the Air Board invited pilots who had a minimum of 500 hours flying in command of twin engined aircraft to apply for conversion to Bristol Beaufighters Since I had 540 hours on twins at this stage and wanted to get away from Ansons, I sent my application through the system and this led to my posting to No 5 Operational Training Unit at Forest Hill, near Wagga Wagga, NSW.

I arrived at Forest Hill on 10th January 1943 to join No 3 Beaufighter Course. Other pilots were Keith Eddison. Maurice Ball, Des Brannelly, Don McCord, Bob Ogden, Charlie Harris. Harold Tapner. Doug Raffan and Edgar Woolcott. The navigators, were Don Miller. Bob Thomas. Ken Delbridge, George Dick, Bob Hasenohr, Dave Childs, Greg Hardman, Eric Hunt and



THEN

Damage done while attacking LAE, due to intense low level ack-ack fire.

Clear evidence of the ruggedness of a Beaufighter and a credit to Keith's flying skills in returning safely to base.



Max Allott. I had a total of 635 flying hours in my log book when I arrived at No 5 OTU, 541 of which had been in command. I had picked up about 300 hours during the 58 patrols and other flying, in less than six months, as a member of No 73 Squadron in late 1942.

The Bristol Beaufighter could not be modified for dual instruction, so training was done in Bristol Beauforts, fitted with dual controls. These aircraft types were similar in a number of ways, but they differed in performance and forward visibility. Woodroffe took me up for my first flight in a dual Beaufort I did my first six flights with Harold, two of them being single engined approaches. Flight Lieutenant "Butch" Gordon took me for my solo test and I'd done about seven hours at that stage. I did an hour solo and some propeller feathering exercises, then navigator Ken Delbridge came with me on 22nd January for the first time, and we did a low level cross country flight in a Beaufort. For the next week I spent two sessions each day in the Link Trainer, which was a requirement on 3 course and indicated the importance of instrument flying: I had seven hours training in the Link in January alone.

Ken Delbridge and I teamed up as a Beaufighter crew when we started the OTU course at Forest Hill. Ken was one of the clever trainee navigators I had taken on navigation exercises at No.1 Air Observers School at Cootaimundra, and I was fortunate in securing him as my navigator. The son of a Methodist minister in Brisbane. He was a very upright character, with none of the vices possessed by the average aircrew type. Nevertheless, Ken joined in most of the social activities - except for wild parties in the mess.

I had a dual flight in a Beaufort with Sqn Ldr Bruce Rose (the Commanding Officer), and one with Sqn Ldr Dave Colquhoun and another Flt Lt "Butch" Gordon.

I did some more day flights with Harold Woodroffe, some night dual with F/O Fred Catt, and on the 12th of February I stood behind Sqn/Ldr Cook for my first flight in a Beaufighter. On the same day I did an hour solo in that Beaufighter, practising single engine flying and circuits.

We flew almost every day from then on. During the 3rd, 4th and 5th March we flew on ten air to ground gunnery details. Other exercises at the OTU included formation flying, patrols to seaward, square searches, low level cross countries by day, night navigation exercises, air combat, night circuits and a high altitude test.

On 7th March we did a four hour and 10 minutes low level cross country which involved an "attack" on Lake Victoria. That flight in A19-89 was our final flight in a Beaufighter at Forest Hill.

Initially, an inexperienced pilot might find the Beaufighter a difficult aircraft to fly for several reasons:

(a) At full take-off power and low airspeed the powerful engines and large propellers generated a massive gyroscopic effect which caused the aircraft to swing to the right. As braking could not correct the swing, it was necessary to advance the RH throttle and raise the tail early in the take-off, maintaining a straight line with the harsh use of rudder. (This was one of the special techniques taught to me by John Miles "stiff arm the yoke when you open up and get the tail flying high").

(b) Unlike other aircraft, the short, low nose on the Beaufighter could not be used to establish a Visual relationship with the horizon, making it difficult to maintain a constant attitude.

(c) Elevator control was assisted by servo trim-tabs, which reduced the amount of physical effort required to fly the aircraft, but while this added to manoeuvrability, it was difficult to maintain a constant altitude. This was not really an important factor as most of our missions were flown on the wave tops or the tree tops, where visual reference was crucial.

The aerodrome at Forest Hill was merely an all over grass field, with the direction of take-offs and landings determined by wind direction as indicated by the wind sock and the landing "T" near the duty pilot's tower.

KEITH NICHOLSON

To be continued.

BEAUFIGHTER COURSE 6 - No.5 OTU WAGGA WAGGA



Can anyone provide names for the personnel in this photograph?

SIGINT - Continued from page 9

through monitoring conversations. High grade cyphers were sent to Central Bureau for decoding, where they were decoded promptly. One such example was the signal intercepted by 51 WT and sent to the Central Bureau which was the itinerary of Admiral Yamamoto for his proposed visit to Bougainville. Although the message was decrypted by Central Bureau, the Americans in Hawaii also intercepted the message, and Admiral Nimitz acted on the information from Hawaii and authorised the interception and shooting down of Yamamoto and his Chief of Staff (in a separate Betty). A full account of this action is also available on the Internet.

Initially Central Bureau was made up of 50% American, 25 % Australian Army, and 25% RAAF .In closing I may add that General Macarthur relied heavily on wireless interception and intelligence received from these sources. He openly stated that he would get to Japan with American troops, but he took a RAAF Wireless Unit to the Philippines with him under the guise of an Airfield Construction unit. RAAF Wireless Units were active in all theatres as far north as Okinawa. No 6 Wireless Unit was ready to go to

Okinawa when the big ones were dropped, so their movement was cancelled.

The Defence Signals Directorate took over the work of Central Unit, to the best of my memory in 1947, and now has a payroll of 1400. (No secret I read that in the Courier Mail). I attended a reunion of the Central Bureau Intelligence Corps in Melbourne, and met up with Major Ballard. Still a friendly sort of a guy, who must be nearing 90, but definitely had all his marbles. I do not know what has happened to Flt/Lieu George Reveille, who was our CO at 51, and also one of nature's gentlemen.

There is a lot more, but enough is enough, and I hope you have not been bored. For Internet Browsers there is plenty to take up your time. I almost forgot, but numbers 2 and 3 Wireless Units turned up in the Northern Territory, and took over quite a percentage of the interception being carried out by 51. As for myself, after my tour was completed I was engaged Radar and Air Sea Rescue, and then went to Morotai and Tarakan and was engaged in WT duties of a different nature.

ROY INCHES.