



Opening Night Sergeants Mess, Coomale Creek, 15-2-44





Funeral of S/Ldr R. L. Gordon and F/Sgt K. A. Smith - A19-165. 27-2-44





Propeller from A19-165



Adelaide River War Cemetery, 1944 (Photo Bill Dunbar)



Anti-aircraft positions, Foli Village, 22-12-44



Mina River Bridge after attack by Dutch Mitchets and Beaufighters



Hunting on Alligator River
Crocodile taken with grenade inside Duck



'A' Flight at Berry Springs



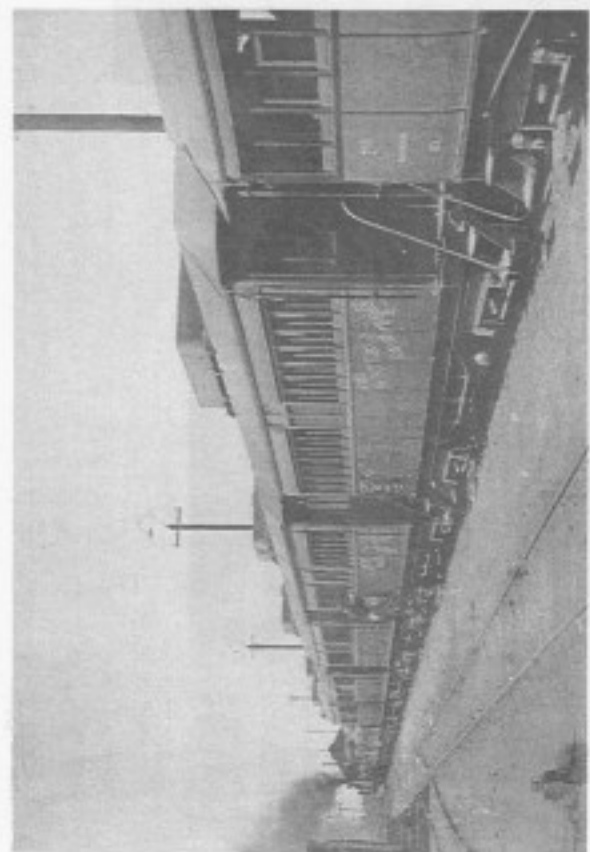
Bob Warner, Col McKenzie, Ron Mayne, Tom Dillon, ? Cox, ?, ?



F/Sgt Fred Wilkams



Tom Dillon



On the 'Ghan' heading North



Senior Citizens Beat Inflation

A couple aged 67, went to the doctor's office. The doctor asked "What can I do for you?" The man said "Will you watch us have sexual intercourse?" The doctor looked puzzled but agreed. When the couple had finished, the doctor said, "There is nothing wrong with the way you have intercourse", and charged them \$32.

This happened several weeks in a row. The couple would make an appointment, have intercourse, pay the doctor and leave. Finally the doctor asked, just exactly what are you trying to find out? The old man said, "We are not trying to find out anything, she is married and we can't go to her house, I am married and we can't go to my house. The holiday Inn charges \$80, the Hilton charges \$78, we do it here for \$32 and I get back \$28 from Medicare for a visit to the doctor's office."



CLEANING CANNON ON A BEAUFIGHTER

By B2/67

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Tornado Comes to Tondano.

FROM John Brennan:—

The town of Tondano, on the island of Celebes, crowds close up to the hills on the northern shore of Lake Tondano. To the east ricefields make a checkered pattern of the floor of the valley, and palm-thatched farmhouses are dotted about the shores of the lake. There are fine churches and European-style dwellings.

Before the war Tondano was a favored holiday resort of the European residents of Menado and the other coastal cities. The Netherlands Indies forces used the lake as an operational seaplane base. Since the Japanese occupied the island anti-aircraft guns have been set up among the trees on the hills north and west of the town. A powerhouse has been established where the river comes down from the mountains; a large headquarters force has occupied the buildings in the business section and the godowns built by the Japanese merchant firm which did most of the business in pre-war days have been used for the central storage of supplies. They are large godowns and need to be, for 19,000-odd Japanese troops are scattered about the island's northern end.

In recent months, ever since the Allied landings on Morotai, in the Halmaheras, these troops have lived a harassed existence. American Liberators and Mitchells have rained their bombs on airfields and docks. R.A.A.F. Kittyhawks and low-flying Beaufighters have dive-bombed and strafed bridges and road-transport, grounded aircraft and gun positions. Towns have been fired, food stores burned, ammunition and fuel dumps exploded. At night Spitfires have circled the Celebes airfields hoping that the enemy might some time attempt to bring in reinforcements of aircraft. For many weeks now he has been forced to use his motor transport only at night or when the weather is such as to keep the raiders at home. He has not been seen in the air.

But Tondano has been comparatively peaceful. The town of Tomohon to the west was strafed and burned in one sudden, savage raid. Day after day Kittyhawks dive-bombed the Langoan airstrip, on the southern shore of the Meer van Tondano, and Beaufighters tore at the already badly-damaged aircraft which littered its edges with their cannon shells. Occasionally one or two Beaus came whispering across the treetops above Tondano, fired a few strafing rounds at an odd motor truck, swooped around beyond the large hospital building marked with its huge red cross, and were out again, swerving, slide-slipping, dipping to avoid the anti-aircraft fire. But that was all.

Then came the morning when the R.A.A.F. decided that Tondano was ready for "doing over." For this Celebes town was listed the largest-scale all-R.A.A.F. raid of the war in the Pacific. Ninety-odd Kittyhawks and Beaufighters were detailed to "bomb, strafe and burn the Japanese-occupied areas," already discernible in photographs brought back by Beaus. The Kittys went in first. Their primary

targets were the known ack-ack positions about the town. They were carrying depth charges for the first time against a land target. At 8.55 on a bright Sunday morning they dived on Tondano out of a cloudless sky. There was a little inaccurate anti-aircraft fire; a few black puffs of smoke: that was all.

It was an impressive sight—10, 20, 30 'planes, sweeping, diving, pulling out and rounding to come sweeping in again upon the town. The smoke began to hover in small-seeming patches, widely-scattered. Almost hidden by the dust and smoke were the flickering, hopeful flames of beginning fires.

Then the Kittys swept up and out to the west, and the Beaufighters were swooping on the well-marked targets to burn those sections of Tondano. They went down in three waves. Each wave was to have ten minutes over the target area. Hung beneath each wing was a cluster of fire bombs, filled with a new and highly-inflammable oil mixture.



Jack Entwistle and Dave Beasley - AA damage to A19-212 incurred on raid on Tondano, Celebes, 14-2-45 (Photo © Beasley)

MARCH 7, 1945.

The Bulletin

7

Before the first of the 'planes had pulled out of their dives fires were starting among the houses and smoke was spreading in a low cloud over the town.

The 'planes went up and around and in again, sweeping just above the level of the trees, climbing up one side of a hillock beside the town, hurtling down the other side, then winging back towards Tondano, a few feet above the waters of the lake. The rattle of their automatic cannon was loud and distinct above the noise of the motors, and ahead there was the quick, bright, electric-light flash of the shells exploding in the sides of houses.

Each wave made three sweeps along the town, and as it began to climb the hill for the last time the wave following was already above the target, ready to follow out across the lake.

There was a sweep down along the Langoan

strip, 25 feet above the ground. Cannon shells tore at the fuselage of any 'plane that seemed at all repairable. A climb through the hill pass, branches of trees showing up on either side of the cockpit; a searching, winding, sweeping rush above the treetops out to the coast, with here and there a "target of opportunity"; and then, in the bay, a dip to ten feet to wave at a grinning, excited family of natives in a canoe.

Already the last of the 'planes had left Tondano behind. The Kittyhawks and Beaufighters had been there for only 45 minutes. Apart from those first bursts of ack-ack, a little machine-gun fire from the sides of Langoan strip and half a dozen "tree mines," exploded in the treetops as the Beaufighters raced above them, there had been no reaction from the enemy. But at Tondano the fires would burn all through the day, and already the pall of smoke had blotted out the brightness of the sun.

-Whispering Death faces own demise-



By KYLIE DAVIS

AN ageing Beaufighter strike aircraft – one of only five in existence – sits in a paddock in the southern Melbourne suburb of Moorabbin, a silent but deteriorating reminder of the camaraderie, bravery and daring of World War II fliers.

The aircraft known by the Japanese as Whispering Death faces its own demise.

"It would be a great shame to see her disappear," said Mr Neal McDonald who, at 23 years of age, was the brash and confident Flying Officer McDonald at the RAAF's Coomalie Creek base, 70km south of Darwin.

"The Beaufighters were an important part of the RAAF's power and there were many hundreds made in Australia so they are an important part of Australia's war history."

The Moorabbin Air Museum is seeking parts to restore the Beaufighter and money to build an extension to the museum to store it safely.

With his navigator, Frank



Flying Officer McDonald (top left) and his Beaufighter and, inset, Mr Magee (left) and Mr McDonald yesterday

Magee, then 22, Mr McDonald flew on operations into Timor, Dutch New Guinea and the islands of Indonesia to destroy enemy ships, airbases and aircraft.

"We were instrumental in preventing many more raids on Darwin," Mr Magee said.

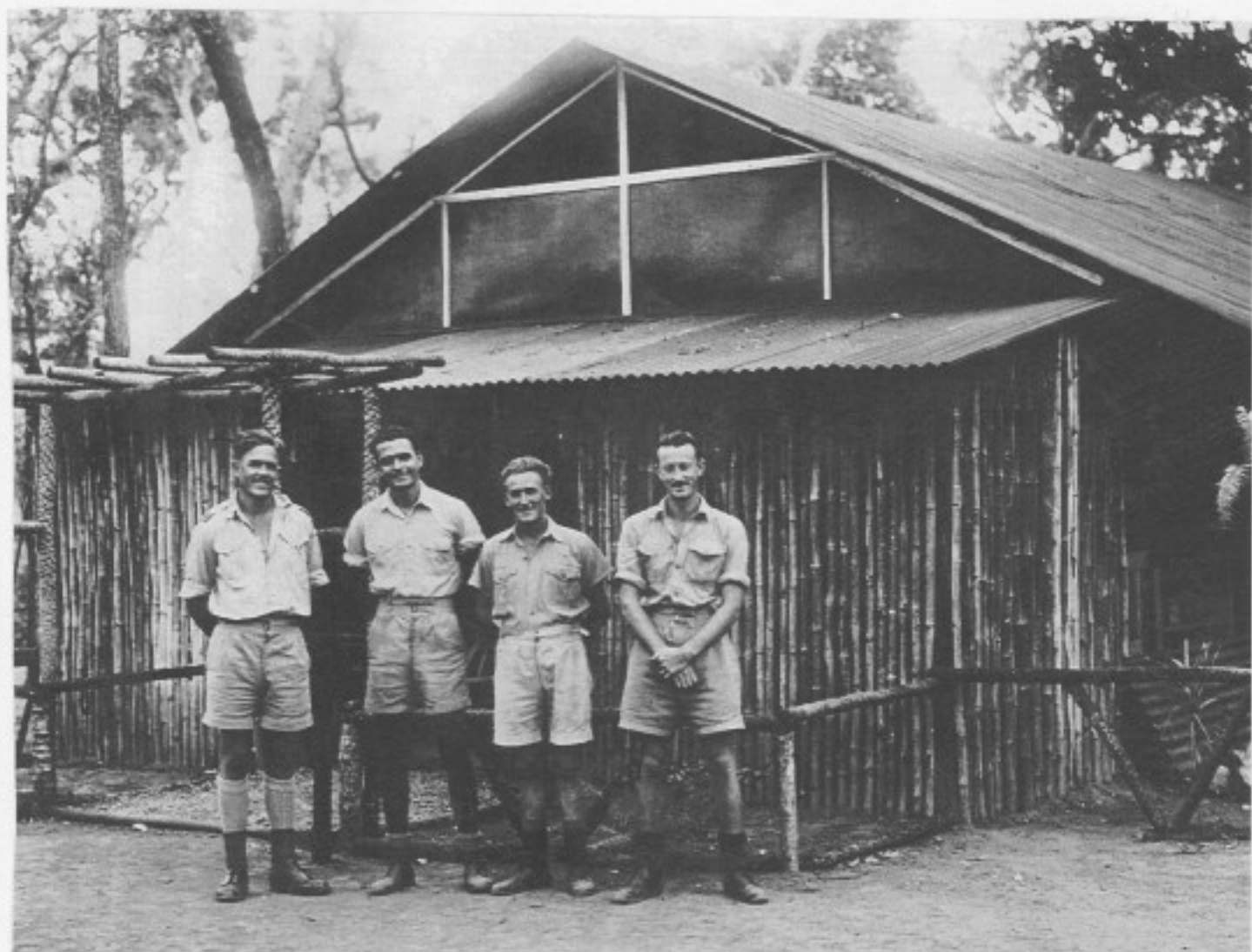
So supreme was their confidence in the plane and their ability that Flying Officers McDonald and Magee would attack a target several times rather than leave a Japanese aircraft standing.

For their 1943 raid on a Jap-

anese sea aircraft base at Taberfane, on the island of Aru between Timor and New Guinea, the two became the second crew ever to be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"A squadron of about eight Beaufighters went in to Taberfane. Everyone else had gone home after one hit when I realised there were still quite a few of the floatplanes standing," said Mr McDonald.

"So I called out to Frank we should go back in, and he agreed."



Doc McLaughlin, Charlie Brooks and two orderlies at the hospital, Coomalie Creek. (Photo F. Anderson)



John Sweeney, F/L Cobham(Intel), and Emrys (Sam) Morgan



AIRCREW 20-1-43

Navigators on wing - Agnew Hatfield Newton Studt Thorncraft - Thompson
Moors Lennon

In Front - Cornie Madden Savage Barnett Cooke Greenwood Delaporte
Biven Entwistle Van Nooten

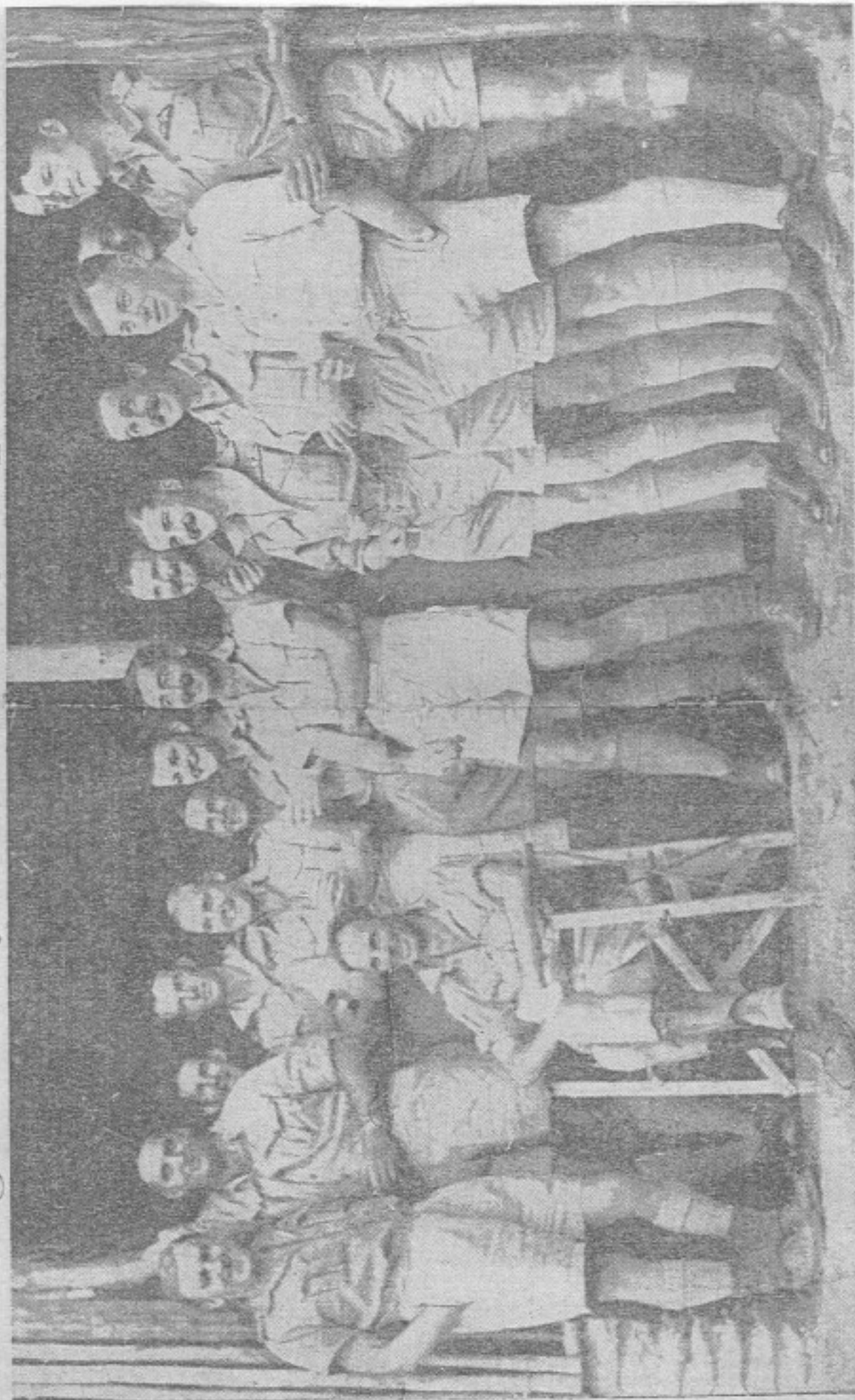
(Photo A. Hoffman)

Beaufighters' Record

In operations in North-West Australia an RAAF Beaufighter squadron had destroyed 60 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed four, and damaged 61.

The Air Minister, Mr. Drakeford, stating this, added that this record was a splendid testimony to the Australian aircrews who manned these hard-hitting ground strafers, and also to the quality of British aircraft.

Beafighter boys are buckjumpers of the air



BEAUGHTER PILOTS AND OBSERVERS relax in their buck mess. This group includes Pilot-Officer Alan Martin, of Adelaide; Flight-Lieut. Hank Henry, Clarence Park, S.A.; Pilot-Officer Dorothy Hooks, Funchibout, N.S.W.; Flying-Officer G. R. Wylie, Nealside, W.A.; Flight-Lieut. John ("Twiss") Entasdale, of Westbourne Park, S.A.; Flying-Officer R. S. Gravel, of Merbein, Vic.; Flying-Officer Vic Letthead, Burroucoppin, W.A.;

Flying-Officer Keith McDuffitt, Camberwell, Vic.; Flying-Officer A. J. Cameron, Moorooka, Qld.; Flying-Officer Don Taylor, Mt. Lendale, W.A.; Flying-Officer Don McCord, Largsville, Tas.; Flight-Lieut. Mick McCutcheon, Young, N.S.W.; Flying-Officer John Hand, Mt. Lawley, W.A.; Flying-Officer Barrie Gillispiie, Nealside, W.A.; Flying-Officer D. ("Trapper") Drysdale, Parramatta, N.S.W. These lads fly daily over enemy territory.

They blast the Japs relentlessly by day and night; live in bush huts and tents

By BILL MOORE, Our War Correspondent

It does you good to shake hands with the devil-may-care Beaufighter boys of this north-west area.

Up here they call Beaufighter 534 crews "Buckjumpers of the Air" because they have the uncanny knack of bouncing off the enemy's palm trees, jumping over his hangars and installations, and generally kicking Tojo's treasures to smithereens.

AND there's no fooling about those palm tree bouncers, because I've been there when the boys have come home with pieces of palm tree securely wedged between the engine cowlings and fuselage.

The crews are just as daring—if not so well known—as the Spitfire pilots. They swoop from the heavens on to the enemy's bases, ships and settlements, to strafe and destroy everything in sight, only a few feet from the ground.

Their cheery, tall, dark, and handsome leader told me, "Those trees often bend down to let us through."

He has completed 25 missions, and his boys get a great kick out of their jobs. The squadron has the remarkable record of more than a hundred planes shot out of action in 145 missions.

For example, they bowled over more than 20 enemy aircraft, and probably destroyed and damaged as many more. And all these, mark you, on the Japs' own territory.

So scared are Jap planes of Beaufighters that they clear for cover whenever they see our boys coming. Beaufighters have had most success in their attacks on Longgoet, the new airstrip in Kot Islands; Dill and Koepang, in Timor; Tabertane, in Kot Islands; and in the Solafu Group.

These fighters have gone out morning and night and swooped from the clouds in the face of fierce neck fire with all guns blazing. That

is "furniture" is improvised from boxes and cases.

Down in the tropical boys you meet mechanics, armorers, fitters, and riggers busy in planes.

You see them handle affectionately a wounded plane which has come in badly baked from a burst of enemy cannon or anti-aircraft fire.

The plane is patched-up, overhauled, and made ready for service again.

There have been Beaufighters which have lurped home with a part of the wing like a colander, but they are fixed up and go out for more strafing sweeps.

I chatted with some of the ground staff as they worked in warm winter sun.

Lance Stan Tuller, of Inverell, N.S.W., flight mechanic, said: "Before the war I had a small sheep property near Inverell, but

now I never think of sheep. I've met the greatest bunch of fellows in the world here," he said.

Corporal Stan Peary, of Mt. Kembla, N.S.W., who earned 26/- a day as a coalminer, and who now receives 12/6 a day as a fitter and armorer, told me he would go back to mining after the war.

"It's got hold of me. My people have been miners for four or five generations," Stan said.

An officer in charge of the ground staff said he had the "finest lot of workers you could find anywhere."

"Beaufighters call for the highest skill in maintenance to keep them running freely," he added.

In recent months Beaufighters have varied the daily service diet by sometimes participating in armed reconnaissance patrols and in shadowing Allied ships.

One of the luckiest observers in the squadron is Flying Officer John N. Marr, of Subiaco, Perth, who narrowly escaped death when an enemy explosive shell burst on the covering above his head while over Tabertane recently.

Marr was hoping to get leave when I saw him, to go home to his wife and three-month-old John Marr, Junior, whom he has not yet seen.

In the mess, just before dinner, pilots, observers, and others gather for ice-cold squash. Around the mess are pictures of attractive pin-up girls, possibly cuttings, and squadron insignia.

Drool Flight-Lieutenant Joe Stanley, of Anabellflower, Qld., who often leads the planes into action, is pretty proud of the fact that Australian Beaufighters fly much longer distances to get to enemy bases than do R.A.F. Beaufighters overseas.

Another Queensland pilot, Squadron-Leader Gordon Savage, of Ipswich, shepherded the lads one day when the Beaufighters destroyed nine out of nine float-planes. Savage said: "Our leader told us to bring home the bacon. We did that all right, and brought some suckling-pigs, too."

That's typical of the Beaufighter boys. They pack a bundle of fun into every mission.

The Queen's thought for mothers

Cabled from London by ANNE MATHESON

"It is to the mothers that my heart goes out. They are always in my thoughts. With war on so many far-flung fronts, it must be a terrible strain for Australian women and I think their sacrifice is magnificent," said Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, to Dr. Evatt when she gave audience to him during his London visit.

THE Queen gave Dr. Evatt a signed photograph of herself and the Princesses to take back to Mrs. Evatt.

"Her Majesty told me it is the children and their future that exercise her thoughts. She believes that it is they who must shape the world," said Dr. Evatt. She indicated that there is no phase of the education of the Princesses which she doesn't supervise.

"Queen Elizabeth is the most outstanding of all the women I've met," Doctor Evatt added, "and I've met most of the important ones."

"Everyone knows of her gracious-

had to many of them seemed somewhat remote.

Reference is made to it in an airmail letter that arrived this week at the office of The Australian Women's Weekly from Mrs. Ella Dunbar, head of the overseas department of the Women's Voluntary Services, in London.

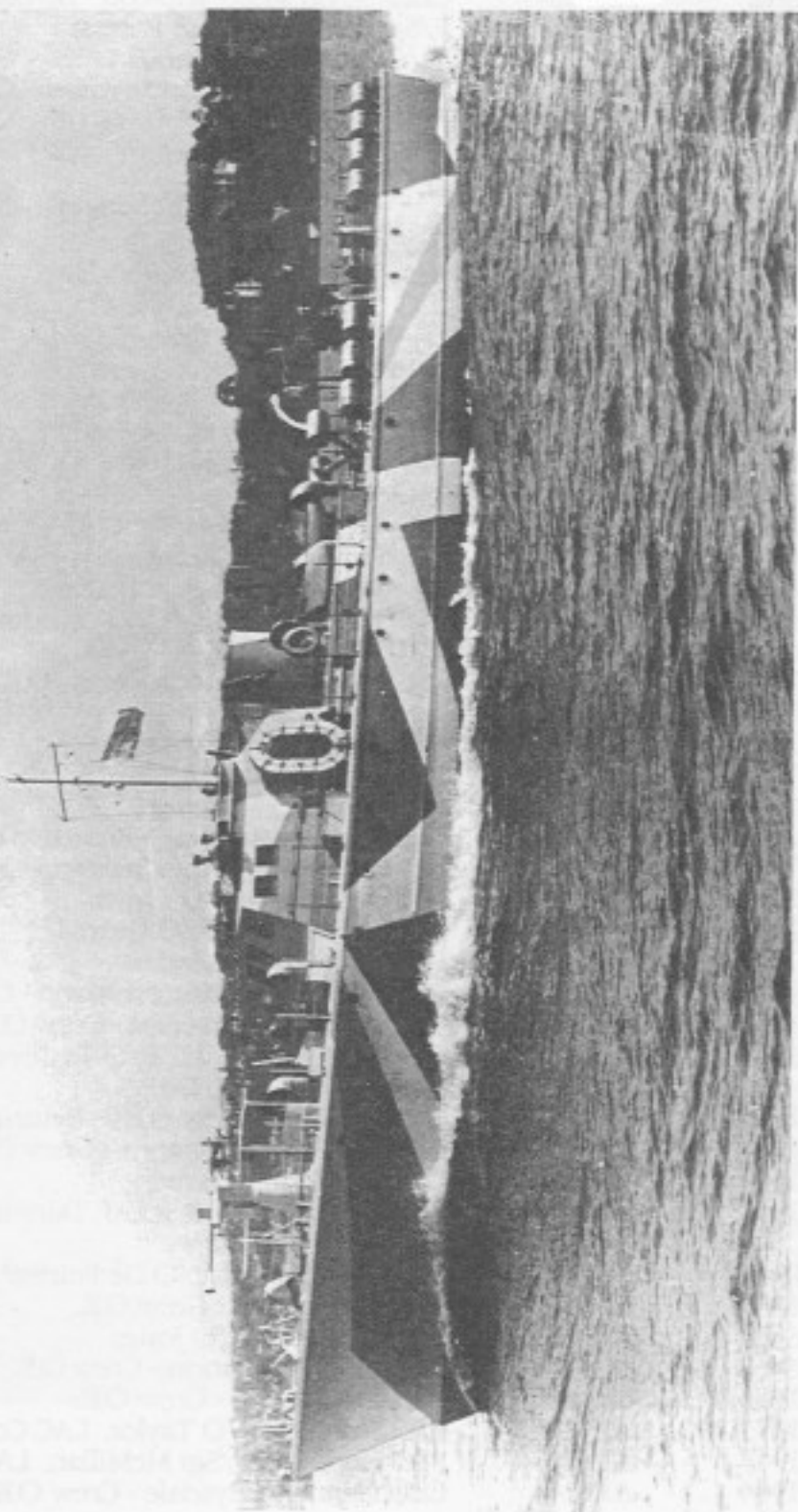
"I have just read in the paper that it is possible to send airmails to Australia, and I hasten to send you one, and hope that it arrives by record time. What a wonderful service it is. I suppose after the war we will wonder how we ever existed without it."

"I think nearly everyone in Britain listened-in on Sunday evening to Dr. Evatt. He made an excellent broadcast, and certainly brought the Pacific story up to date; and how well we agreed with him when he said the Dominions had something of value to contribute, and would help to perpetuate the unity and solidarity of the British Commonwealth."

London broadcast

DR. EVATT'S broadcast speech was one of the successes of his London visit.

He gave English listeners a new realization of the dangers and the problems of war in the Pacific, which

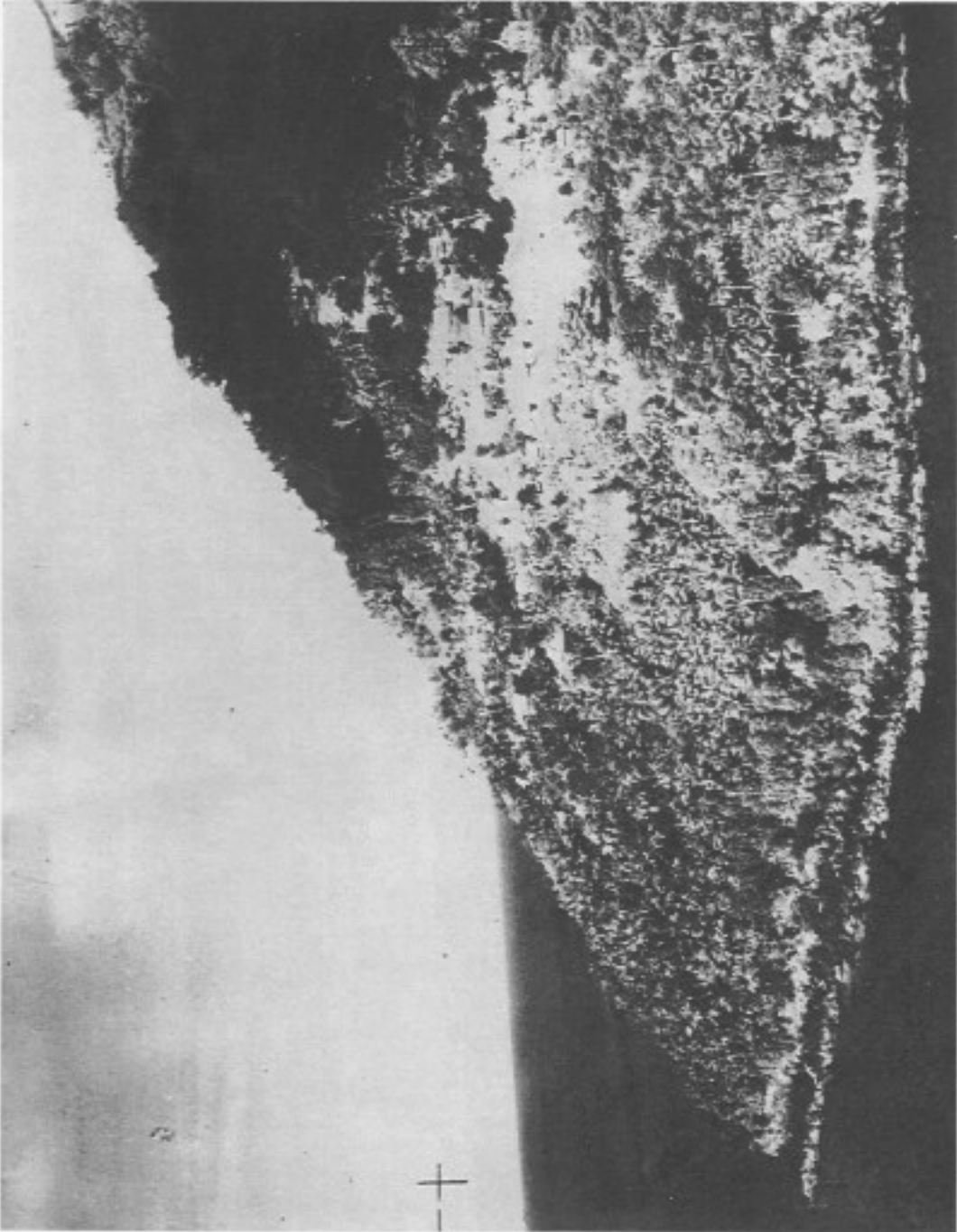


ML814 was with HMAS's Armidale, Castlemaine and Kuru off the Timor Coast when Armidale was sunk in November 1942. ML814 continued to run supplies to our troops on Timor.

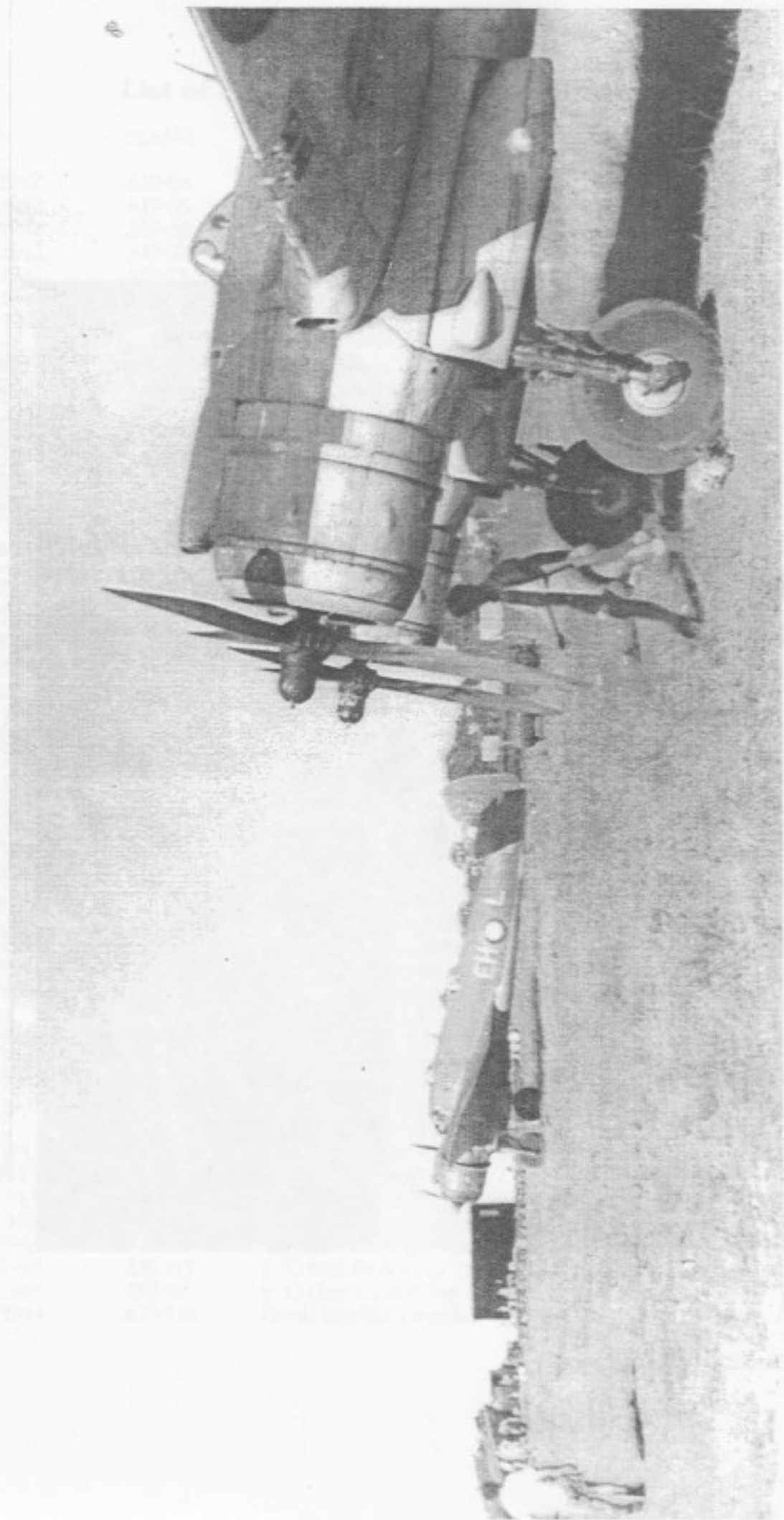
List of Squadron losses since formation

DATE	PLANE	CREW/REMARKS
17-11-1942	A19-64	S/L Ridings & W/O Clark
30-11-1942	A19-65	Crashed on strip - wipe off - no one hurt
30-11-1942	A19-69	F/Sgt Morrison & Sgt Forrest
23-12-1942	A19-22	W/O Smith & Sgt Hands
29-12-1942	A19-71	W/O Wilkinson & Sgt Byrnesw - Crew O.K.
29-12-1942	A19-20	P/O Gabb & Sgt Webb - Crew O.K.
06-01-1943	A19-70	In swamp, Cape Stewart - Crew O.K. - Returned to 4RSU, 25/07/1943
19-01-1943	A19-67	P/O Thomas & Sgt Van Nooten
25-02-1943	A19-66	Crashed on strip
02-02-1943	A19-31	Strafed on strip - burnt
15-03-1943	A19-79	F/O Longoni & Sgt Dale
17-03-1943	A19-91	Crashed on strip - Crew O.K.
17-03-1943	A19-78	In mud near Darwin - Crew O.K. - Returned 02/06/1943
27-04-1943	A19-59	F/L Greenwood & Sgt Thompson
06-05-1943	A19-60	F/O Budd & P/O McQueen
10-05-1943	A19-72	Burnt on strip, Millingimbi
12-05-1943	A19-19	F/O Branelly & Sgt McGrath
19-05-1943	A19-45	F/O Taylor & Sgt Coburn
19-05-1943	A19-29	F/O Firth & P/O McLennan
19-05-1943	A19-58	Sgt Armstrong & Sgt Robertson
07-06-1943	A19-112	Crashed on strip - Sgt Terry (serious), Sgt Doyle & W/O McDonald W.O.D.(O.K.)
01-06-1943	A19-103	Crashed RAAF Darwin - Crew O.K. - Returned July
12-06-1943	A19-57	Crashed strip - Crew O.K.
23-06-1943	A19-62	Crashed strip - Crew O.K.
23-06-1943	A19-113	Crashed strip - Crew O.K.
24-06-1943	A19-118	? Gillespie & ? Cameron
09-08-1943	A19-117	Burnt while refuelling - Returned 25/11/1943
18-08-1943	A19-18	Forced landing, Caper Stewart - Crew O.K. - Returned later
21-08-1943	A19-47	F/L Gardiner & F/O Lyons
21-08-1943	A19-63	F/O LLeathhead & F/O Graves
30-08-1943	A19-119	F/L Willard & Sgt Butler
14-09-1943	A19-8	Forced landing, Bathurst Island - Crew O.K.
17-09-1943	A19-70	Forced landing on coast - Crew O.K.
29-09-1943	A19-116	Crashed Millingimbi. F/O Taylor & F/O Hocking, Cpl Gorton & LAC Deggs
03-10-1943	A19-144	Crashed strip - Crew O.K. - Returned 14/12/1943
09-10-1943	A19-40	Belly landed, Livingstone - Crew O.K.
09-10-1943	A19-18	Forced landing, Darwin
18-09-1943	A19-84	Crashed and burnt, RAAF, Darwin - F/Sgt Ellis & Sgt Carton. LAC Pitts
19-10-1943	A19-17	F/O Cridlands? & P/O De Peiries?
21-11-1943	A19-82	Crashed on strip - Crew O.K.
21-11-1943	A19-145	F/Sgt Gaunt & P/O Jones
21-11-1943	A19-36	Shot up on operation - Crew O.K.
03-12-1943	A19-80	Crashed on strip - Crew O.K.
04-12-1943	A19-117	F/O Stubbs & P/O Taylor. LAC Coghlin
06-12-1943	A19-86	F/O Gerdes & F/Sgt McMillan. LAC Henry
04-01-1944	A19-144	Crash landed, Drysdale - Crew O.K.

Supplied by Alex MacKinnon



SEROA IS. AN ACTIVE VOLCANIC ISLAND NORTH OF DARWIN 40 NM NE OF VILA IS. SHOWING MAIN VILLAGE



SQUADRON AIRCRAFT AT BROOME - JUNE 1944



Aircraft at Morotai



Camp at Morotai



Armourers at work at Morotai - Mick Thorpe



Eric Coleman, George Carnegie and Dave Boasley at Morotai



Squadron camp, Morotai 1945 AA Battery Camp



A. A. Battery Camp



On Wama Strip, Morotai



Pranged Catalina behind Kittyhawk - Mt. Bongo
in background - Sanga Sanga, 1945



M. Philips with Jap mine. HF/DF
Station in trees - Sanga Sanga, 1945

(Photo's courtesy M. Philips)



M. Philips and T. Redford with friend at Sanga Sanga, 1945



Service Party



Women of Netherlands East Indies Civil Administration Village



Refueling



Morotai Shoreline



EH-Q being serviced



Liberator graveyard between Wama and Ptoe Strips

Photos Courtesy M. Phelps



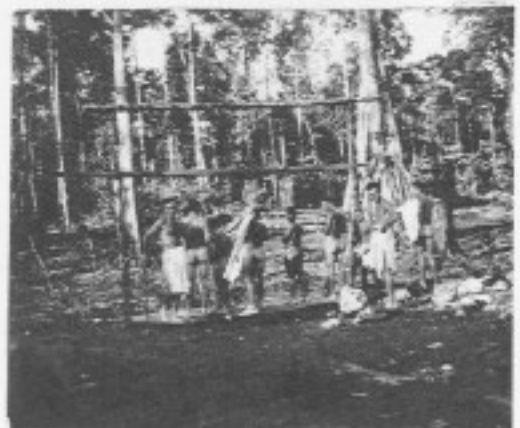
77 Wing Picture Palace



Graveyards



Malcolm Phelps, Bill Williams, Spud Murphy and Alan Read at tent with A/R trench in foreground



Squadron showers with running water



Long trail to ... ?



'Carinya' Tent of Williams, A. Reed, F. Murphy and M. Philps



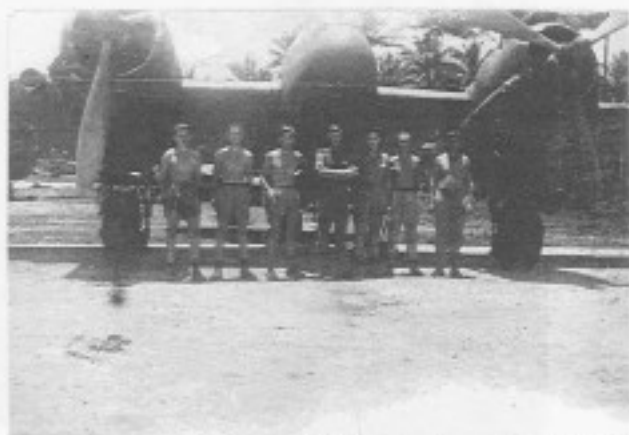
Volleyball at 77 Wing



Captured Jap bunkers



Patented 'Washing Machine'!



Bluey James, Bluey Gliddon, Mal Philps, Ron Provos, Keith McGrath, Bill Scammel and Fred Williams

(Photo's courtesy M. Philps)



B-5 on Pitoe strip 15-2 -45 after AA damaged landing gear and hydraulics
(Photo: K. Edmanon)



Village on Tawi Tawi Island in Zulu Archipelago, Philippines. (Photo: Mick Thorpe)



Members of 22, 30 and 31 Squadrons at a briefing on Morotai.

WHAT ARE GERMANS WORRYING ABOUT?



WHAT ARE SENIORS WORTH?

From Junior Gardam

Remember, old folks are worth a fortune - with silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys, lead in their feet and gas in their stomachs.

I have become a little older since I saw you last and a few changes have come into my life.

Frankly, I have become a frivolous old girl. I'm seeing five gentlemen every day. As soon as I wake up Will Power helps me out of bed. Then I go to see John. Next, its time for Uncle Toby to come along, followed by Billy T. They leave and Arthur Ritis shows up and stays the rest of the day. He doesn't like to stay in one place very long so he takes me from joint to joint. After such a busy day I'm really tired and glad to go to bed with Johnny Walker. What a life! Oh yes, I'm also flirting with Al Zymer!

P.S. The preacher came to call the other day. He said that at my age I should be thinking about the hereafter. I told him, 'Oh I do, all the time'. No matter where I am, if I'm in the parlour, upstairs, in the kitchen or down in the basement, I ask myself: Now what am I here after?

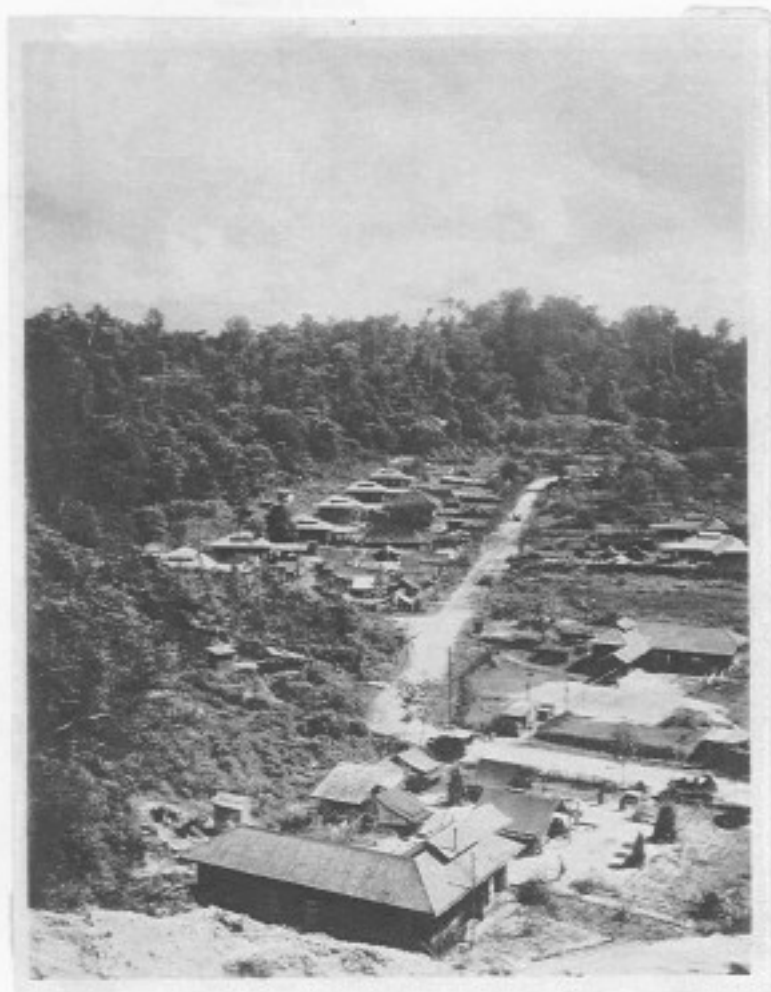
FOR WOMEN ONLY

From Bill Cook

Just a line to say I'm living, that I'm not alone or dead.
Though I'm getting more forgetful and more mixed up in the head.
For sometimes I don't remember when I stand at the foot of the stairs
If I must go up for something or if I've just come down from there?
I stand before the 'frig, so often, my mind is filled with doubt.
Have I just put the food away or have I come to take it out?
And there are times when it is dark, with my nightcap on my head
I don't know if I'm retiring or just getting out of bed.
So if it is my turn to write, there is no need to get sore,
I think I may have written and I don't want to be a bore
So remember that I love you and wish that you were here.
But now it's nearly mailing time so I must say good-night dear.
Here I stand before the mail box with my face so very red,
Instead of posting you the letter, I have opened it instead.
My bi-focals I can manage, my dentures fit just fine,
I can turn up my hearing aid but God ... I miss my mind.



Orderly Room and Operations Room, Tarakan, July 1945



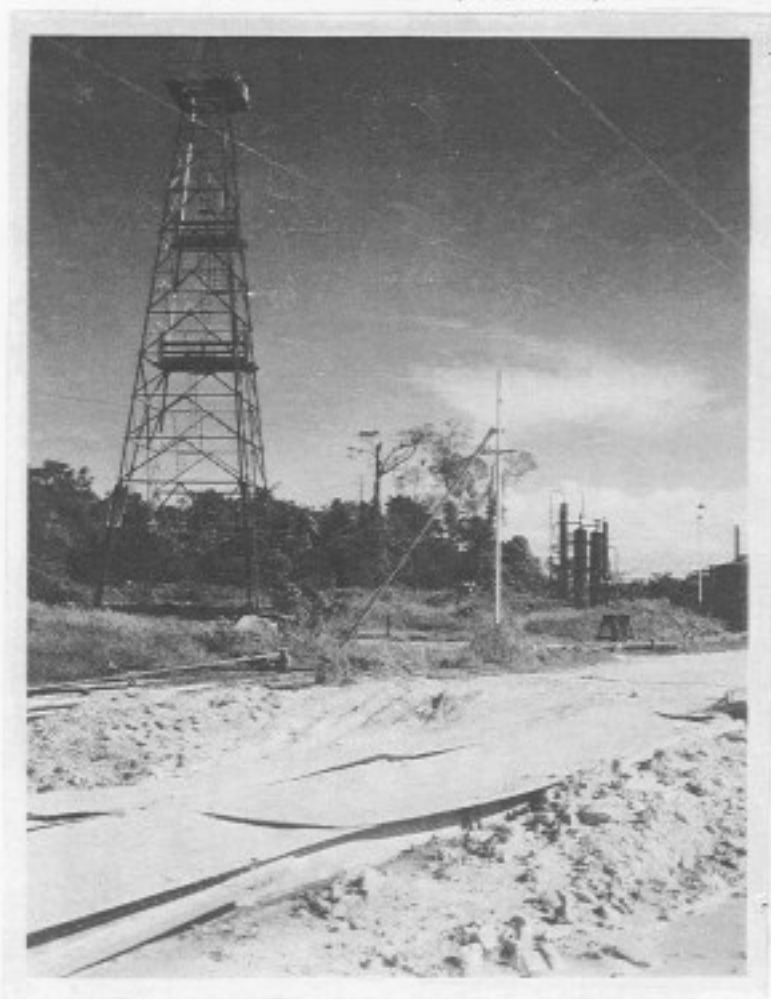
31 Squadron camp at Tarakan, July 1945
(Photos D'Beasley)

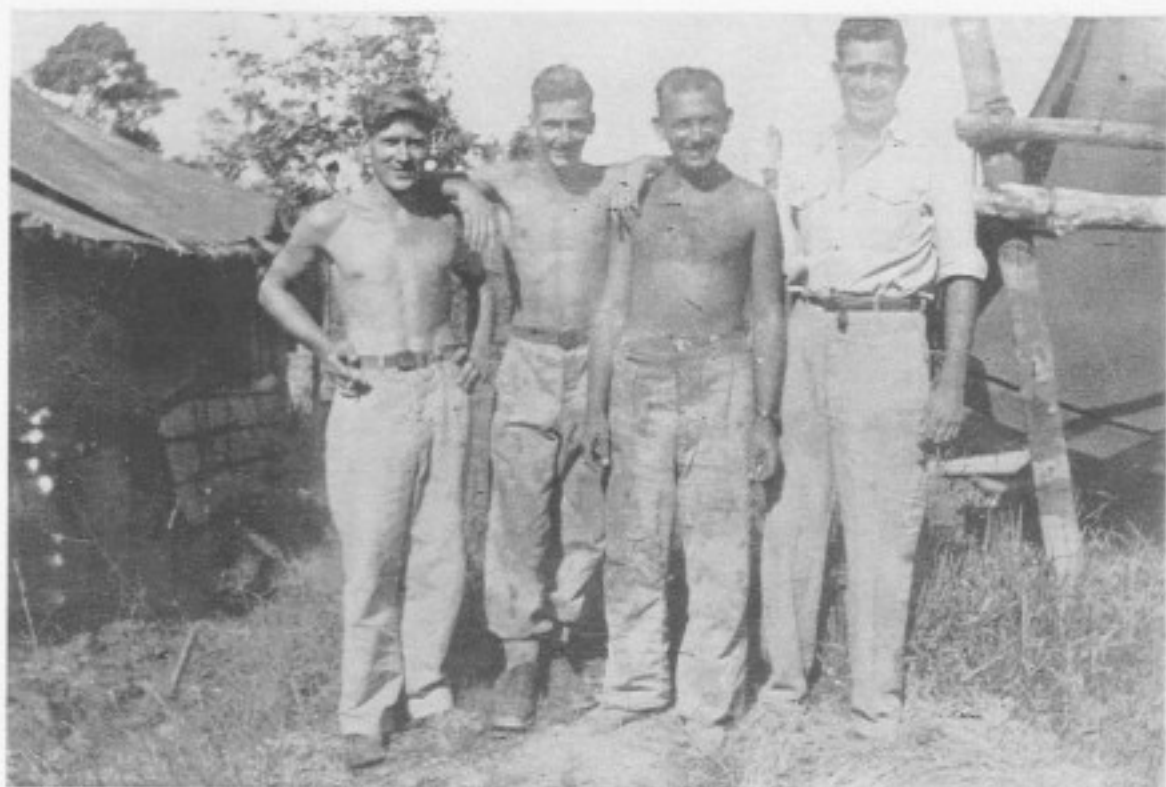
WHAT ARE SENIORS EXPECTED

TO DO?



Oil Wells near 31 Squadron camp at Tarakan, July 1945
(Photo: D. Beasley)





Armourers at Tarakan - Mick Thorpe, Mick Hutchison, U. K. . . . Hewart

(Photos Mick Thorpe)





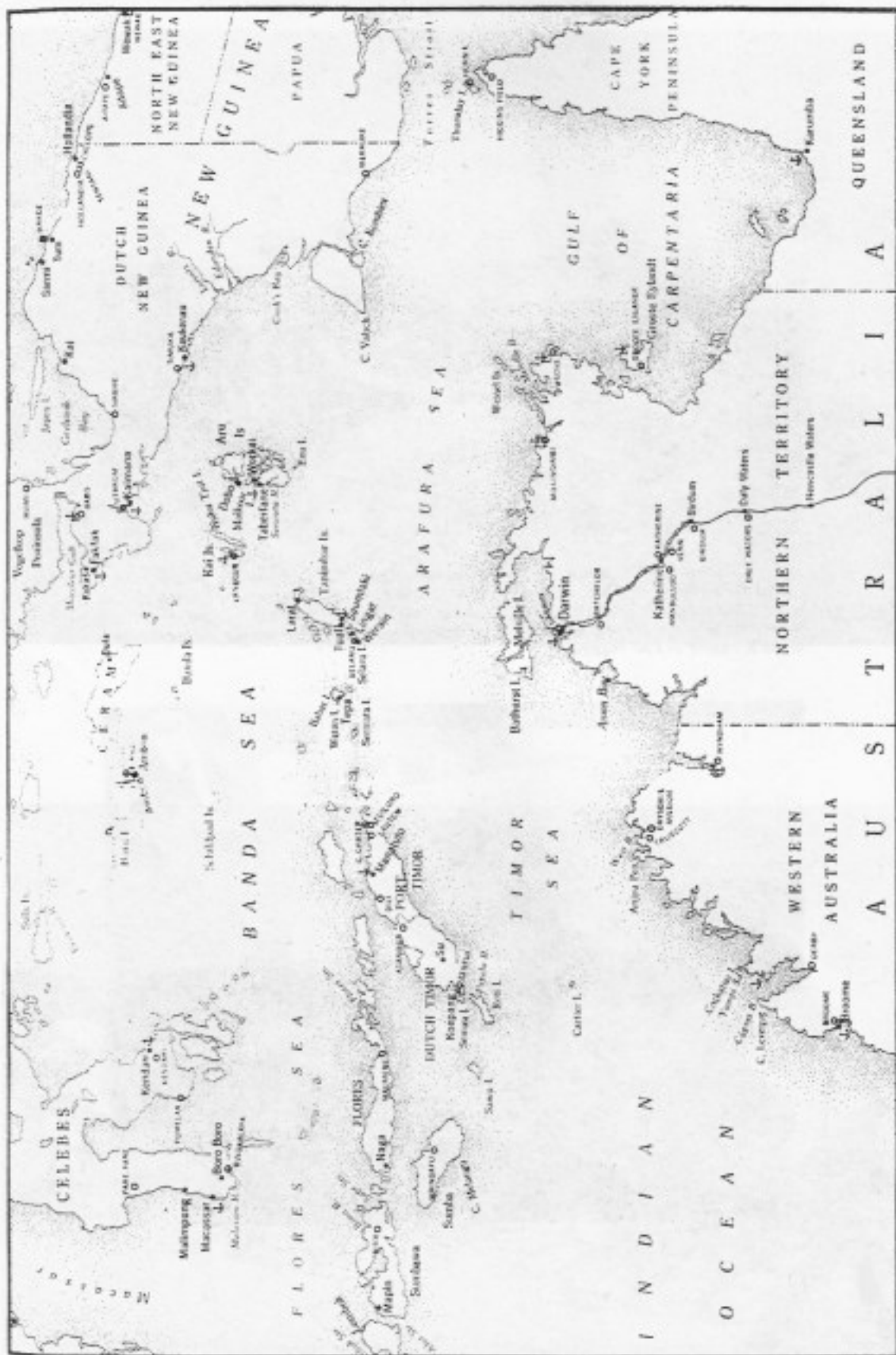
31 Squadron arriving at Tarakan (Photos Mick Thorpe)

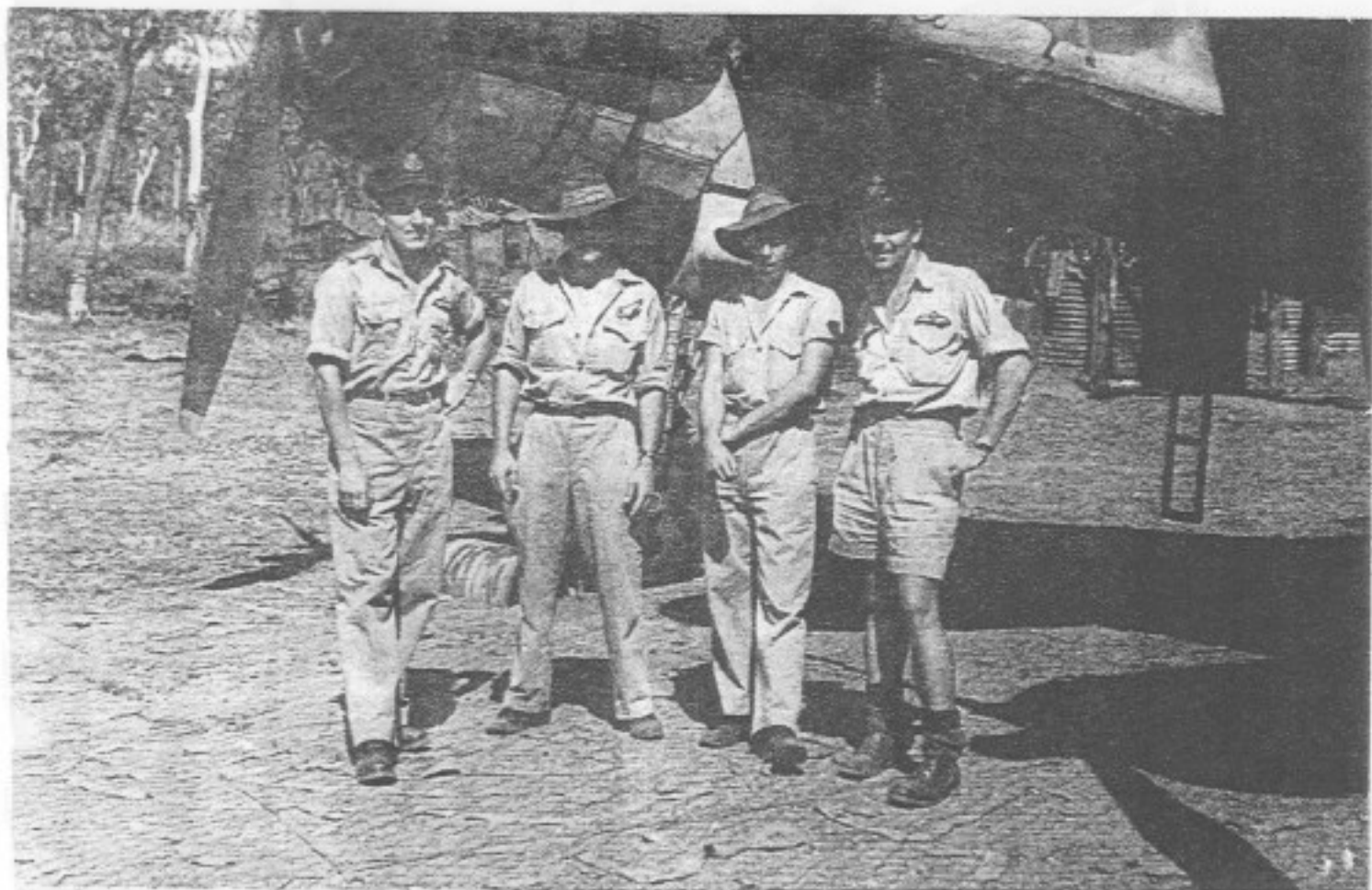




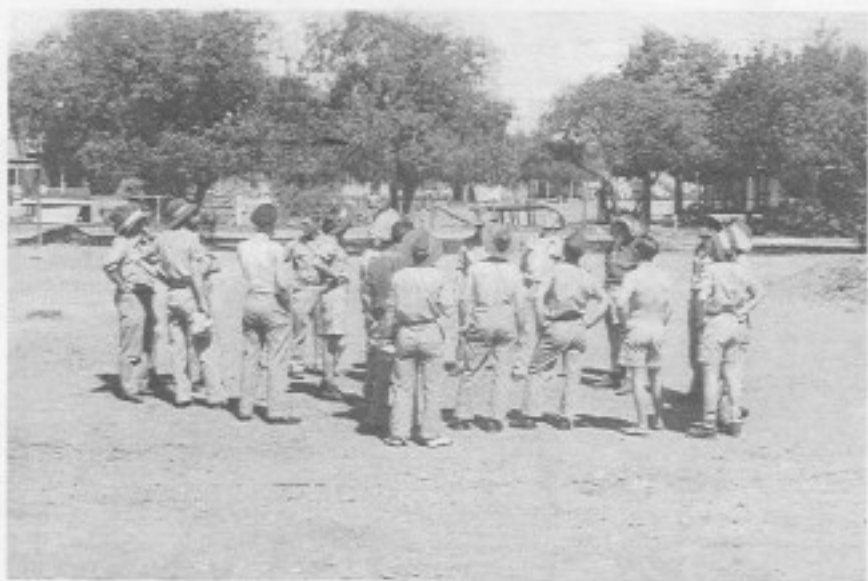
31 Squadron's A19-177 came to grief at its Coomaie Creek, NT, base in April 1944 on return from a sweep over Timor. It ended up in a bank off the runway after - according to the official report - "landing with drift in a strong crosswind". We can't help wondering if the remains of the wedge tail eagle sticking out of the wing leading edge (lower photo) may have contributed to the accident! (RAAF Historical)







Ron Bullen, Gus Sparke, Ron Mayno, Bill Rankin



'Whispering Death': No 31 Squadron

Ex-members of 31 Squadron will gather at 2pm tomorrow at the five mile peg on the Olympic Way north of Cootamundra to dedicate a monument to the memory of Flight Sergeant Jenkins and Flight Sergeant Suthers.

These crew members of a 31 Squadron Beaufighter were killed in a crash at the site in 1942.

The monument has been donated by the Cootamundra Shire Council with the Beaufighter Association providing the memorial plaque.

Members of the Cootamundra RSL will attend and the general public are cordially invited.

Formed at Forest Hill

By BONES RYNEHART

RAAF Base in 1942, 31 Squadron was equipped with the Beaufighter, an aircraft made famous for its deadly accuracy as a night fighter in the Battle of Britain.

The aircraft had a sleeve valve radial two engine. Its speed at low altitude made its approach almost impossible to hear hence the name 'Whispering Death'.

After a short time of intensive training at Wagga, 31 Squadron was moved to Darwin to begin three years of distinguished combat in the Pacific war zone.

In the first two weeks of operations the squadron recorded 53 sorties in enemy

territory inflicting great damage to enemy aircraft bases and campaigns against Japanese floatplanes and radio installations. The squadron's main objective was to keep the "Japs" tied down in Timor.

As the Japanese retreated the length of the sorties increased. One of the squadron's greatest obstacles was the flying time. Quite often aircraft would return with petrol tanks almost empty.

In September 1944 they became the first RAAF squadron to use rocket projectiles in the Pacific. The new armament proved a great advantage to its renowned fighting ability.

At the end of the war the squadron had a record of 20 aircraft shot down in the air and 54 on the ground. A total of 14 planes were damaged in the air and 32 on the ground.

Ships destroyed totalled nine and four were damaged. In all the squadron flew 2660 offensive sorties.

Ex-members of 31 squadron organised a reunion in Canberra on Anzac day.

The photos of a Beaufighter was supplied by former 31 Squadron fitter Mr Norm Garth of Wagga. Among local men who served with 31 squadron are Phil Engelbrecht, Roy Rynhart, from Tumbarumba, Ron Wilson and the late Bob Johnson.





Darwin man, Mr Harry Moo, a former navigator with 31 (Beaufighter) Squadron, lays a wreath at this morning's memorial service. Picture. MICHAEL PRATT.

War pilots remembered

Nostalgia was in the air at the Civic Centre gardens this morning.

Seventy members and friends of 31 (Beaufighter) Squadron Association gathered at the Cenotaph for a memorial service in honor of their comrades lost in Northern Australia in World War II.

The association is holding a week-long reunion in Darwin.

It was the first time back in the north since 1944 for many members. 31 Squadron was part of an RAAF network of defence units in the Top End during World War II and was based at Coomalie Creek,

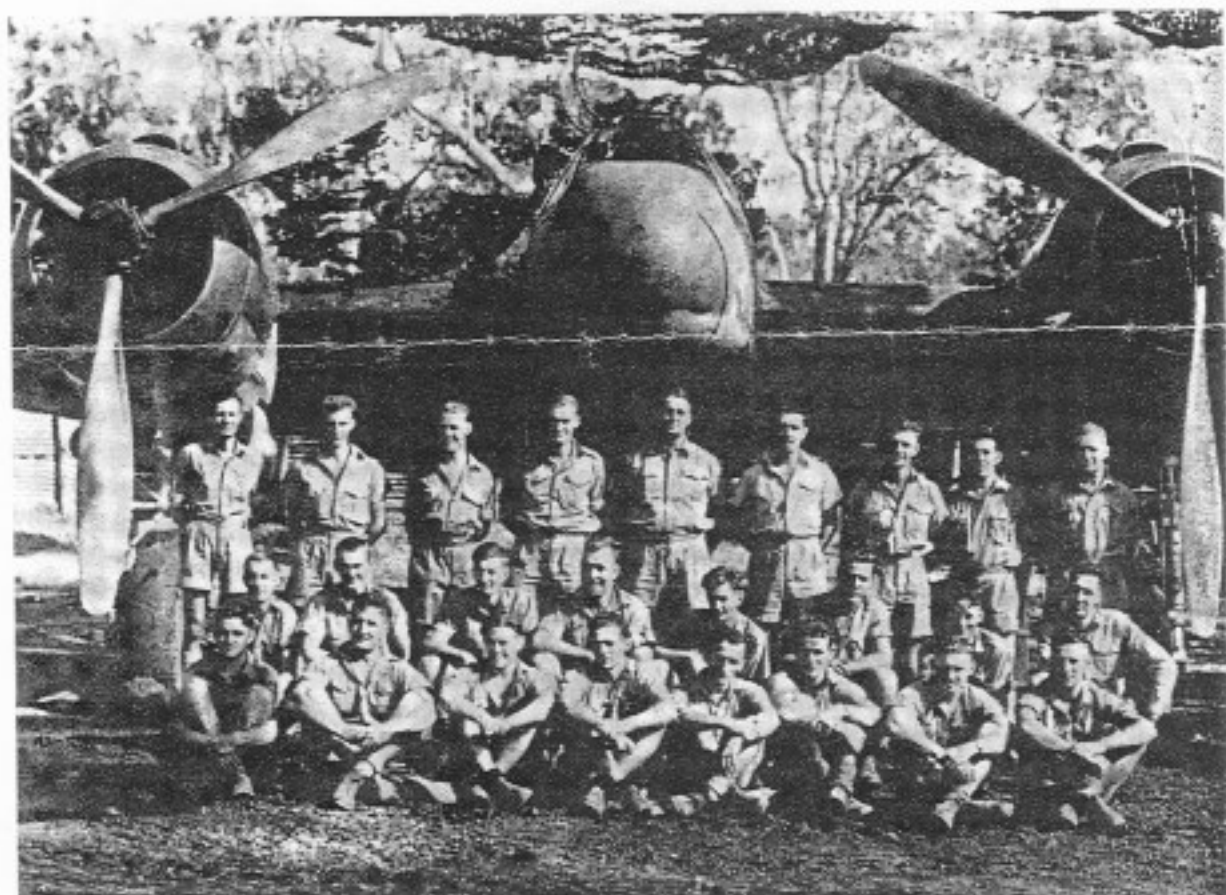
80 km south of Darwin, from 1942 to 1944.

The squadron flew sorties from there to Japanese-occupied Timor and other island targets in the area.

In a moving service on Saturday morning, association members dedicated a memorial plaque at the Adelaide River War Cemetery.

Later, the group returned to its wartime HQ at Coomalie where another plaque was unveiled on the airstrip.

This morning's service was conducted by the Darwin RSL president, Mr Luffy Plasson, and service chaplains.



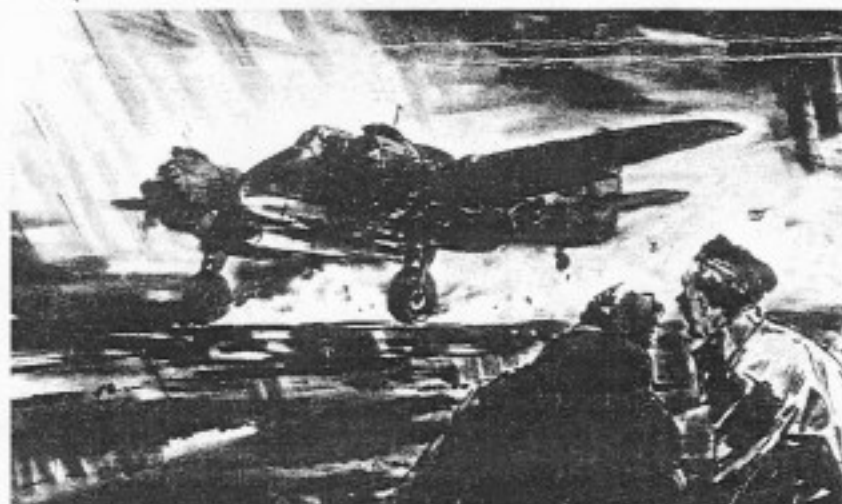
'B' Flight, 31 Squadron and Beaufighter under camouflage netting, Coomalie Creek, early 1943: (front row, left to right) H. J. Mackay; W. Morris; R. Gardam; Hastings; W. Cook; G. Dermoudy; L. Perkins; R. Jackson; (second row, left to right) N. Graham; V. Pretty; J. Anderson; W. Creghan; L. Carey; J. Devoney; A. Carman; W. Chad; (third row) R. Jones; n.k.; H. Marr; J. Webster; H. Henry; Gardiner; H. Smythe; R. Morgan; J. Binst

BEAUFIGHTER

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Pilots tended either to like or heartily dislike the Beaufighter; few were indifferent. Those who liked this paragon of ubiquity did so because it was a solid, straightforward device, with few oddities of behaviour or handling, was immensely strong and provided a first-class view of coming events. Care was needed to prevent an incipient swing from developing during the early part of the take-off run; there was a certain amount of slewing about as the undercarriage retracted, erratically and hesitatingly; and the pre-dihedral-tailplane versions were mildly unstable fore-and-aft. The solo cockpit was an untidy but homely place with everything—from the fuel-selector wheels (behind on the left), the curiously segregated engine, propeller, undercarriage, flap and hydraulic-power controls and the "fruit-machine" electromechanical undercarriage indicators to the pedestalled trim-wheel on the right—scattered about as if they were the afterthoughts of the designer of a cinema-organ console. Getting in, via a hatch-cum-ladder behind and below the pilot's rostrum, was (like getting out) an athletic business, but, once installed, the pilot felt very much in command of any future situation.

The controls were somewhat heavy, but this characteristic seemed natural, like the spec-tacled control column, for so relatively massive a fighter-bomber and torpedo-bomber, and you could fling the aircraft around in semi-aerobatic manoeuvres, vortices streaming from the wing-tips, without fear of over-abrassing. The strength of the Beaufighter was adequately demonstrated for me when all brake pressure suddenly fled



away during a test flight; despite corrective asymmetric power after touch-down it swung remorselessly off the runway and ended up going backwards. The best of the Beaufighters were the Hercules-engined Mk I's, V's and, especially, the later variants with all "mod cons." The

intermediate Merlin-powered Mk II's were less stable, felt (for some keel-surface or all-patream-torque reason) as if they were going sideways after take-off and had uncomfortable engine-out characteristics.

H.A.T.

BEAUFIGHTERS

JAPANESE soldiers living in the neat white stone villages of Bobonaro and Moabisse which doze in the folding hills of Portuguese Timor were the first enemy troops to discover that the R.A.A.F. had brought a new and fearful weapon to harass and destroy them. One afternoon the serenity of their garrison life was suddenly shattered by a barrage that blasted buildings, wrecked vehicles and killed comrades. They didn't see the aircraft which swept in just above the trees. There was no warning from whirring engines. Suddenly they heard the bark of cannon, the roar of aircraft passing close overhead, saw the shattering impact of exploding shells, comrades dropping as they ran. All this in twenty seconds. Then the planes were gone and a Jap garrison knew that their enemies had a new and terrifying weapon.

That was the Japs' introduction to Beaufighters—sturdy, swift, powerful, pugnacious aircraft which, from then on, were to bring swift unheralded destruction to enemy bases north of Darwin.

The Beaufighters waged a new kind of war against the Japanese. It was aggressive war, war of attack, war of accurate destruction. Hitherto the enemy had been bombed by aircraft which flew at remote heights in the sky. Sometimes they were strafed by low-diving bombers. That kind of attack had given them time to take cover. It was the sort of war they had experienced throughout their island conquests. Now it was different. Aircraft which skimmed the trees hurtled through the steep valleys of Timor's mountains, the hills screening the noise of their approach. They gave no sign of their coming and their guns' fury destroyed everything in their path.

Their fame reached Australia long before Beaufighters came to the country. Many stories from overseas told of the destruction wrought by their four cannon and six machine guns. To fly them into action from Australia, the R.A.A.F. chose highly trained and experienced pilots and navigators. Every one of the pilots who brought the Beaufighters to the

North-western area was an experienced instructor or staff pilot. Each one of them had flown for more than a thousand hours. Later successes were to prove the wisdom of choosing highly trained men to fly the Beaufighters.

One Beaufighter squadron was formed at the beginning of September 1942. The commanding officer was Squadron-Leader (now Wing-Commander) Charles Read, D.F.C., and the two flight-leaders were Squadron-Leader D. C. Riding and Squadron-Leader G. W. Savage. Squadron-Leader Bruce Rose, D.F.C., who had flown Beaufighters into action overseas was in charge of training. Six extremely busy weeks went by while the squadron was formed and the pilots and navigators trained in their new "kites". Ground crews slaved long hours learning all they could about the complexities of the aircraft. Stores were made ready, equipment was obtained. The countless articles required to equip a squadron were gathered together and sent north. Above all, men who were complete strangers to each other had to be brought together; had to learn to know each other so that the squadron could achieve that peak of efficiency which comes only through team work.

The monsoon had begun to spread its clammy fingers over the Darwin area as the first aircraft arrived. A new strip had been made for the Beaufighters, but there was no camp established, and the men of the squadron set about making one for themselves. They built it in their spare time after training flights. As the monsoon closed down, the air crews began to learn something about the difficulties of flying in tropical weather, and the ground crews discovered the amount of toil required to manhandle nine tons of aircraft from the cloying mud of the dispersal areas to the runway. But although the grey blanket of the monsoon hung low over the area, and all the land oozed water and mud, the Beaufighters were grounded for only one day during the entire "wet".

Came November 17, 1942, the day for their