

# The Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia

President: Max Ripper  
63 Moore Street  
Rosedale, Vic, 3847  
Tel: 99-2469



Secretary:

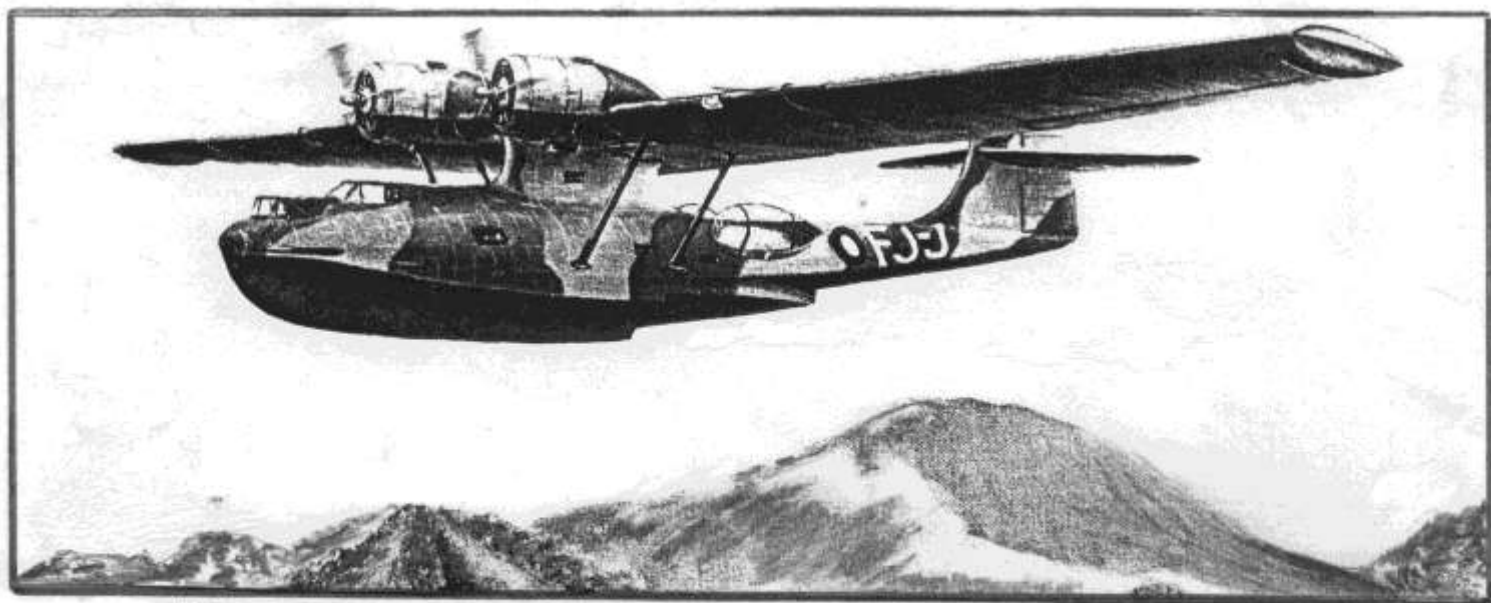
Allan L. Davies  
4/18 Gordon Street,  
Traralgon, Vic, 3844  
Tel: 051-745906

Editor

PATRON AIR VICE-MARSHAL J.C. JORDAN AO (RAAF-RETIRED)

## BULLETIN - No 12 - AUTUMN '96

# The Catalina Aircraft



Many Members of our Association have a great affection for the Catalina, prompted no doubt by the stirring work in this grand old workhorse, in the rescues of so many aircrews, other servicemen in dire straits and civilians, both in the sea and on the land. Due to the extreme distances involved the Catalina was particularly active in the Pacific War Area.

This tribute to the "CATALINA" and its' crews is an indication of the adaptability, range and durability of the "CATALINA" and our acknowledgement of the little known facets of the overall contributions of the "CATALINA" Squadrons to the total war effort.

This Catalina FJ-J was one of a flight of four sent from Base at Cairns to operate from Port Moresby. This "Cat" is finished in the original two tone grey camouflage, and was much more distinctive than the all black paint job used on these aircraft later on.

The work by these four "Cats" was firstly in assessing safe pick up spots behind the Japanese held areas for air sea rescue, coast watcher activities and general intelligence. This duty was undertaken for the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit and the Pilot of FJ-J was a Squadron Leader Geoff Coventry, who was renowned in RAAF circles for his great flying abilities coupled with his devil may care attitude.

More detail on SQDL D Coventry's "Catalina Adventures" can be read on the next page. Regrettably he did not survive his war service, being killed in a take off in a rough sea, after delivering vital parts to an American ship, in difficulties out of Milne Bay.

Catalina FJ-J above, is taken from a painting by our Member, Duncan Forrester, and depicted as flying over the sea, just off the rugged & mountainous coast of New Guinea.

This initial probe into the Japanese held areas of New Guinea, was undertaken by these four "Cats" of No. 11 Squadron, whose recce over the Sepak River area is a highlight in the record of RAAF operations during WW2.

Donations of \$2 and upwards are allowable Tax deductions.

# THE CATALINAS

## ON BORROWED TIME

WHEN Squadron-Leader Geoff Coventry and his crew returned to base after a raid on Manokwari, they had something for the I.O.'s narrative report. What they had was a frank admission that they were back but didn't know how.

Coventry had flown in a Catalina on a bombing and reconnaissance mission over Manokwari Harbour. They came in across the bay at a very low height and were immediately met by a concentration of light and medium ack-ack. "There was tracer flying past us on every side," his crew admitted. It was the hottest show a Catalina had ever come out of. Coventry told the intell. officer that he was living on borrowed time.

Since Moresby's early days Coventry had been flying a lone Catalina through the night across long stretches of sea. For a few months he was a brassed-off controller at the fighter sector, and on many a night when Moresby was raided by the Japs, sat through the monotonous dog watches, waiting for the Jap flying boats to come down from Rabaul and plaster the seven-mile strip.

Back on Catalinas, Coventry played an important role in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. On the night of March 2, 1943, he struck with the convoy, radioing its position back to Bomber Command, whose great force of heavy and medium bombers was poised to strike its greatest blow the following morning provided the convoy came within range. Just before nightfall the Jap convoy had turned toward Wewak from a point at the north of Vitiaz Strait. But, when darkness came, it wheeled about and made full steam for Lae. Coventry hovered over the ships and sealed



their doom, his wireless operator sending through regular messages. The staff chiefs at Bomber Command began rubbing their hands again, for it meant that the convoy was entering the range of the medium bombers and Beaufighters. Coventry unloaded bombs at intervals during the night and drew ack-ack from the destroyers, "just to give them a hell of a night". He did not observe any hits, but his greatest contribution to the Bismarck Sea Battle was his regular plotting of the convoy's course well into the dawn of Wednesday, March 3. Before lunch on that day most of the Jap ships were destroyed.

Coventry was always on top of the game and it is difficult to say that this or that adventure was his greatest. His series of flights from Moresby across central New Guinea, for the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, were perhaps his most outstanding. He and his flight of Catalinas were the first to do a series of such jobs, and they brought back a wealth of material that was invaluable later to A.N.G.A.U.

A few days after the Manokwari raid Coventry was called upon to deliver a pump to a small American ship which was in difficulties due to a leak. The ship was lying some distance out from Milne Bay in the open sea. In heavy weather, and against his better judgment, Coventry set down his flying boat on the rough sea and delivered the pump to the Americans. Damage had been done to the Catalina on landing, and, when the flying boat attempted to take off, rivets were sprung and the aircraft crashed on its nose. Coventry was killed, but the rest of his crew escaped.

Coventry had used up his borrowed time.

PILOT-OFFICER G. B. GRAHAM

Extracts "On Borrowed Time" and "The Song of the Catalinas" - from "RAAF SAGA," RAAF Directorate of Public Relations - 1944

An unusual aspect of the Consolidated Catalina was the quite unique retracting floats which folded upward and outwards, thus forming the wingtips.

In May 1941 Catalinas tracked the German battleship "BISMARCK", thus cementing their place in air-sea reconnaissance. The Catalina was used extensively in minelaying, troop movements, and were heavily armoured in both offensive and defensive armament. They were active in Submarine patrol and attack and of course played a heroic part in many sagas of sea and land rescues. In short an AIRCRAFT TO BE REMEMBERED.

## SPECIFICATIONS.

Consolidated Catalina 1.

( PBY 5 )

### Power.

Two 1200 h.p. Pratt and Whitney R-1830-S1C3-G Twin Wasp Fourteen cylinder radial engines.

### Span and Wing Area.

104 ft. - 1400 sq. ft.

### Length.

63 ft. 10½ inches.

### Maximum take off weight

34000 lbs.

### Maximum Speed.

190 m.p.h. at 10500 ft.

### Operational Ceiling

24000 ft.

**General** The Catalina was produced in larger numbers than any other flying boat during WW2, operating in all theatres of war, and gaining a well earned reputation for reliability and adaptability. This aircraft was first produced in 1933, purely as a flying boat, but in 1939, was modified with the addition of a retracting tricycle undercarriage, to an amphibian.



## THE SONG OF THE CATALINAS

Into the golden sunset, boys,  
That is the course to steer,  
That's where the Japs are waiting, boys;  
Waiting, as we draw near.

Stand by your guns in the blister, boys,  
With a sharp look-out above,  
For we're in the land of the Zeros, boys,  
No time to dream of love.

Check up now on your course, lad,  
We can't afford mistakes,  
For we've got to be in and out, lad,  
Before the daylight breaks.

Shield her behind the clouds, sir,  
As searchlights flicker below,  
Your eye on the height you are flying, sir,  
'Tis folly to get her too low!

Keep a sharp look-out below, boys,  
We're flying over the town,  
Be ready there to release them,  
The bombs go sailing down.

Give her all that she's got, sir,  
Set us a course for home,  
We've accomplished what we have come for,  
We've made a mess of their drome.

Give them an E.T.A., lad,  
Ahead is the rising sun,  
We're almost back to our base, lad,  
From another job well done.

FLIGHT-SERGEANT W. W. ROUGH

## Unarmed 'Cats' defied the might of the Japanese

A SECRET GROUP of Allied airmen flew 271 missions during World War II - for a distance of four point six million kilometres - without ever losing an aircraft to enemy action, despite constantly flying through Japanese-dominated air space.

The Royal Australian Air Force and Qantas pilots and crew who flew unarmed Catalina flying boats out of Perth to Sri Lanka were part of the elite "Double Sunrise Club", so called because members saw two sunrises on their non-stop 6,800 kilometre trip which could take up to 32 hours.

The route was twice as long as any commercial route before the war.

The flights began in June 1943 to get top secret despatches and special passengers through to England - and information and passengers back to Australia - after the fall of Singapore in 1942 cut direct communication between Australia, the Middle East, India and England. The Japanese victory over Singapore, the "island fortress", meant the only remaining air communication between Australia and Britain was a 30,000 kilometre roundabout route via the United States. By sea the same trip took 30 days.

"The epic feats undertaken by the aircrews will be recalled as part of the *Australia Remembers 1945-1995* commemorative year," the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr Con Sciacca, said.

"The spirit and courage of the air crews was typical of the Australian character which we are commemorating and which helped to ensure the continuation of the democracy and freedom we still enjoy today," Mr Sciacca added.

The twin engined catalinas were stripped of non-essential equipment and loaded with about 9,000 litres of aviation fuel in an extra six fuel tanks for the mammoth flight which exposed them to Japanese attack.

The catalinas flew parallel to Japanese occupied territory for 14 hours at night to avoid detection and maintained radio silence until they were about 200 kilometres out of Sri Lanka.

The flights were so secret that aircraft traffic controllers in Perth were not told of their destination and the aircrews were sworn to secrecy and could not tell their families of their flights.

Carrying a crew of six and up to three passengers, the catalinas often had to battle head-



*The banner of the Catalina fliers*

winds and turbulent conditions. The only navigation available was star sightings with the real possibility of overshooting Sri Lanka in monsoon conditions and running out of fuel over the sea.

Passengers on the catalinas were given an ornate "survival certificate" admitting them to the "Secret Order of the Double Sunrise".

The catalina flights continued until 1944 with some flights being extended from Sri Lanka to Karachi. After 1944 faster Liberator, and then Lancaster, aircraft were used on the Perth-Sri Lankan run and the time for the flight reduced to about 13 hours.

Ivan Peirce, of Perth, was one of the Catalina pilots. He remembers the mammoth flights as "terribly noisy and monotonous" but says the aircraft never let their crews down.

"We flew over at 1500 feet to conserve fuel but at 14,000 feet on the way back to catch prevailing tail winds. The temperature plummeted to minus 16 centigrade at those heights. It was so cold bare flesh would stick to the metal of the aircraft. That height was maintained for 18 to 20 hours and we didn't carry any oxygen.

"The United States-built 'cats' were fantastically reliable," he said. "The twin engines were made under licence by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation in Victoria and were maintained by the RAAF workshops in Kalgoorlie. To run 30 hours non-stop was a fantastic performance for any aircraft engine at the time and their reliability was a tribute to their Australian makers and the RAAF mechanics."

Mr Peirce said the catalinas and their crews faced additional hazards as well as the extraordinary navigation and flying skills required to meet their landfall.

"The Japanese detected an aircraft skippered by Captain Russell Tapp from Queensland when he flew to Cocos Island to pick up a sick naval officer. A Japanese plane tried to bomb the Catalina but the bombs missed and she escaped."

Mr Peirce said he remembered taking a lot of generals on the mammoth flights but a British

naval officer was one man who had stayed in his mind.

"He was a British submariner who had been decorated with the VC and bar. He made a few flights from Sri Lanka with us. We thought he had pulled rank because he had a girl friend in Perth!"

Another important traveller to Australia had been General Sir Charles Gardiner who had later become the governor of Western Australia.

Mr Peirce, who did 76 flights himself, remembered them as "terribly noisy and monotonous" but not without tragedy.

A Lancastrian aircraft (a converted Lancaster bomber) piloted by Captain Frank Thomas from Queensland had disappeared near Cocos Island. It was believed the aircraft had caught fire and crashed into the sea while aviation spirit was being pumped up for the engines.

"We think either the pump seized and caught fire or the fuel leaked. They would not have had a chance".

The loss of Captain Thomas had been a particularly bad one because he had been a brilliant pilot.

"He had taken one aircraft through a tropical storm when an engine failed. He turned back to Cocos Island at night on one engine, dropped flares and put down near the island - while maintaining radio silence all the time.

"Two days later Captain Thomas had completed the flight from Cocos to Sri Lanka - thanks to a new magneto fitted on the island."

Mr Peirce's own flights were not always uneventful.

"I remember once flying through a cyclone when the wind got behind us and lifted our 105 miles per hour cruising speed to 200," he said.

"Then we had to fly out of the cyclone into a headwind and our speed dropped to 15 mph. It took us almost six hours to get away from those winds while being bucketed by the cyclone. Our altitude often dropped from 1500 to 2 500 feet during the storm but the only damage to the aircraft was a broken strand of an elevator cable."

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PERTINENT PARS

Our new member "MAC" Skinner has an interesting "last" associated with his wartime service as a F/O Navigator, Bomb Aimer on 105 Squadron RAF, when he and his Pilot dropped the LAST BOMB ON BERLIN, on the morning of 21st; April 1945. The raid was made in a MOSQUITO Mk XVI (note - the Bomber version not the PR). To make the occasion really memorable the operation was carried out on "Macs" 20th; BIRTHDAY !!

The "DROP" was a 4000 lb Blockbuster.

A War time recollection from member David Cook - " I recall seeing two PR Mosquitos on Labuan Island, Borneo during the War . I have since learnt that one of them was Mosquito A52-600. I was an instrument repairer with 93 Squadron (86 Attack Wing) which flew Australian made Beau-fighters. In company with No.1 Squadron, then equipped with Australian made Mosquitos ( FB Mk.VI ) we were to participate in the invasion of Japan. Fortunately the War ended. The murky blue colour of the PR Mosquitos was in marked contrast to the silver & black of the No. 1 Sqdn aircraft, which were armed with machine guns, cannon and rockets "

Our member David Cook is one of the volunteers active on the A52-600 Restoration project.

From a Legacy Bulletin - (The Cartoon is ours !!)

In an issue of "Flight Path" there is a profile of the late Bill Minty, who was a Catalina colleague of Ron Foskett.



In the course of the article, the following reference to the Catalina appears: ( with no derogatory intent and in full appreciation of this fine craft, I am sure, Ed. ) --- "THEY WERE ALSO VERY SLOW, WHICH ALLOWED THEM GREAT RANGE, BUT AS BILL MINTY OFTEN CLAIMED, IT ALSO MADE THEM THE ONLY AIRCRAFT KNOWN TO SUFFER BIRD STRIKE FROM BEHIND !! "

A DATE TO REMEMBER. Sunday 17th; November 1996 - OPEN DAY at RAAF Base Richmond NSW; - 0900-1530 hrs; celebrating the 75th; Anniversary of the Founding of The Royal Australian Air Force. This should be of particular interest to our NSW Members, who could readily take this opportunity to visit Richmond on this day when the A52-600 restoration project will undoubtedly be part of the display. Other Open Days are - Hobart 11/2/96 at Hobart International Airport. - RAAF Base Williams 18/2/96 - RAAF Base Edinborough 17/3/96 - RAAF Base East Sale 24/3/96 - RAAF Base Williamtown 21/4/96 - Open Day & AIRSHOW at RAAF Base Amberley 4th; and 5th; May 1996 - Alice Springs Airport 21.7.96 - RAAF Base Tindal 3/8/96 - RAAF Base Darwin 4/8/96 - RAAF Base Townsville 11/8/96 - RAAF Base Richmond PARADE 3/10/96 - RAAF Base Wagga 13/10/96 and as shown heading this notice, OPEN DAY at RAAF Base Richmond 17/11/96. You FORGETTING TYPES BETTER HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE CALENDAR !!



Extract from "WINGS"  
17th; April 1945.

## MORE PERTINENT PARS.

"Echo" from our Wirraway segment (last Bulletin). Member Ivan Pretty, ex Nav; No. 1 Attack Squadron (Mosquito), contributes as follows : -

"Re the article on Wirraways, I worked at the C<sup>o</sup>wealth Aircraft Corp; from January 1938 until I joined the Army in May 1940. People may wonder why the first Wirraway was A20-3. - A20-1 was a NA16, with fixed undercart, A20-2 was a knocked down NA33, used by the C.A.C. employees to study the various components, to gain better knowledge of what they were making.

Wilbur Wackett was president, or some such nominal title and an American, Dick Beck was the General Manager. I have a picture of A20-3 outside the factory before its first flight." Cheekily Ivan goes on to say " I'll guarantee the first 50 or so!-- but after that I left !!!"

Ivan also confirms part of your editors research when he writes - "27/3/39 is correct as date of first flight" (BINGO!- got something right Ed.) Thanks to Ivan for this contribution.

There was a very cautious man  
Who never romped or played;  
He never danced, he never sang  
Nor ever kissed a maid;  
So when at last he passed away  
Insurance was denied;  
For since he never lived, they say,  
He clearly hadn't died.

## The Advertiser

Saturday, October 14, 1995

### Misleading

A LETTER under the heading "Recognition denied" (*The Advertiser*, 7/10/95) is quite misleading as far as non-returned ex-servicemen are concerned. All ex-service personnel are entitled to treatment for war/service-related disabilities, under the Veterans Entitlement Act and I am aware of many who have successfully claimed such benefits.

Perhaps the word "veteran" tends to keep non-returned members from applying to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many ex-servicemen, particularly those who served in the Darwin area, don't classify themselves as veterans because they did not go overseas. This also affects widows of those men, who are of the same opinion until informed otherwise, but unfortunately many may be overlooked.

I would urge any and every ex-serviceperson, regardless of where they served and particularly those affected by malignant cancers, to lodge claims with the department for assessment for a war/service-related disability. There are ex-service organisations which will assist with claims and the department, through its newly-formed Veterans Advisory Network (known as VAN), is willing to help all concerned.

I would thank Mr Colin Thorpe for his letter and trust it will attract enough attention to entouse all ex-servicepeople and their families to take some personal, positive action to protect themselves by lodging claims with the department. It will certainly make things a lot easier for their widows at a later date.

BRIAN HALL,  
RAAF Association Welfare,  
Glen Osmond.

### NOT A PRETTY SIGHT

Harvey Matterson was up a ladder then he headed for the ground  
And at the moment when he hit it there was a dreadful sound.  
Harvey suffered pain around his shoulder and in other places too  
So a visit to his doctor he decided he must do.

In the absence of his doctor, a locum, quietly spoken  
Confirmed the fears of Harvey, his collar bone was broken.  
Then the locum checked the hip, reported to be numb  
And was astounded by the bruising that covered Harvey's bum.

Indeed, he had never seen a bruise like this in all his working life  
So he rushed into the waiting room to bring in Harvey's wife  
Not realising the naked Harvey who now stood with gaping jaw  
Had been driven to the surgery by the lady from next door.

In time of war the first casualty is truth.

Every war causes soldiers to change nearly  
all their ideas, except their opinion of officers.

The greatest paradox of them all is to speak  
of "civilized warfare."

VALE - G.A. (Dick) GLASSEY. 24/6/26- 3/8/95.

Dick joined No.87 PR Squadron at Canberra in 1949 as a Sergeant Pilot. His passing will be regretted by old friends on the Squadron.

Our sincere condolences to his widow Betty and his family.

Brian Hall is a member of this Association and supplies your editor with material that helps in putting the Bulletin together. Brian hails from Adelaide, where he is a member of the very large Mitcham Branch of the RAAF Association and is most involved in welfare work, and represents many applicants to the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs in their pension and other welfare matters.

Our thanks to Brian for his continuing valuable assistance. Ed.

# Mosquito MESSAGES

Definitely a book to be read !!

"RIFF - RAAF"

LARRIKINS AT LARGE

IS BNO 646 06734 6

By Graham Sivyver

This book is a real little gem, recording vignettes from the Authors' WW2 RAAF experiences and the very human happenings & scrapes of his mates, Cass, Rass and George, these names suitably disguising the identities of the very many of his Service friends & acquaintances whose hilarious adventures are related in most readable short sequences.

"RIFF- RAAF" will appeal to ex Air Crew & Ground Crew members, in fact to all who were involved in the Services during WW2-  
- YOU are all in it !!

Air Vice Marshal J.H. Fleming, in his foreword, most ably describes the tenor of Graham Sivyver's recollections of the Service in the following extract.

- " Having spent the major part of my life in the RAAF, over 40 years in aircrew & for a short time in the ground-staff, & in every rank from Aircraftman to Air Vice Marshal, I find immediate rapport with Rass, Cass & George. Their story is disarmingly frank, humorous, often hilarious, sometimes poignant & sad; it is nevertheless a true account of the behaviour of the young people in time of war.

They were not as promiscuous as their tale may imply; indeed their moral standards would be the subject of mirth to the equivalent age group today. They were not thieves or vandals or deliberate breakers of the law. They were a section of society who to all intents and purposes had no future, and so lived one day at a time, at every possible opportunity. Some survived to become leaders in just about every walk of life "

"LARRIKINS AT LARGE" - may be purchased from the Author, Graham Sivyver, of 30 SARDON ST; TOOWOOMBA, Q'ld; 4350. PRICE \$7.00 Postage Paid (soft cover)



Our Member Will Carter of Nairne S.A. has recommended the following books for your attention.

MOSQUITO IN ACTION Part 1, By Jerry Scutts  
ISBN 0 89747 283 7 - Aircraft Number 127  
Squadron Signals Publications Inc; This is a pictorial history of the bomber, photo reconnaissance and special use variants of the Mosquito including detailed pictures and photos Will has not seen in other books.

MOSQUITO IN ACTION Part 2, By Jerry Scutts  
ISBN 089747 303 5 - Aircraft Number 139  
Squadron Signals Publication, Inc; This book covers the fighter, fighter-bomber and trainer variants of the Mosquito.

These books are available at Hobby Shops and are reasonably priced at \$15 each.

THE MEN WHO FLEW THE MOSQUITO. By Martin W. Bowman. ISBN 185260 488 3 - Haynes Publishing.

This is a new book only published in 1995 and is the author's 18th book. It features individual epics of the Mosquito's triumphant WW2 career. In hardback with 192 pages of history and photos that make you feel you are there here and now! The price in England is £19.99 (AUD \$42). Locally however the price is \$65 and the book may be purchased from Dymocks Bookstores. Will tells us either way it is definitely worth every penny (or cent, depending which country you buy it in.)

Our thanks to Will Carter for the above detail

Our plaudits to member Keith Granger who, in the last Poppy Appeal, raised the handsome sum of \$2079, working from his wheelchair with the East Malvern (Vic) collection team.  
Great Effort Keith.

Keith was the popular and hardworking Photographic Officer on No. 87 PR Squadron in the NT. Prior to that in the early days of the War in the Pacific, Keith was seconded to the US Air Force, with whom he flew several missions in his capacity as a photographer.

His efforts on those operations were recognised by the award of a Mention In Despatches.

## VALE.

S.F. (Barney) EURELL. 16.5.21 — 30.11.95

Barney was trained in RAAF Photography, commencing his life vocation in the early War years with war service at East Sale & 87 PR Squadron, Coomalie Creek NT; & other units.

His work in photography continued to 1969 and he retired from the RAAF, whilst serving at RAAF Base, Laverton in 1980.

Our sincere sympathy in her bereavement to Greta.

**THE BOOZE BARONS**

In any given squadron up at the "sharp-end", there were two distinct classes of technical people: well - maybe three if you would place the gun-plumbers in a separate group. The work output of these various groups varied widely.

The 'black-hand' gang of mechs and riggers seemed always to be working flat-out; the 'queer-trades' au contraire seemed to perform only daily inspections, and to repair unserviceable aircraft, after which they'd disappear into their dongas in the jungle. (For the benefit of the uneducated, the 'queer-trades' consisted of electrical, instrument and radio people; only very rarely would they be seen to wash or polish an aircraft, or any other of the hundred-and-one jobs about a flight-line). The fact that they were among the most highly-paid troops troubled them not at all. Having performed their disappearing act, some would hit the cot, whilst others would go and stoke up the fire beneath their liquor still, ready for another day of production of the illicit booze known as 'jungle-juice' or 'panther-piss'.

The program followed in producing this brew went something like this: take a 44-gallon drum almost full of water, add a few pounds of dried fruit (stolen from the ration-dump down the road), chuck in a few pounds of sugar and a tad of yeast, and then let the whole mess ferment for about ten days. The resultant product, undiluted, would kill a sizeable herd of elephants, no worries at all.

Our appreciation to the Author Graham Sivyer for his permission to reprint this story from his book.

**UNCLAIMED MEDALS**

Thousands of unclaimed medals relating to 1939-45 remain unclaimed. Ex-service personnel, or relatives of deceased ex-servicemen can claim their medals by writing to Medals Section, Central Army Records Office, Soldier Career Agency, GPO Box 393D, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

A possibly-fatal factor in this brew was wood-alcohol, but this could be eliminated by distilling the fluid a la best American moonshiner's recipe. The making of the still required another drum and a lot of small-bore pipe, the latter coming from wrecked aircraft, of which many were to be had in a war-zone like this. As the brew was boiled, the steam ran along the pipe, cooling as it went, and dripped out the end of the pipe. The resulting liquid was very high-proof alcohol indeed; this was cut with water in the ratio of one-quarter alky to three-quarters water. The resultant 'white-lightning' was sold to all-comers at five quid per 26-ounce cordial-bottle; this represented a nice little mark-up, considering the ingredients may at times have been bought from the sergeant-cook in return for a bottle or two of the finished product.

When this stuff was flogged around the Yank camps, the latter were given a choice of colours. "What colours do you have?" asked the Yank of Rass (who was the courier because he could borrow the flight-commander's jeep, no questions asked); "Water-white or dark" said Rass. "What's the difference?" "Half-a-cup of black tea" Rass replied without blinking an eyelid.

More than one bloke made enough loot from this bootleg liquor to buy a brick home after the war: so big had the trade become that later in the war, when the action had moved up into Dutch East Indies (in what is now Indonesia), the Dutch authorities raised the question of 'trade within the meaning of the act'. Probably the Netherlanders were too busy trying to quell the rising tide of nationalism engulfing The Indies at that time to get into the act themselves.

This stuff was just great for getting a party off the ground, and the sound of soberish harmony could often be heard around the camp far into the night. This was occasionally interrupted by some thoughtless Japanese airmen who came to strafe the camps: whenever this activity increased enough to be a bloody nuisance, the troops were in the habit of hurling their empties at the Zeros as they raced by, for as their blood/alcohol ratio moved towards equality their ability to assess the threat to life and limb diminished accordingly. By and large though it was a fairly harmless way to pass the time until the long-awaited posting back to the mainland arrived.

*Peace for Christmas Island.*



On the 18 October 1945, the British flag was raised on Christmas Island. After 4 years of Japanese occupation, the RAAF set out on a reconnaissance mission in a 'De Havilland Mosquito' which lead the way for the British on the 'HMS Rother' to officially reclaim Christmas Island.



Now Australia Post commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II on Christmas Island with the release of two intaglio designs showing the significant RAAF reconnaissance flight and the arrival of the British on the 'HMS Rother'.

Celebrate Australia's role in the return of peace to Christmas Island. The Christmas Island Stamp Issue is now available from your Post Office and Australia Post Shop.



Stamps 2 x 45c (see-tenant).

CDAPS 592

One stamp represents the mission conducted by the RAAF in June 1945 to find out whether the Island was still occupied and if phosphate was being mined.



A good shot of A52-600, indicating the progress achieved on the fuselage. Note the work at the rear section where the fuselage has been prepared to "take" the jointing of the last section of the fuselage.

Works on the Tail section, fin and tail cone are well advanced.

Our members and your Committee continue to enlist volunteers to the project, some highly qualified in their trades and all very willing. We owe these volunteers & contractors a great debt of gratitude for their long and dedicated hours on this task.

A pair of wheels and tyres, grubby looking but in great condition will prove most useful when we have something to put on them.

Just another surprising indication of how much of Mosquito aircraft parts, instruments etc have been "Bower Birded" over the past 50 years.

Locating parts is another way in which the Assoc' assists the restoration.



One of the fuel tanks removed from the wing box 2 x 68 gals; this tank is in excellent condition and with other "bits and pieces" is stored pending reinstallation one day in the future.

Members who attended the last AGM, will already have seen these photographs, which could not be shown in the August Bulletin due to shortage of space.



### "BACK TO THE TRACK" 1995"

On a beautifully restored vintage "INDIAN" motor cycle, our member Keith Muller of Penrith, completed his return to THE TRACK, leaving Penrith on July 17th; & returning on September 7th; - a round trip of 9000 kms !! on a non sprung INDIAN SCOUT at 40-45 MPH. Keith restored the motor cycle and even made his USAF uniform. Altho' Keith was serving in the RAAF At Darwin in WW2, he was attached to USAF 380th Bomber Group, for a time, operating from Darwin in Liberators, whom he had arranged to represent on the "AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS" commemorations in the NT.

His outward trip to Alice Springs, where he joined the convoy of some 90 WW2 vehicles, which had travelled on railway flat tops from Adelaide, was fraught with unwelcome incidents, bad weather, burnt out generator, wrestling with his "steed" managed to "bless" him with a hernia, but from Yunta on the gods smiled on him with a run free of other troubles.

At the "Alice" he met up with his wife Ina, who had travelled on the troop train that had run right around the eastern coast and west to Adelaide. Ina was a WAAF during the war, but it was probably the first troop train she had struck.

Among the many vehicles making the "Alice" - Darwin run were Amphibians, Armoured Personnel Carriers, Jeeps, ASLAV 8 wheelers, Leopard Tanks, Land Rovers and many others. After a hectic few days of NT hospitality and parades through "Alice" the convoy headed for Darwin on 8th; August with Keith in his full tank regalia heading the way up the track, ( kept him out of the bulldust anyway!!) He says, as he stopped to take photos just out of town, "It was a wonderful sight to see 90 odd beautifully restored WW2 vehicles of all descriptions, rolling along the bitumen, being cheered by a huge throng of locals and tourists - but somehow sad knowing it was a sight likely never to be seen again."

The convoy rolled through Aileron - Barrow Creek - where Keith was told by the owner of a big Mack truck, was just two miles per gallon, Keith says the character was blessed with a heap of kanga. "All Curung" an aboriginal settlement where a special Corroborree was turned on for the veterans, - Gennant Creek, where the owner of an amphibious Jeep, was giving some locals a ride to demonstrate the Sea worthy capacity of his pride and joy - having completely forgotten to screw in the drain plugs, rapidly driving for the bank, as the passengers started to sing, " for those in peril on the sea" he slipped in the four wheel drive - or he would have IF HE'D REMEMBERED TO ENGAGE IT !! As he slipped rapidly down the bank, aspersions on his parenthood and shouts of well needed advice from the onlookers, saved the day, and kept the passengers dry ( until they all retired to the local for a HEART STARTER!!.)

Then Daly Waters Pub - the oldest continually operated "oasis" in the NT; Traffic lights are there, but for these few major buildings and lack of permanent residents coupled with the fact that the lights did very little "Greening", "Redding" and "Ambering"; one would think they were a bit of a luxury. Possibly someone had forgotten to apply the 240 volt 50 cycle. No one to give the money to, after filling up at the bowser, just will 'er up, wander across to the bar and tell the boss how much you owed him. Gave one a great sense of being trusted - would this happen in Parramatta?

Next Larrimah, the Gorrrie air strip, 14 ARD, Gorrrie Telecommunications Unit, where Keith finalised his contract with the RAAF, he found old Unit photos posted in the Pub, one showing the hut he occupied, so many years before.

At Mataranka the Vets became involved with the Army Exercise K95 with the "GOODS" the Vets and other personnel, versus the dreaded "Orange-landers" RAAF and the USAF got involved with sorties from Findal, and some Commander called in an Air Strike whilst I enjoyed a cuppa at "Katie's Cafe", where a flock of Y/A 18's streaked at just three feet, it seemed, over me and other coffee sippers, with dire results to my uniform, with coffee all over the place. #X\*?!X!!

That's getting ahead of myself, as the "shoot up" took place on the way down the track. Anyway they made it to Darwin where the convoy went into procession mode and to Keith's delight the route went past the Marrara Sports Complex, once the location of the 380th; Bomber Group retraining area and campsite. This USAF unit suffered the loss of 400 personnel and 40 Liberator aircraft in the early days of the war in the top end.

Keith met up with Richard Luxton, the owner of Coomalie Creek Station, which was the base for No. 31 Squadron (Beaufighters) and No. 1 PR Unit which reformed as No. 87 PR Squadron (Mosquitos). Many pleasant hours were spent on the Station with Richard, while Keith explored the old camp sites, the restored 31 Squadron Chapel, the air strip with the two cairns and the beautiful billabong area. The old memories suddenly were not so far away.

On August 23rd; Keith set off for home, Katherine, Mataranka, Daly Waters, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Kulgera, Coober Pedy, Port Augusta, Broken Hill, with a pause at Cobar as the sky got rid of some unexpected and unwelcome snow and wind, then on to home sweet home at Penrith in the shadows of the Blue Mountains.

The goodwill and great hospitality freely given to the people making up this "Back to the Track" Convoy, by the "Territorians" along the way and during the Commemoration parades and functions, was THE FEATURE of this trip, making the great effort of the participants and the organisers of this "Australia Remembers" Programme really worthwhile.

Yes, since his return, Keith has had that hernia attended to, and at the moment his eyes are still watering, and he won't listen to jokes that make him laugh. A big thankyou to Keith for his concise report on his adventures back to Darwin at the Top of the Track. *Ed.*



### DARWIN OR BUST or the Aussie-Yank Don-R

Keith travelled on his "INDIAN" as a complete unit. His gear included a light tent, hard rations, changes of clothing, first aid kit, tools and essential parts for running repairs - plus + + +

Everything had been meticulously planned months before the start of the "BACK to the TRACK" at Alice Springs, even the sidarm to fend off any nasties - wild buffs and crows, (that is just plain editorial licence) the "gat" was standard USAF issue. Congratulations Keith on your great effort.

RESTORATION PROJECT POINT BRIEF NOTES

RICHMOND NSW - MAR 96

Visits have continued and have included a visit from the current owner of Coomalie Creek, Mr Richard Luxton. Also, Mr Powell from New Zealand visited in February to copy the entire set of jig drawings. Now there are two sets of the rare drawings. Mr Powell is building a brand new Mosquito and has made a lot of progress. These jig drawings will enable him to manufacture brand new parts to the required tolerances for flight. It is understood that he will also have the means of making at least two replicas. The first is intended to be a static aircraft, but the second will be built to fly.

Slow but steady progress is being made to audit the components of the A52-600. A computer database of all the parts held is slowly being assembled so that when a fully funded project is approved for its restoration, the project manager will have an accurate insight into the % parts held and their condition. The computer database will allow a more rapid sorting of A52-600 component information than what would be possible with a manual filing system. Many parts however are still yet to be identified, tagged, condition reported and recorded - all parts will undergo this process.

Notwithstanding several mechanical (undercarriage) parts have been cleaned and Non-destructively tested and suitable overhaul processes identified - albeit yet to be carried out.

Major Funding.

It is clear that the restoration of the project cannot be achieved piecemeal. Indeed 503WG, suffering from the financial and personnel cut backs, that have had RAAF wide effect cannot commit sufficient resources to carry out the restoration in an reasonable time frame. Indeed, this fact was noted at a brief was delivered to the most recent CASAC (Chief of Air Staff Advisory Committee) meeting, held 23 Feb 96. This brief was prepared on behalf of Training Command, the command responsible for the RAAF Museum, by GPCAPT (ret'd) Armstrong. The brief delivered covered several aspects of RAAF historical aircraft restoration, in light of the relative priorities for the aircraft to be restored and the financial limitations placed on historical aircraft activities. The following provides highlights of some of the major points made:

A52-600 is seen as an important part of the RAAF collection.

Completion of Boston Bomber restoration at Amberley has freed resources for other major restoration projects.

An organisation like HARS (Historical Aircraft Restoration Society - Contact Mr Baxter 02 7438166) was considered to take on restoration work to get the aircraft to airworthy. In such a proposal, HARS would have an obligation to meet certain public (including Mosquito Association etc) and RAAF interests but would be relatively free to recoup the restoration costs commercially.

GPCAPT Armstrong proposed that RAAF Museum take on the Mosquito project starting in 1997 and finishing mid 1999. (Although no mention has been made of it being an airworthy restoration.) A52-600 restoration was proposed to take place after the Catalina restoration that would be completed at Amberley early 1997.

A52-600 may be restored at Point Cook or Amberley, due to staff and facilities considerations. Restoration at Richmond is unlikely.

CASAC decided that the Catalina restoration take place and ordered that a comprehensive, (presumably staffed) complete review of the options for the restoration of A52-600 take place this year. (It is anticipated that this would be completed in time for a possible start of work after the Catalina restoration).

Airworthy Restoration??

From the above, it is clear that restoration of the Mosquito in the near future is likely. However, there is a concern that an airworthy Mosquito may not result. Indeed, I have noted that serious consideration should be given to restoring A52-600 to an airworthy condition as the rare materials (certainly the spruce for the spars) and craftsmanship to do so, appear to be available. Other Mosquito's, including the recently completed Mosquito at the Aust War Memorial, would satisfy the provision of static examples. Perhaps lobbying for such a desire can be conducted by organisations such as the Mosquito Association and be legitimately directed at a higher level in the Government, RAAF or Department of Defence (bearing in mind that 503WG is responsible for carrying out the wishes of the RAAF Museum, which in turn reflect the wishes of CASAC, the Dept of Defence and most of all the Australian Public's interests etc...). However, with respect to the RAAF and volunteer activities at Richmond, work done towards the parts audit will help establish the costs and feasibility involved with an airworthy restoration, so at least it may be considered by the formal review that will be conducted at the direction of CASAC.

C. FRENCH

# THE AUSTRALIAN BUILT

## Mosquito

PB MK. 40  
modified for  
PR work.



EXTRACT

WINGS August 29, 1944

Thanks to member Keith Muller and his wife Ina for saving so many copies of war time "WINGS" publications, and donating them to the Association. A great help to your editor.

THE MOSQUITO AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA.

Notice of Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Latrobe Shire Council Chambers, Kay Street Traralgon, on Monday the 12th; August 1996, commencing at 2.00 pm.

Business.

- 1) Presentation of Annual Report & Financial Statements ended 30th; June 1996.
- 2) To receive & adopt the Annual Reports.
- 3) Fixing of Fees for the ensuing year.
- 4) Election of Executive & Committee for the year ended 30th; June 1997.
- 5) General Business at the discretion of the Chair.

Note(a) Motions for inclusion in the agenda are to be lodged in writing with the secretary not less than 14 days prior to the AGM.

Note(b) Nomination for the positions of President, Vice President Secretary, Treasurer and four Committeemen are called, closing on the 14th; July 1996.

Nomination forms may be obtained from the Secretary. The retiring Committee: - M.Ripper (Pres), K.Johnston (Vice Pres), A.Davies (Sec/Treas) and Committeemen J.Burgess, J.Graham, C. Ryan, R.Skinner offer themselves for reelection.

**MEMBERSHIP**

- NOW 252

The following new members have been admitted to the Association since the issue of the December 1995 Bulletin. They are thanked for their interest & support and warmly welcomed to our fellowship.

Hunt R.G. Roy- PO Box 272, Two Wells 5501- ex RAAF Flt Mech 1 & 93 Sqds  
Waski A.M. Alfred- 120 Victoria Rd; West Pennant Hills 2125- ex AIF, RAAF  
Murdock G.M. Geoff- 2/34 Warwick St; Enfield, 5085- ex RAAF, 1 Sqn Armourer  
Kenny J.P. John- 8 Sqn RAF Waddington, Lincoln, England LN5 7NB Air  
FLTLT; Defence Office (RAAF) seconded to RAF  
Skinner M.B. Mac- 4 Tiwi St; Sorrento Gold Coast 4217- ex 105 Sqn RAF  
Nav (F/O on Mosquitos)  
Munro C.M. Cameron- 33 Diane Crs; Viewbank 3084- Student Aerospace Eng.

DID YOU KNOW ??? - That the FB MK.40 Mosquito built in Australia was built of HOME GROWN COACHWOOD PLY, combined with imported balsa and birch. This was brought to our attention by member Mrs. Phillis Jones of Ralston, NSW, who knows the owner of the property on which coachwood was grown. Following some research, this apparently little known fact was confirmed in an article on the Mosquito in "WINGS"-Vol 3 No.8 of 18th; July 1944.

Keep your stories, other information and photos coming in members. The Bulletin depends heavily on your contributions, and perhaps through these pages, in many cases, you will be preserving pockets of WW2 history for posterity.



**SPECIAL NOTICE** to Members who are ex-personnel of No. 1 Squadron RAAF and No. 464 Squadron RAAF.

Wing Commander Mark Lax, CSM has completed his history of No.1 Squadron-Mosquito Days (about 50000 words) and it has been entered in the RAAF Heritage Awards. Mark is still working on the full No.1 Squadron history

Following completion of this current task later this year, Mark intends to research and write the history of No.464 Squadron RAAF. It is important that ex 464 members contact Mark so that personal recollections may be recorded. In Marks' own words "In particular, I want to record their reminiscences. Information such as types of operations, photocopies of log books, day to day life, working conditions, in fact anything the member thinks should go into the Squadron's history (including comical or anecdotal stories) would be very much appreciated. If anyone has a diary they would photocopy for me or other written material. I want to include as much about the ground crew as I can and as you know, these very important people are often overlooked, simply because of lack of information on their part."

**PLEASE:-** ex 464 members, air crews and ground crews, write to Mark with your recollections and information on squadron days. His address is :-

Wing Commander Mark Lax  
Air Power Studies Centre  
RAAF Base, FAIRBAIRN, ACT 2600.

## The Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia

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