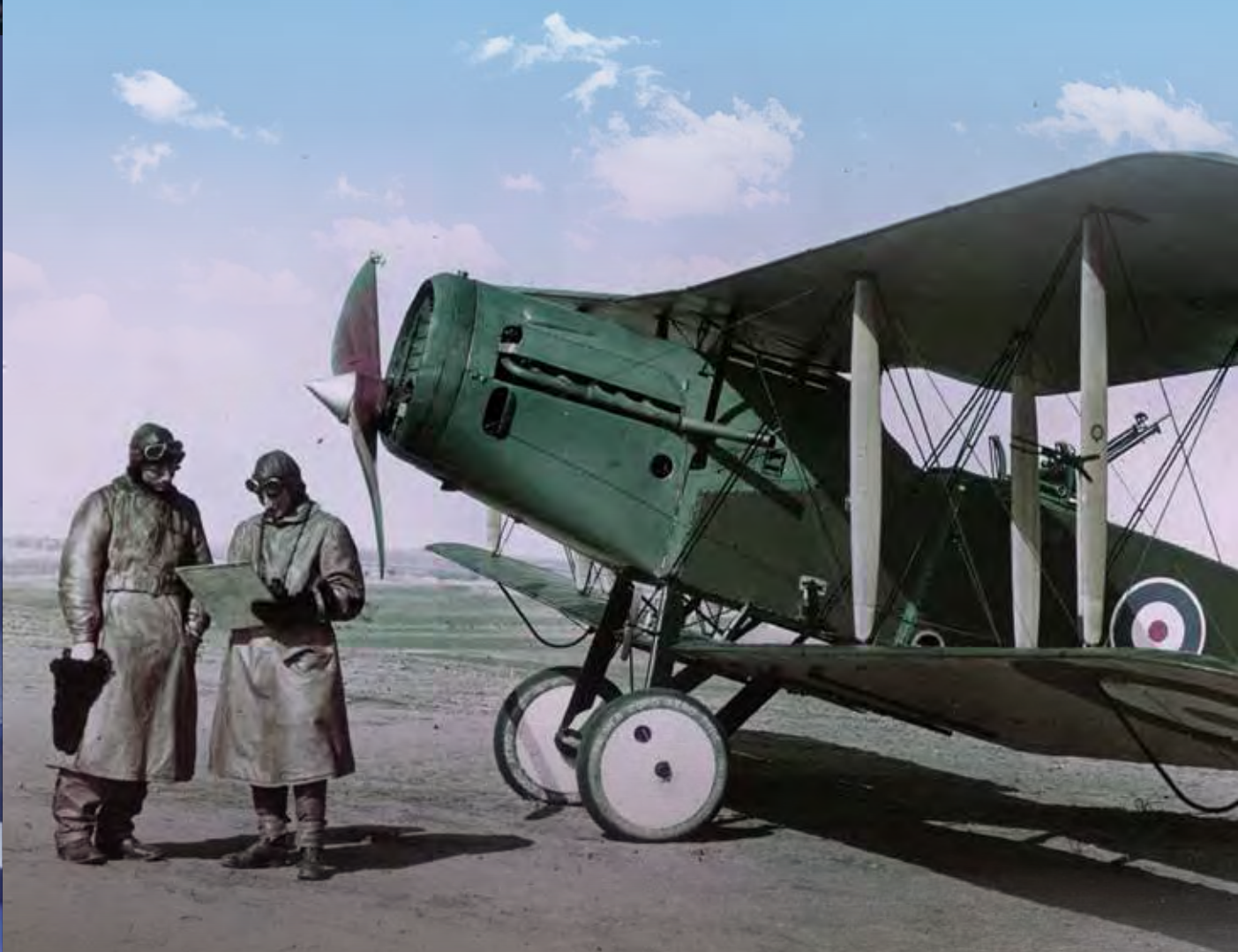




CENTURY OF SERVICE



# Chivalry

Stories of the Royal Australian Air Force



*Chivalry: Stories of the Royal Australian Air Force*

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**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**



Comradeship

Ancestry

Patriotism

Chivalry

Loyalty

Resource

Candour

Curiosity





AWM ART90410.002 [detail]

In the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra there are 15 stained-glass windows. Each shows a figure dressed in military uniform, and under each figure is a word which describes a quality displayed by Australians during wartime.

One window features an airman standing in front of a lance, a shield, and the rose of chivalry; harking back to the time of medieval knights. In contrast, he is holding a pair of binoculars and a map, and wearing a flying cap: symbols of the cutting-edge aviation he helped pioneer. He embodies the unwritten moral codes of both chivalry and mateship. He represents the courage and integrity of those who have served in the Royal Australian Air Force.

This window bears the word *Chivalry*.

# Chivalry

**Stories of the Royal Australian Air Force**

Written by Angus Johnson and Nathan Rogers





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We acknowledge Australia’s traditional custodians and their continuing connection to country, sea, and community. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

## Note to the reader:

Most of these stories take place during wartime. You may feel sad after reading them. Tell a teacher or trusted adult if you require support. Teachers may wish to be sensitive to those students who have personal experience with conflict, family members who are veterans, or parents serving overseas in warzones.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised the following stories contain the names and images of people who have died.





1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

# Introduction

Since the earliest days of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC), Australians have looked up to the skies in awe of those flying above. Rapidly advancing aircraft technology was used to connect Australia to distant places, but that same technology would also bring war closer than ever to Australia's shores. Those serving in Australia's air force have often battled harsh conditions and great adversity during war and **peacekeeping**, or while providing **humanitarian** aid. The role of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) today remains largely the same as it was over 100 years ago: control the air, strike with precision, gather information, and provide efficient transport over long distances.

Members of the RAAF served in the deserts of North Africa and the Middle East, the jungles of the **Pacific** and Vietnam, to the cold skies above Europe and Korea. They often spent long periods of time away from their families. Some lost their lives.

The stories in this book are about people who served in the RAAF, either in the sky or on the ground, in Australia and around the world. They showed initiative, courage, and sacrifice in order to achieve common goals. Richard Williams faced many challenges as he advocated for a separate and independent Australian air force. Felix Sainsbury endured harsh desert conditions to keep his mates in the air. Clare Grant Stevenson led women into the war effort as the head of the Women's **Auxiliary** Australian Air Force (WAAAF). Linda Corbould overcame many obstacles to achieve her dream of flying. We share their stories so that they may be remembered.

**Second World War veterans of the WAAAF during a stormy Anzac Day march in Sydney, 1989.**

Patrick Grant, AWM P09682.002







1914



1917



1921



1941

# Father of the Royal Australian Air Force: Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams

**Richard wrestled with the controls of his flimsy aircraft as it glided down to the dusty airstrip and landed. As the plane came to a stop, he heard the cheers of his instructors, who ran over to congratulate him. Richard had passed the test and become the first military trained pilot in Australia. Seven years later, he would be the first person to lead the newly created Royal Australian Air Force.**

Born on 3 August 1890 at Moonta Mines, South Australia, Richard Williams was the eldest son of a miner (also named Richard) and his wife Emily. When he left school, Richard took up a job as a telegraph messenger and later worked as a bank **clerk**. When he was 19, Richard enlisted in the South Australian Infantry **Regiment** of the Australian Military Forces.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Richard was selected to attend the first military flying course at the recently established Central Flying School at Point Cook, Victoria, where he learned to fly in Bristol Boxkite and Deperdussin aircraft. To graduate, he had to pass a number of flying tests which included doing “a number of ‘figures of eight’ within a reasonable radius”<sup>1</sup> over the airfield, and “to land the aircraft from a glide and come to a rest within a circle of about 50 yards (about 45 metres) in diameter”.<sup>2</sup>

Richard later talked about the experience of flying a Boxkite: “the pupil and instructor sat on wooden seats ... These seats were not fixed to the aircraft but were merely dropped into place ... If the [aircraft] acted quickly in a downward bump, the pilot and seat could leave the aircraft. ... We had no seatbelts, I do not know why.”<sup>3</sup> While training in the Boxkite, Richard continually pestered his instructors about flying a more advanced aircraft, which he managed to do on the last day of his training.



Septimus Power, *Lieutenant Colonel Richard Williams* (1924, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.4 cm, AWM ART08008)

A pilot at the controls of a Bristol Boxkite aircraft at the Point Cook Aviation School, c. August 1915.

Darge Photographic Company, AWM DAD0035





1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## Central Flying School, Point Cook

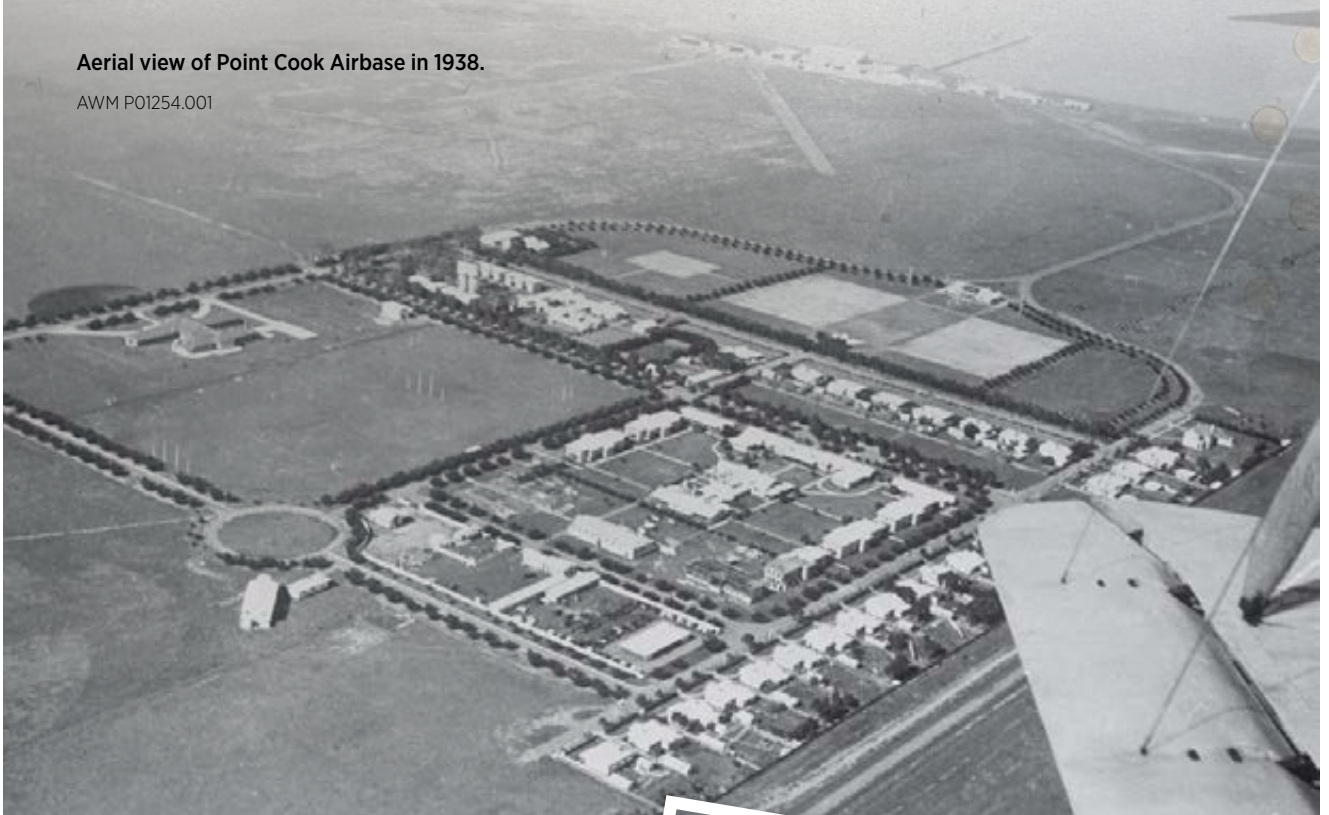
The Central Flying School at Point Cook opened in February 1914 on Port Phillip Bay, 20 kilometres south-west of Melbourne. Flying training began on 17 August 1914, just 13 days after the start of the First World War. Pilots trained at Point Cook before heading overseas for service.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Point Cook expanded to include training for flying, **navigation, reconnaissance, signalling, and armaments.**

Today, RAAF Base Point Cook is Australia's oldest military air base and one of the world's oldest continually operating airfields. It is currently home to a RAAF Museum and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology flight training centre.

Aerial view of Point Cook Airbase in 1938.

AWM P01254.001



In January 1916, Richard was appointed as a captain in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and posted to Command No. 1 Squadron AFC, which arrived in Egypt in April. During his service in the First World War Richard showed courage and leadership in many situations, he attacked Turkish troops under anti-aircraft fire and once rescued a fellow pilot who had been shot down behind enemy lines. For his actions, Richard was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). He earned the respect of the men under his command, who gave him the nickname "Dicky".

Richard Williams as Commander of No. 1 Squadron AFC, c. 1917.

AWM A04556







## Did you know?

The Australian Flying Corps was established in 1914. As planes were a new technology, there had not been an air force in Australia before the First World War. The AFC was part of the Australian Imperial Force.

Australia was the only **Dominion** of the British Empire to form its own flying corps during the First World War.



AFC forage cap with a Rising Sun badge.

AWM REL/0134



Australian Flying Corps badge.

AWM REL32620

What symbols do you see on this badge?

After the First World War, Richard received an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in recognition of his wartime service. After returning home to Australia, he was promoted to Brevet Lieutenant Colonel and worked with other army and navy officers to build an Australian air force. During this time, Richard chose the dark blue colour for the winter uniform, and chose the Australian wedge-tailed eagle to be included on the badge.

The Australian Air Force was formed on 31 March 1921; in August, King George V added "Royal" to the name. Richard was proud of his contribution to this task: "at the ripe old age of 30, it became my privilege and honour to have the principal hand in establishing Australia's Air Force."<sup>4</sup> By October 1922, Richard was promoted to Chief of Air Staff, the head of the RAAF. He held this position at three separate times over the next 13 years.

The RAAF faced many challenges in the 1930s. The **Great Depression** started in 1929, and there were no overseas conflicts – which led to discussions in Australian politics about whether the nation needed an air force. The RAAF was threatened as an independent service a number of times – by both the navy and army, which had to compete for money and resources. Richard stuck to his view that the RAAF needed to remain independent:

*Aviation under the control of the Navy and Army would be developed as an auxiliary, that is to ships at sea in the case of the Navy and to land forces in the case of the Army. I claimed that the Air Force was already capable of far more than that and that aviation would be fully developed in all its aspects only by airmen.*<sup>5</sup>

It was not until 1933, when the worst of the Great Depression was over, that the RAAF became secure as an independent service of Australia's armed forces.

Royal Australian Air Force officer cadet's sports blazer, c. mid 1920s.

AWM REL/18526

RAAF forage cap.

AWM REL28918.001







1944

1950



1966



2003-Today

During the Second World War, Richard served in a number of senior **administration** roles for the RAAF in London and Washington D.C. Following the war, he had to retire from the RAAF in 1946 because of an order that “all **officers** who had served in the 1914–1918 war were to be retired”.<sup>6</sup> This was to allow the advancement of younger officers.

Richard became Australia’s Director-General of **Civil** Aviation as Australia’s general aviation expanded. This included the construction of new airfields and systems and setting up improved safety standards. For his achievements, he was appointed Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE) in 1954.

When he retired in 1955, Richard joined the board of Tasman Empire Airways Ltd (which was renamed Air New Zealand in 1965), and was president of the Air Force Association. In this job, he was able to encourage public discussions on the importance of air power in keeping Australia safe.

Richard died in 1980 in St George’s Hospital in Kew, Melbourne. At his funeral, 700 people attended and 17 aircraft performed a fly-by in recognition of his service.



Richard Williams, c. 1942.

AWM 010805

**Richard next to a Deperdussin training aircraft in 1969. The French-made Deperdussin is the oldest existing aircraft flown in Australia.**

RAAF Public Relations, AWM P10875.001





# A pioneering aviator: Captain Sir Ross Macpherson Smith

**From the cockpit, Ross nodded to the mechanic standing by the propeller. “Switches on,” he called, and the mechanic swung hard on the propeller to make it turn. The engine spluttered into life amidst a cloud of smoke. “Chocks away,” yelled Ross, and his aircraft trundled towards the runway for take-off.**

Ross Macpherson Smith was born on 4 December 1892 and grew up on a remote sheep station in South Australia. He and his brother Keith spent much of their time riding and hunting. At school in North Adelaide Ross discovered a passion for sport, playing cricket and football, and running in the school championships. In 1910, at the age of 17, Ross joined the **Commonwealth** Military Cadet Corps. He joined their round-the-world expedition, visiting military institutions throughout the British Empire, Europe, and North America. In London, he visited a flying exhibition to see an aeroplane for the first time. It is likely that this was the beginning of his lifelong passion for flight.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, Ross enlisted in the 3rd Light Horse Regiment. Two months later he was on the first troop ship out of Adelaide. In May 1915 he landed on Gallipoli, where he served for four months before getting sick with scarlet fever. After recovering he returned to his regiment, which was now fighting in Egypt. Ross participated in the Battle of Romani in August 1916, but afterwards he found the lack of action tedious. In September 1916, Ross visited the nearby **aerodrome** where No. 1 Squadron AFC was operating. Ross managed to convince the commander to help him get a transfer to the squadron. Less than a month later his application was accepted and he reported for duty at the aerodrome.

Ross was made an observer, which meant that he would fly with a pilot on reconnaissance missions. This involved observing the location of enemy forces and recording information about the land below. He would sketch maps, take photographs, deliver messages, and direct ground fire from his perspective high above the ground. Senior officers used the work of observers like him to plan their campaigns in Egypt and Palestine. In a letter to his mother, Ross wrote, “It’s a jolly responsible job.” He knew how his information could make the difference between life and death for the men fighting on the ground. More than once, it was his old comrades in the 3rd Light Horse that he was supporting.

**Ross flying over Adelaide, 1920.**

SLSA, PRG 18/9/1/47B

**Ross Smith, c. 1920.**

SLSA, B-6101







1944



1950



1966



2003-Today



No. 1 Squadron's aerodrome, c. 1918.

Frank Hurley, AWM P03631.026

Ross loved flying but admitted, "It's not all beer and skittles, sitting behind a red hot engine for a few hours, and swallowing exhaust gas and oil."<sup>2</sup> On one occasion he and his pilot landed their plane to rescue a downed British pilot. Ross fired at nearby enemies with his revolver while the British pilot climbed on board. With no spare seats in the plane, the British pilot was forced to sit on Ross's lap.

Ross's commanding officer, Captain Richard "Dicky" Williams, really liked Ross. Dicky began giving him unofficial flying lessons on the way back from their missions. Dicky noted that Ross's "one desire was to become a pilot."<sup>3</sup> In April 1917, Ross got his wish and was transferred to No. 3 School of Military **Aeronautics** in Egypt to learn to fly.



Ross (left) and his observer Ernest (right), 1918.

AWM A00658 [detail]

## Did you know?

Despite fighting in a daily life-and-death struggle, Australian and German aviators had a lot of respect for one another. They started communicating by dropping messages on each other's airfields. They let each other know how captured comrades were going, wrote letters, and even exchanged gifts on Christmas day. In some cases they dropped wreaths when a well-known pilot had lost his life, and on one occasion the Australians organised and attended a funeral for a German pilot they had shot down.



Ross's flying glove.

RELAWM14267

**Why did pilots need gloves like this?**





Training to be a pilot was dangerous. The school rushed recruits through training with few instructors and old aircraft. As a result, pilots in the AFC were more likely to die in a training accident than in combat. Thanks to his early practice with Dicky, Ross was able to complete his training quickly and safely. "I consider myself quite an airman now," he wrote.<sup>4</sup> In September 1917, Ross took over from Dicky as commander of his flight. He was now responsible for six aircraft, 12 flying officers, and more than 30 ground crew. Sometimes, out on a mission, Ross was involved in a dogfight with an enemy aircraft – an aerobatic duel in the sky in which both pilots tried to shoot the other down. In 1918, Ross was given the job of flying a large Handley Page **bomber**. During the final battles of the war, Ross used this aircraft to attack enemy phone lines, cutting off communication between the enemy commanders and their troops. He also worked with the Arab forces led by T.E. Lawrence – known as Lawrence of Arabia – who were fighting alongside the Australians in the Middle East.



Ross landing at the Arab camp – "You never saw such excitement as there was & the machine made the greatest impression."<sup>5</sup>

Stuart Reid, *Handley Page reaches rendezvous with Lawrence of Arabia* (1918, oil on canvas, 50.4 x 61.2 cm, AWM ART14279, AWM Unlicensed Copyright)

At the end of the war, Ross was offered a new mission by his British commanders. He was asked to participate in a survey of possible places to land in South Asia. The British hoped to create a series of airfields that would make it possible to fly all the way from Britain to Australia. In June 1919, Ross learned that the Commonwealth Government was offering £10,000 – worth more than \$1,000,000 today – to the first Australians to fly from Britain to Australia in less than 30 days. Almost all the Australians who were qualified for such a flight had served with the AFC. Ross travelled back to Britain in order to participate. He knew that the South Asia survey he had just completed gave him a large advantage. He teamed up with his brother Keith as well as two engineers from the survey, Jim Bennett and





1944

1950



1966



2003-Today

## The birth of QANTAS

Paul McGinness and Hudson Fysh both served as ANZACs on Gallipoli. In mid-1917 they joined No. 1 Squadron AFC and flew as a pilot and observer team in the Middle East alongside Ross Smith. They attempted to organise a team for the air race from Britain to Australia, but did not have enough money for an aircraft. When they returned to Australia, they started the Queensland and Northern Territory Air Service, known as QANTAS. Since then Qantas has grown to be Australia's biggest airline and has helped to transport the Australian military in a number of conflicts.

Paul McGinness and Hudson Fysh, c. 1919.

Jordan, AWM P00342.012



Wally Shiers. Together they flew a Vickers Vimy aircraft 18,500 km from London to Darwin in 28 days. They faced many challenges – including storms, mountains, a constant shortage of fuel, and even an angry bull on a runway in India. On one occasion they found a crack in the engine that could have ended their race, but Wally resourcefully patched it with chewing gum provided by one of their sponsors, Wrigley's. On 10 December 1919 they landed in Darwin, winning the race. A large crowd swarmed the aircraft to congratulate them. The Smith brothers were knighted for their achievement and were instantly famous around the world.

Ross spent the next two years giving lectures across the Commonwealth. He was one of the most well-known aviators in the world, but he did not enjoy his fame. The four years of war, a flight halfway around the world and time in the spotlight had taken its toll. On 13 April 1922, Ross was conducting a test flight of a new aircraft in London when he lost control and crashed. Neither he nor his engineer, Jim Bennett, survived. It is estimated that 100,000 people attended his funeral parade in Adelaide. His grieving mother Jessie simply said, "Before Ross died he belonged to us, but now he belongs to the Empire."<sup>6</sup>

Left to right: Keith, Ross, Jim and Wally standing in front of the Vickers Vimy, c. 1919.

AWM 106074



Mail brought on the flight: "First Aerial Mail - Great Britain to Australia", 1919.

George Courtney Benson, AWM RC02337



1914



1917



1921



1941

## Fighting the conditions: Sergeant Felix Sainsbury

**The tent shook as the sandstorm raged outside. Felix could see the weary expression on the faces of his mates huddled around him. He paused a moment, cleared his throat, and launched into the first verse of “Waltzing Matilda”. His mates looked up, grinned, and started to join in, steadily drowning out the howling wind.**

Felix Sainsbury was born on 14 May 1920 in Albany, Western Australia. As a boy, he was a natural singer and was encouraged to perform in his local church. His father encouraged his keen interest in everything mechanical, especially cars, so after finishing school he found a job in the **automotive industry**. In October 1940, with war raging in Europe, Felix and a group of friends enlisted in the RAAF as ground crew. He went through an eight-week training course to be an armourer, learning how to maintain the weapons on an aircraft. In June 1941, he was posted to No. 3 Squadron RAAF, and headed for the Middle East to join them.

On the day he left Australia, Felix travelled down the river from Perth to Fremantle with 40 other servicemen. He could see people cheering along the shore. In Fremantle they were loaded onto the biggest ship he had ever seen. On board were nearly 12,000 service personnel from across Australia and the Pacific. Each person was assigned a job on the ship – and with his singing background, Felix was assigned to the ship’s concert party, performing three nights a week. He quickly made friends with some Maori and Tahitians in the group, who shared their traditional songs with him. Felix wrote in his diary, “We finished up with a good orchestra.” They landed in the Middle East in August 1941 and spent a month fighting in Syria. In September they packed up and headed for the deserts of North Africa, where Felix would spend the next two years of his life.

**Felix travelled on RMS *Queen Elizabeth* to the Middle East, 1941.**

AWM 303826



**Felix, 1944.**

Image courtesy of the Sainsbury family





1944



1950



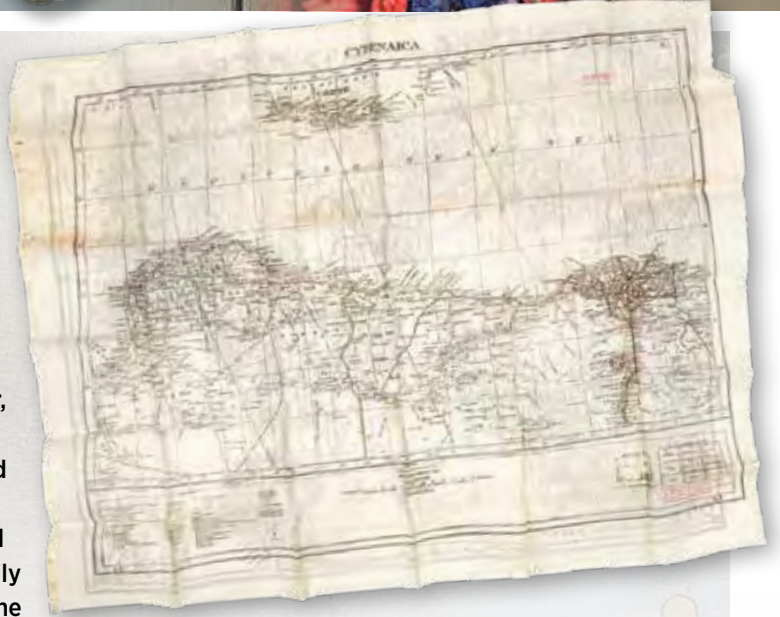
1966



2003-Today

## War in the desert

In June 1940, Italy declared war on Britain and the Commonwealth. The Italians attempted to invade British-held Egypt from their colony in Libya, but they were defeated and forced to retreat. In February 1941, Germany sent troops to Libya under the command of Lieutenant-General Erwin Rommel. He successfully pushed the Commonwealth forces back to the Egyptian border, earning him the nickname “the Desert Fox”. Over the next 18 months the conflict see-sawed back and forth across the desert, with both sides struggling to keep their armies supplied with equipment, food and particularly water. Australian forces were heavily involved in the campaign, most famously holding the important town of Tobruk against all odds. For this they gained the nickname “the Rats of Tobruk”.



Map used by pilots in case they were shot down in the desert, c 1942.

Waddington PLC, AWM REL37873.006

By 1942 No. 3 Squadron was flying the Kittyhawk aircraft, to fight enemies both in the air and on the ground. Each pilot had a ground crew team of a **fitter**, a **rigger**, and an armourer. Together they kept the plane flying and fighting – but most importantly, it was their work that gave a pilot the best chance of surviving each mission. Unlike in some other squadrons, there was little importance given to the difference in status between pilots and ground crew. They lived together, respected each other, and saw the pilots’ success or failure as a reflection of the whole squadron’s work.



Frank Norton, *Changing engines, 3 Squadron* (1941, oil on canvas, 43.1 x 46.5 cm, AWM ART21006)



The Africa Star recognised service in North Africa. Felix received one like this.

AWM REL29285.002





1914



1917



1921



1941

It was a constant battle to keep the sand and dust out of the moving parts of the aircraft. After a sandstorm, Felix would have to wash down the plane with the only liquid they had enough of – aircraft fuel. The squadron might conduct 60 or more **sorties** a day, and each time they returned, Felix would need to re-equip his aircraft.

One of the first things Felix did when he arrived at a new airfield was to “whack down a slitty” or slit trench – a long, narrow hole in the ground, strengthened with sandbags.<sup>2</sup> This was important because on most nights enemy bombers would attack the airfield. Felix and his mates would dive out of their tent and into the slit trench for protection. Thinking back, Felix wrote, “Gee, we put a lot of faith in those holes in the ground!!”<sup>3</sup> To make it harder for the bombers to see them, Felix would turn out all the lights and cover the reflective windscreens on the aircraft with oil and dust.

The war in North Africa was a fight as much against the conditions as the enemy. Most entries in Felix’s diary mention the “heat and the dust”.<sup>4</sup> In one he wrote, “You just have to learn to live with it, but it sure gets to you sometimes.”<sup>5</sup> During the frequent sandstorms, the sky would darken and the ground crew would shelter in their tents, which became “just like an oven”.<sup>6</sup> Felix would try to cover the gaps in the tent but the sand would still get into everything. Water was incredibly scarce, with each man given a litre and a half every two days. This meant that Felix rarely had enough water to wash himself or his clothes. Occasionally he and his mates would combine a bit of their water for a shallow bath and toss a coin to see who went first. Felix remembered, “Gee whiz I lost that toss a few times and you’d get into the muddy water.”<sup>7</sup> The food was usually limited to **bully beef** stew and “hard tack” biscuits. Nevertheless, Felix had a lot of respect for the cooks who were “the first to rise, and the last to go bed”.<sup>8</sup> For Christmas, Felix received a parcel from the Salvation Army that contained coffee, jam, and chocolate – which he described as “top of the menu stuff”.<sup>9</sup> Despite the hardships, the squadron was proud of having adapted to the harsh conditions and began to refer to themselves by the unofficial title of “the Desert Air Force”.



**Repairing an aircraft  
in a sandstorm, 1941.**

George Silk, AWM 010204



**Ground crew on their  
way to lunch, 1941**

George Silk, AWM 010207



George Silk, AWM 010214





1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## Desert Air Force lingo

In classic Australian style, RAAF servicemen had slang for many everyday words in North Africa. This included:

Kite – aircraft

Shufti – to have a look at something

Shufti kite – **reconnaissance** aircraft

Clifty – to scrounge

Slitty – slit trench

The Blue – the desert

The deck – the ground

The wire – the Egyptian/Libyan border

Under silk – to parachute

Reos – **reinforcements**

Number nine's – boots

Clobber – clothes or personal possessions

Felix and his mates with motorbikes they had found on a “clifty”, 1941.

AWM P02541.006



The squadron's ground crew spent much of their time moving between different airfields as a result of the frequent advances and retreats of the campaign. They would often have to load their equipment into trucks and drive hundreds of kilometres through the desert, over several days. During a retreat this was often left until the very last minute, and Felix remembered that on one occasion “as we left the strip the German tanks were coming in at the other end”.<sup>10</sup> Enemy aircraft attacking the convoy were always a concern, particularly for Felix with his truck full of explosives. Navigation was difficult, with few landmarks in the seemingly endless desert. By day they could use the sun for direction and at the night they would follow the stars. They also had to watch out for **minefields** left by both sides. As the driver of his truck, Felix felt a huge responsibility for the safety of his team.

The squadron's desert convoy, 1941.

AWM P02541.010

During a convoy, Felix would sleep next to his truck, 1941.

AWM P02541.004







1914



1917



1921



1941

The conditions and the war took a large mental toll on Felix. On 11 January 1942 he wrote in his diary:

*Many times I am reminded of the down side of war. Often a pilot went out on a dawn operation and did not return. It is not long before his empty place in the tent is filled by someone else, but the war goes on.<sup>11</sup>*

This difficulty never went away, but there were things that cheered him up and helped him to keep going. Felix sometimes received mail from his family at home. This included letters, newspapers, and pictures of his dog, Tinkie. He even received a cake in one parcel, which “brightened the day a bit”.<sup>12</sup> Even though they were so remote, the YMCA arrived one evening with a mobile cinema to entertain the squadron. It was these things, and his fellow servicemen, that kept him going. Reflecting on this camaraderie, Felix wrote:

*[It's] a bond, real in its meaning of loyalty, comradeship, and, above all other, mateship, which, I believe, will last the rest of our lives.<sup>13</sup>*

Felix was sometimes given leave in the Egyptian cities of Alexandria or Cairo. During one visit he and his mates snuck into the Navy Fleet Club for officers only, where they could have a bath, a shave, and a haircut. That night, while enjoying performances on the Fleet Club's stage, Felix was surprised to find that his mates had volunteered his services as a singer. His first song was met with loud cheers of “encore”, so he obliged with a couple more.

#### **Listening to the Melbourne Cup, 1941.**

George Silk, AWM 010876







1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## The squadron's mascot

One of the squadron's pilots, "Tiny" Cameron, had adopted a monkey named Buzz during his time in Bombay. Buzz became the squadron's mascot and was hugely popular with the men. On one occasion "Tiny" took Buzz on a short flight. Unfortunately Buzz kept trying to press all the buttons in the cockpit, so he never got a second flight. After the war Buzz was given to the Brisbane Zoo, where Tiny would visit him regularly.

"Tiny" and Buzz, 1941.

George Silk, AWM 010910



In March 1943, Felix heard the news he had been longing for: he was headed home. He caught a ride on a rusty old ship taking Italian prisoners to Alexandria. While on-board, his job was to help guard the dispirited Italians, and they began talking. He asked if they knew any songs in English, which they did, and together they sang some of their favourites. Felix was promptly banned from talking to the prisoners for the remainder of the trip; but as they disembarked in Alexandria the Italians gave him a big cheer in farewell. As he boarded a ship bound for Australia he recalled his service in the desert, writing:

*As the sun sank behind Port Suez into the desert beyond, we took our last look at Egypt, with little regret, but vivid memories of the good and bad times, and most of all, sorrow for our mates who did not make it.*<sup>14</sup>

Felix spent the rest of the war training new recruits at No. 4 Service Flying Training School in Geraldton, WA. There he met a servicewoman named Muriel McLeod, who was serving in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), and on 31 March 1945 they were married. When the war ended later that year, Felix returned to his job in Perth. Felix and Muriel had three children: John, Janet, and Derry. In 1975 they opened their own newsagency, which Felix declared was "the best little business I've ever had".<sup>15</sup> Felix passed away in April 2023, just short of his 103rd birthday.

Felix at 96, 2016.

Terence Osborne,  
AWM2017.520.1.4242

Felix's diaries from his service,  
1940-1943.

Felix W Sainsbury, AWM PR00907





# Leading the way: Group Officer Clare Grant Stevenson

**Standing quietly on the parade ground, the flags waving above her head in the early morning sun, Clare looked across to the dozens of women standing in lines dressed in their neatly pressed uniforms. She felt a sense of pride leading what became the largest women's service in Australia during the Second World War.**

Clare Grant Stevenson was born in Wangaratta, Victoria on 18 July 1903. She was the second youngest child of Robert and Ada Stevenson. When she was four years old, Clare and her family moved to Melbourne. Clare studied science at the University of Melbourne and, after graduating, began work with the Young Women's Christian Association. She went on to take up a position at Berlei, a manufacturer of women's underwear. As a senior executive, she travelled to New Zealand and the United Kingdom before returning to Australia in 1939.

During the Second World War, the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was created, which permitted women to enlist in the Australian air force for the first time. Clare was approached to take the role of director of the WAAAF by senior members of the RAAF and government, and was in charge of its management, wellbeing, and training.

Clare showed remarkable leadership during her time as director and made an effort to inspect different WAAAF units across Australia:



Nora Heysen, *Group Officer Clare Stevenson* (1943, oil on canvas, 77 x 56.8 cm, AWM ART22215)

*During the course of her duties, Group-officer Stevenson visited practically every unit in Australia where W.A.A.F were employed, and most members of the service have had, at some time, an opportunity of personal conversation with her.<sup>1</sup>*

Clare stood up for the rights of the servicewomen in the WAAAF and advocated for equal payment for women in all services. She also encouraged women to participate in the educational programs on offer to them by the RAAF. By war's end, Clare had risen through the ranks to be one of the most senior officers of the women's services in Australia and earned the admiration of many officers and airwomen.

Clare remained director of the WAAAF until 1946 when a short illness led to her being medically retired. Upon leaving, she remarked, "Members of the WAAAF had a job to do and they did it magnificently."<sup>2</sup> Clare returned to her position at Berlei Ltd.



WAAAF wool cap, c. 1944-45.

AWM REL25316





1944



1950



1966



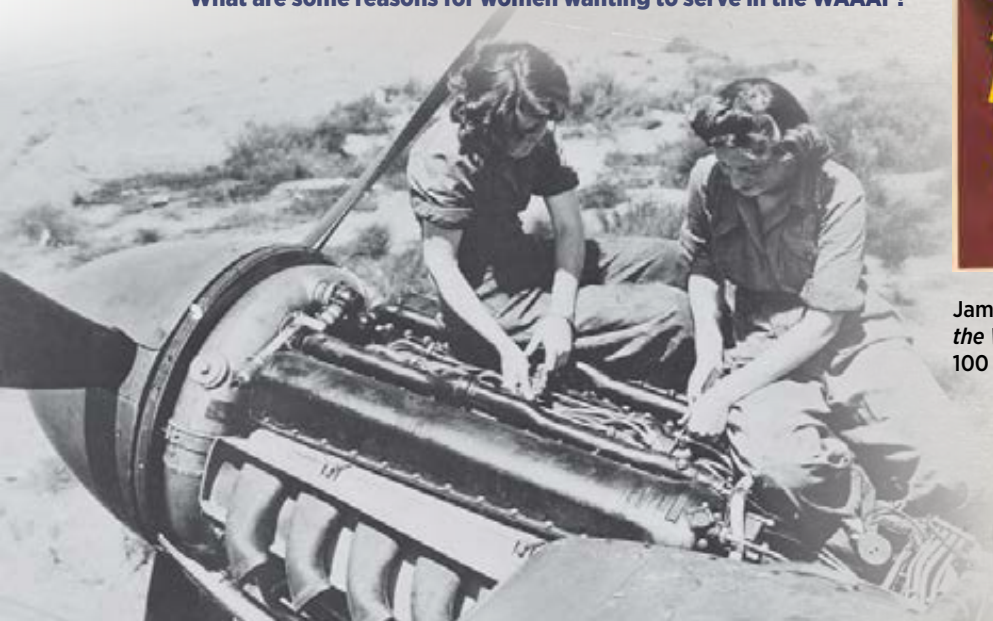
2003-Today

## The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF)

During the Second World War, a considerable number of women wanted to serve, and the RAAF wanted to release male personnel for overseas service. This led to the formation of the WAAAF in March 1941. The WAAAF grew to be the largest women's service of the Second World War, with around 27,000 women serving as mechanics, drivers, **wireless** operators, clerks, and **intelligence** officers.

During the war, 57 WAAAF servicewomen lost their lives. Disbanding after the war, it reformed in 1950 as the Women's Royal Australian Air Force before being integrated into the RAAF in 1977.

**What are some reasons for women wanting to serve in the WAAAF?**



James Northfield, "Doing a grand job!" *Join the WAAAF* (1942, offset lithograph on paper, 100 x 63.5 cm, AWM ARTV05170)

Two WAAAF Flight Mechanics, Aircraftwoman Lee and Paddy Whitlock of Burwood, NSW, working on an aircraft engine, c. 1944-45.

AWM VIC0960

After retiring in 1960, Clare involved herself in community organisations that provided for veterans and their families. She also set up the Carers Association of New South Wales and became its president. She successfully **lobbied** the Australian government to introduce a carer's **pension**. In 1981, on the fortieth anniversary of the formation of the WAAAF, Clare led the women's services in the Anzac Day march in Sydney.

Clare died in Sydney in October 1988.

**Group portrait of senior officers of several women's services. Left to right, Clare Stevenson (WAAAF), Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, Women's Australian Air Force Nursing Service, Australian Army Nursing Service, Australian Women's Army Service, and the Australian Army Medical Women's Service, 1942.**

Herald Newspaper, AWM 137133

**What challenges might Clare have faced while leading the WAAAF?**







1914



1917



1921



1941

# “From your loving son, John”: Flight Sergeant John Worley

**Leaning against some wooden crates under a setting sun, John finished writing a letter to his family. His thoughts were interrupted by an announcement on the loud speakers requiring all aircrew to report to the briefing room. John signed the letter, dropping it in the post before gathering his flight gear and readying himself for another bombing raid in the night skies over Germany.**

Born in Murwillumbah in northern New South Wales on 19 August 1923, John was one of eight children born to Richard and Alice Worley. Growing up on the family farm, John often helped milk the cows with his dad and siblings before riding on horseback to school. When he got older, he began working in a real estate office and started dating Joan Kelly, who worked at the local bank.

John had just turned 16 when the Second World War broke out in September 1939. At 18, with dreams of becoming a pilot, he was able to enlist for service, but required permission from his parents. On his enlistment papers, his father wrote: “Permission given for Air Force only, not AIF.”<sup>1</sup> John’s father had a brother-in-law who had died in the trenches of Belgium while serving in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War.

Entering the RAAF, John trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme and attended training in Queensland and New South Wales. Having failed the written exam to enter the pilot’s course, he trained as an air gunner. John broke the news in a letter to his family:

*I don't know how you are going to take this, I am off course now and going out as an A.G. (air gunner) ... Well, I had some very bad news from Joan about two hours before the exam and when I got in the room ... I couldn't think ... [and] missed by three marks on the written, anyway I blame no one but myself.<sup>2</sup>*

Before leaving Australia, John asked Joan to marry him. They promised that they would plan for the wedding when John returned from overseas service.

John was sent to Bomber Command and flew missions in Avro Lancaster Bombers with No. 460 Squadron, RAAF, which flew missions out of Binbrook base near Lincolnshire, England. During flights, John had to endure **flak** and attacks from German aircraft. He sat at the back of the aircraft for hours, often in radio silence and in temperatures as low as - 30°C.

**John with Joan, c. 1942–43.**

AWM P00216.005



**Flight Sergeant John Francis Worley, c. 1942–43.**

AWM P00216.002





1944

1950



1966



2003-Today

## Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS)

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the British government realised that it did not have enough people to maintain the Royal Air Force. To solve this problem, it asked fellow Commonwealth nations for a pool of trained aircrew. Known as the EATS, the scheme involved recruits attending flying and technical schools specialising in flight, navigation, gunner, bombing, and wireless training. Many Australians travelled to other Commonwealth countries such as Canada and Rhodesia for their EATS training. Over the course of the war, 37,000 Australians were trained as a part of the scheme.



Malcolm R. Warner, *Hemisphere training for air gunners* (1944, watercolour and brush and ink heightened with white over pencil on wove paper, 37.6 x 55.5 cm, AWM ART24100)

Group portrait of RAAF personnel before overseas **deployment**. John is in the centre in the front row, c. 1942-43.

AWM P00216.003

While serving in Bomber Command, John made efforts to keep in touch with Joan and his family. In one letter, he wrote:

*I guess you would want to know how I have been keeping, well I am enjoying the best of health, as a matter of fact I don't know when I have felt better, sometimes I get a bit remorseful, but is only because I miss Joanie and you people so much.*<sup>3</sup>







1914



1917



1921



1941

## Bomber Command

Flying larger aircraft, Bomber Command was tasked with bombing Germany, Italy, and other **Axis** occupied countries during the Second World War. Flying mostly at night, it was made up of men from Commonwealth nations, including around 10,000 Australians. Flying in Bomber Command was incredibly dangerous, with around 44% of crew members dying in air operations during the course of the war.



Alan Moore, *Bomber's Moon* (1962, oil on canvas, 182.2 x 304 x 10 cm, AWM ART27553)



No. 460 Squadron badge.

AWM REL31723



A crew of a Lancaster Bomber from No. 460 Squadron in 1944. Pilot Officer Lynch (third from left, furthest back) was the only member of the crew to survive the war.

AWM UK1175

### No. 460 Squadron, RAAF

Flying Wellington and Lancaster Bombers, No. 460 Squadron flew operations between 1942 and 1945. Its motto was "Strike and Return". It suffered the highest number of **casualties** of any Australian air squadron in the Second World War.

"G for George", a Lancaster bomber in No. 460 squadron, was remarkable in that not a single person died while serving in it. Most Lancasters flew an average of 21 missions before being shot down and destroyed. George completed 89 missions before being withdrawn from service. John was the rear gunner in George during two missions in 1943.



"G for George" on display in the Australian War Memorial, 2010.

AWM RELAWM31788





1944

1950



1966



2003-Today

## Did you know?

### RAAF Bomber Crew

Lancaster and Halifax Bombers usually contained seven aircrew with different roles. Each was essential for the function and survival of the aircraft.

**Pilot:** Leader of the crew and flew the aircraft.

**Flight engineer:** Sat next to the pilot, and was responsible for maintaining the aircraft during flight, continuously monitoring gauges, fuel and electrical systems, and adjusting them when necessary.

**Bomb aimer:** Responsible for guiding the aircraft over the target and releasing the bombs at the right moment. The bomb aimer was at the front section of the aircraft, manning the forward guns in the event of an attack.

**Navigator:** Sat behind the pilot, and was responsible for navigation. The pilot relied on the navigator for directions to the target destination and then bring the aircraft back to base.

**Wireless operator:** Sat near the navigator, and was responsible for monitoring communication. The wireless operator supported other aircrew and was responsible for first aid.

**Mid-air gunner:** Sat in the top turret towards the back half of the aircraft. The mid-air gunner had a large view around and above the aircraft and was responsible for defending it during an attack.

**Rear-air gunner:** Located in the most isolated section at the back of the aircraft, the rear gunner was responsible for defending the aircraft from enemy planes. This role was considered the most dangerous and was nicknamed "tail end Charlie".



Stella Bowen, *Halifax crew, Driffield* (J Venning, C J Challis, J McCarthy, J Nicholas, G Robinson, J Good and H O Stenborg) (1945, oil on canvas, 86.2 x 71.8 x 2.3 cm, AWM ART26268)

**Can you see the different roles represented in this painting? What might each one be?**

**What qualities do you think a bomber crew would need to work effectively?**



Air Gunners brevet, c. 1940.

AWM REL25319.001

John and Joan. John is wearing his RAAF aircrew flying gear, c. 1942-43.

AWM P00216.004







By 1944, John had flown a number of missions and was on his way to complete the 30 sorties required before he was granted leave. On 26 January he wrote to his parents:

*Things have been going rather well lately and I am creeping the ops in one by one. I have only 12 trips to do now and then I have finished for 6 months. We were going to have a big party tonight ... but ops are on so that is scrubbed. There is only an hour to go before briefing.*<sup>4</sup>

As he always did, John signed off with "From your loving son, xx John xx".<sup>5</sup>

In the early hours of 27 January, John's Lancaster failed to return to base from a mission over Berlin. Richard, Joan, and the rest of John's family received this news a few days later. His family held out hope that he had somehow survived, and his father wrote letters to the RAAF in an effort to find out what had happened to his son.

In 1951 it was confirmed that John and the rest of his Lancaster crew had died when their aircraft crashed south of Berlin. John was 20 years old.



Photo of John's grave, c. 1952.

Image courtesy of the National Archives of Australia. NAA: A705, 166/44/97

John's name is listed on panel 108 on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial.

Flying goggles, helmet and oxygen mask used by RAAF air gunners in Bomber Command, c. 1943.

AWM REL33109.001  
AWM REL33109.002  
AWM REL33109.003







1944

1950



1966



2003-Today

## Did you know?

### Coastal Command

As well as Bomber Command, Australians also served in Coastal Command. They flew a variety of aircraft, including Sunderland **flying boats**, over large areas of open ocean, primarily to protect supply ships from German submarines. A patrol over the Atlantic Ocean could last up to 16 hours with the crew needing to remain alert for signs of German submarines during the entire flight. Around 650 Australians died while serving in Coastal Command.



Dennis Adams, *RAAF Sunderland Flying Boat attacking U-boat* (1967, oil on canvas, 152.5 x 274.5 cm, AWM ART27572)

John Worley was one of more than 4,100 Australians who died serving with Bomber Command in the Second World War.

Neil Dawson, *Bomber Command memorial* (2005, stainless steel, glass and black granite, 16.5m x 4.5m x 3m, AWM ART92683)





# The fighter: Warrant Officer Leonard “Len” Waters

**Flying above the palm trees, Len looked over the calm, blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. The view from his aircraft was beautiful. This calm vista was suddenly interrupted by puffs of black smoke littering the sky, and the sounds of close anti-aircraft fire rang out in Len’s ears.**

Leonard “Len” Waters, a Kamilaroi man, was born on 20 July 1924 at Euraba mission near Boomi, New South Wales. One of 11 children born to Donald and Grace Waters, he lived with his family on Toomelah Aboriginal Reserve. When he was seven, his parents moved the family to the town of Nindigully, Queensland, to escape reserve **authorities** who had been known to take Aboriginal children away from their families.

Growing up, Len was fascinated by flight, saying, “I grew up in the era when the skies were being explored” and “when other kids were playing with ordinary toys, I’d be making model planes and flying kites.”<sup>1</sup> At 13, Len left school to work with his father as a **ring barker** before learning sheep shearing. In his downtime, Len spent hours tinkering with his dad’s old car and boxing with his brothers.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Len eagerly awaited his 18th birthday so he could enlist in the RAAF. After joining in 1942, Len was **mustered** as an aircraft mechanic. Unsatisfied with this role, Len spent nights studying hard and applied to transfer to aircrew. He started flight training in December 1943 and finished fourth in a class of 48 pilot trainees. Len was presented with embroidered wings to signify his role as a pilot. He was posted to No. 78 Squadron on Morotai Island and was assigned a P40 Kittyhawk **fighter** plane. One aircraft had been named “Black Magic” by its previous pilot. Len decided to retain the name and it became his favourite aircraft.



Leonard Waters, c. 1944–45.

AWM P01659.001

Len (second from left, back row) with fellow RAAF pilots, 1944.

AWM P01757.002

**How do you think Len felt when he gained his pilot wings?**







1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## RAAF in the Pacific

When Japan declared war against the **Allies** in December 1941, the RAAF had a small number of bases in Australia and the islands. By 1942, battles on the Kokoda Trail and at Milne Bay had helped halt the Japanese advance. The RAAF played a significant role by supplying Australian forces and attacking Japanese ships, aircraft and troops.

The RAAF operated over an area in the Pacific that stretched from Bougainville Island (east of New Guinea) to Borneo and the Philippines. By the end of the war, the RAAF was the fourth largest Allied air force, 2,000 members of the RAAF had lost their lives, and 400 were taken prisoner in the Pacific War.



William Dargie, *RAAF Kittyhawk Squadron at Milne Bay, August-September 1942*.  
(1969, oil on canvas, 154 x 275.3 cm, AWM ART27628)

“Black Magic”, Kittyhawk aircraft  
flown by Len, c. 1944-45.

AWM P02808.001







1914



1917



1921



1941

## Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service

The RAAFNS was formed in July 1940. By 1943, these nurses were serving in operational areas including New Guinea, Morotai, and other Pacific Islands. In early 1944, 15 nurses were recruited to a new unit; No. 1 Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit. These nurses had specialised training in in-flight medicine, emergency survival, and tropical hygiene and were nick-named “The Flying Angels”. They assisted with the aero evacuation of wounded from frontline areas back to Australia, and the repatriation of Australian prisoners of war when the war ended in 1945.

The RAAFNS continued to serve during the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, and the Vietnam War before being integrated into the RAAF Medical Branch in 1977.

Nora Heysen, *Ambulance plane carrying battle casualties from Morotai to Townsville*. (1945, oil on canvas, 56.2 x 62.5 x 3.5 cm, AWM ART24375)



During his service, Len Waters flew 54 sorties. During one mission, No. 78 Squadron attacked a Japanese base on Celebes Islands (Sulawesi, Indonesia). Len began his attack and dived through anti-aircraft fire. As he pulled his plane out of the dive, Len recalled, “I felt this clunk underneath me and thought, I’ve got a hit there somewhere”.<sup>2</sup> Suspecting an unexploded **shell** was lodged in his aircraft, Len flew for two hours back to Morotai. Approaching the airfield, Len radioed to the base to clear the airstrip before landing: “I just **taxied** to the end of the strip and the armourers came over ... they looked up inside, ripped it open and the shell was there – it was a live shell”.<sup>3</sup> Len explains that it was a lucky escape: “I tell you, it’s the smoothest landing I’ve ever made! I guarantee I could land it on eggs because I didn’t want to jar out what was there”.<sup>4</sup>

During his service, Len was a popular member of the squadron who participated in many activities with fellow pilots and crew. One such activity was boxing. Len had the achievement of being **middleweight** Morotai Boxing Champion in 1944 and 1945.



Boxing trophy presented to Len, c. 1945.

AWM REL22420

## Escape and evasion maps

During the Second World War, RAAF airmen were issued with maps often made out of silk, which were durable, foldable, and could be used even when wet. In the event a pilot crash landed or parachuted out of their aircraft, he could use the map and a compass to get his bearings and try to make his way to base.

**Other than flying aircraft, what skills do you think a pilot needed to have?**

Len’s escape map, c. 1944.

AWM REL22228





1944



1950



1966



2003-Today



**Len's summer flight helmet, c. 1944.**

AWM REL22232

**Len (second from right) with fellow pilots of No. 78 Squadron, 1945.**

AWM P01757.003

After the war, Len returned to Australia and was discharged from the RAAF in 1946. He married Gladys May Saunders and started a family. Len still wanted to be a pilot and planned to start a regional airline in south-west Queensland. He wrote letters to the government requesting support but never received a reply. Unable to secure the resources to start the airline, Len was forced to go back into sheep shearing. He never flew again.

Len moved to Brisbane with his family in 1956. In 1972 he was involved in a car crash. Injuries from the accident left him with epilepsy and limited his ability to work. During his later years, he spent his time singing, emu egg carving, woodworking and attending annual reunion events with the RAAF.

In 1993, Len died in Cunnamulla, Queensland, at the age of 69. At the time of his death, Len was believed to be the only known Aboriginal fighter pilot of the Second World War. His service is remembered through memorial parks located in Brisbane and in Boggabilla, New South Wales. There is also a Len Waters Estate, a suburb in Liverpool, New South Wales, a Len Waters Street in Canberra, and a building named after him at RAAF Base Williamtown. Since Len's death, research has uncovered more stories of Indigenous pilots and aircrew who served in the RAAF during the Second World War.





1914



1917



1921



1941

# “Mr Double Seven”: Wing Commander Richard “Dick” Cresswell

**Cruising high above the ground, Dick glanced left and right, seeing that his wingmen were still with him. Something wasn't right, it was too quiet. He held his hand up towards the sun, straining to see if there was something there. “Is that...?” Yes, it was! Dick hit his radio button: “Enemy, five o'clock high, break formation!” The enemy aircraft flashed past and he turned to follow.**

Richard, known as Dick, was born in Franklin, Tasmania, on 27 July 1920. His mother, Constance, was from the De Havilland family; they ran one of the largest aircraft factories in Britain. As a boy, Dick heard stories of his mother's joy flights in the flimsy flying machines of 1911. His father died when he was young and his mother could not afford to provide for him, so he had to spend some of his childhood living with relatives in Britain. When he returned to Australia, he learned to be independent and help support his mother and himself. Despite his unsettled childhood, Dick never shied away from a challenge. The confidence and leadership skills he gained early in life would prepare him for his later experiences. After school he was eager to fly as an airline pilot, but his aunt convinced him that he would have better opportunities in the air force. In 1937, aged 17, Dick successfully applied for a RAAF cadetship. In the air force he found something like a family that would be with him for the rest of his life.

Dick spent the first two and a half years of the Second World War training new pilots. In April 1942, he was put in charge of the newly formed No. 77 Squadron in Perth. Aged just 21, Dick found himself responsible for more than 100 people. With the need to get the squadron up and running quickly, the RAAF decided to convert a golf course into an aerodrome. A long fairway was turned into the squadron's runway, just in time for the arrival of their new Kittyhawk aircraft.

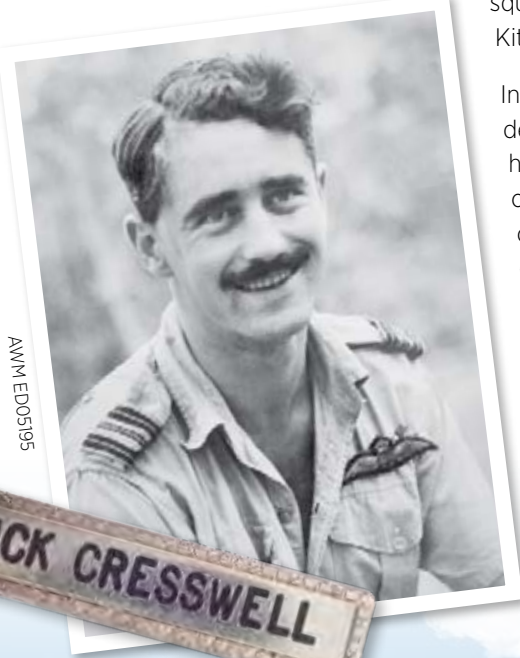


AWM ED05195

In August 1942, No. 77 Squadron was moved to Darwin to defend the Northern Territory. The Japanese Imperial Air Force had started sending bombers to attack Darwin at night. As one of the only Australian pilots trained to fly at night, Dick took charge of the defence. On one night mission, flying alone, he came across three enemy bombers and managed to shoot one of them down. This was the first time an Australian had shot down an enemy aircraft over Australia. Dick continued to lead the squadron through the war in the Pacific. By the end of the war he had been promoted to Wing Commander and was in charge of RAAF base Williamtown, near Newcastle.

**A seat from an aircraft that Dick shot down. He used it in his living room and later donated it to the Australian War Memorial.**

AWM REL/02407



AWM ED05195

**DICK CRESSWELL**

Dick, 1942.

Earl McNeil, AWM 013722





1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## Remembering the forgotten war

Often overshadowed by the Second World War five years earlier, the Korean War is sometimes referred to as 'The Forgotten War'. It began in June 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea. The **United Nations (UN)** asked its member countries to help South Korea in any way possible. Australia sent its military to assist. The UN pushed the North Koreans back towards the border with China. In October 1950, China sent hundreds of thousands of troops to help their North Korean **allies**. The following three years saw a stalemate where neither side could win, and the people of both sides suffered. In July 1953, an **armistice** was agreed to, but the planned peace conference never happened. To this day, North and South Korea are technically at war, stopped from fighting by the now 70 year old armistice.



**Australian Mustangs over Korea, 1950.**

Robert Taylor, *RAAF's first operation over North Korea, 2 July 1950* (1986, oil on canvas, 76 x 152.6 cm, AWM ART28996)

After the war Dick became the commander of the Citizen Air Force squadron in Melbourne. In June 1950, war had broken out in Korea and his old squadron was fighting there under the command of Squadron Leader Lou Spence. On 9 September 1951, Dick received a call. He was told that Lou had been killed in combat and Dick was asked to take his place. He commented:

*So I am again commanding No 77 Squadron. I wasn't new to operational command ... except that this war in Korea was a very different and very ugly war.<sup>1</sup>*

Dick wasted no time when he arrived in Korea. On his second day he flew four sorties. One of his pilots wrote, "He arrived and very much led the squadron from the front."<sup>2</sup> They supported the UN troops on the ground by attacking enemy soldiers, trucks, bridges, and supplies. On one occasion Australian troops were in trouble and called for air support. As soon as Dick heard, he led the squadron to help. One Australian soldier remembered,

*The boost to morale was amazing when we recognised the planes of 77 Squadron overhead. The Squadron's close support was the closest I have ever seen and we passed congratulations to the pilots over our air contact wireless.<sup>3</sup>*

When winter came, temperatures dropped as low as minus 20 degrees, and the airbase was covered with snow. Initially they did not even have proper winter uniforms. Dick would often have to take off and land with almost no visibility in the fog and snow. The conditions particularly affected the ground crew trying to take care of the aircraft. Dick said, "We could not have flown without them", and despite his rank, he was always ready to roll up his sleeves and help them work on the aircraft.<sup>4</sup> The squadron's hard work earned them a good reputation in Korea. Dick's commanding officer, the American General Partridge, told him that he wished he had half a dozen Australian officers in all of his squadrons.





1914



1917



1921



1941



**Dick's 'wings'. A pilot wore this patch once he had learned to fly, 1938.**

AWM REL39456



**Dick in his Mustang.**

Harold Vaughan Dunkley, AWM DUKJ3953

In early 1951, Dick was told to prepare the squadron for their new Meteor jets. He was sent to an American jet squadron for training, during which he became the first Australian to fly faster than the speed of sound. When the Meteors arrived, Dick persuaded his superiors to let his pilots fly their jets as a fighter squadron, attacking enemy aircraft. The squadron found little success in this assignment, and was eventually ordered back to its previous ground attack role. By late 1951, Dick had completed his assigned time in Korea. Remembering his return to Australia he said, "I wasn't sorry to get back home."<sup>5</sup>

**Dick (centre) in front of a Meteor, briefing the squadron before a mission, 1951.**

AWM JK0024







1944

1950



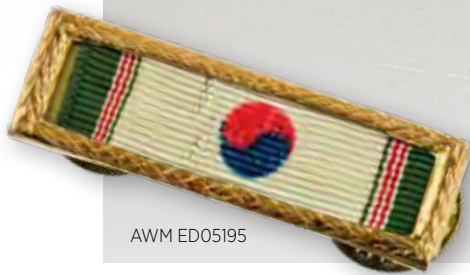
1966

2003-Today



## MiGs, Mustangs and Meteors

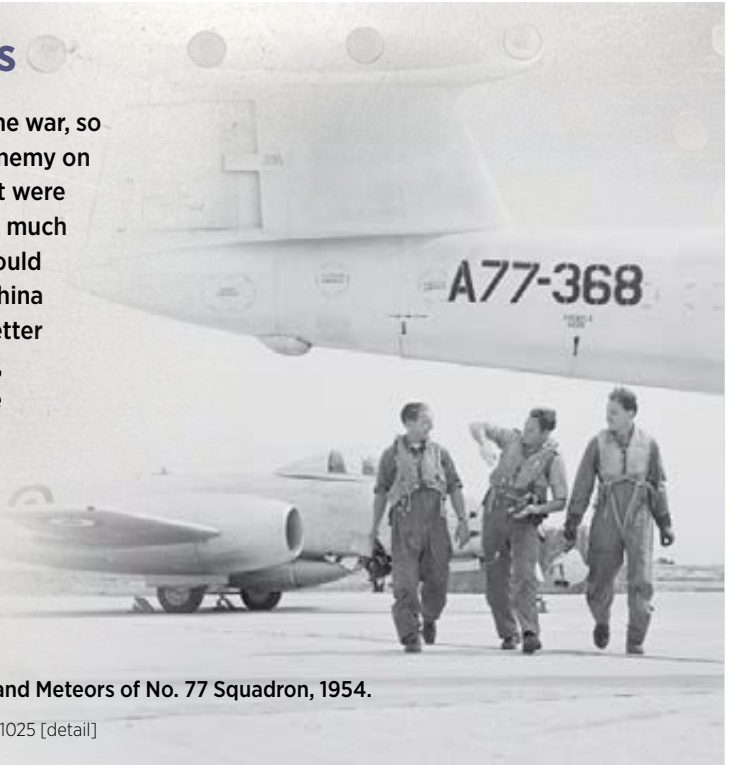
The North Korean air force was destroyed early in the war, so the main job for the UN aircraft was attacking the enemy on the ground. No. 77 Squadron's P-51 Mustang aircraft were ideal for this job. The propeller-driven Mustang was much slower than the newer jet-powered aircraft, but it could stay in the air without refuelling for longer. When China joined the conflict, their MiG-15 jets proved to be better than most of the UN aircraft. Facing this new threat, the RAAF rushed to replace their Mustangs with the best jet available to them, the Gloster Meteor, but it proved to be no match for the "MiG".



AWM ED05195

Pilots and Meteors of No. 77 Squadron, 1954.

AWM JK1025 [detail]



After Korea, Dick helped to advise the government's Department of Air and train new pilots. When his old squadron returned from Korea and sailed into Sydney harbour, Dick led a formation of aircraft above the ship in the shape of two sevens. In 1956, he resigned from the RAAF to work as a cargo pilot in New Guinea with a fellow veteran, Bobby Gibbes. He was not there long when he caught three tropical diseases at once and had to return home. Using his family connections with the De Havilland Company, he found a job flying mapping and photography missions over Antarctica.

When he returned to Australia, he married a well-known pilot from Melbourne, Margaret Schwennesen. He continued working with De Havilland, first as a cargo pilot and then as a salesman, until he retired in 1974. He maintained a close connection with his air force family, remaining actively involved with the No. 77 Squadron association, the RAAF and the Australian War Memorial. His career was so closely linked to the squadron that he had led through two different wars that his nickname became "Mr Double Seven". On 13 December 2006 Dick passed away, aged 86. At his funeral in Canberra, his squadron remembered him by flying over with one aircraft missing from the formation. Dick is survived by his two daughters, Josephine and Claudia.

Dick's badge for the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions Club.

AWM ED05195



Dick talking to a group of students at the Australian War Memorial, 2002.

Roland Henderson, PAIU2002/040.09 [detail]







# Keeping them on the flight line:

## Leading Aircraftman

### Robin “Rob” Gee

**The old truck rumbled towards the line of Australian “Huey” helicopters on the tarmac. From the back of the truck Rob noticed that there were a few missing, and he realised that they must be in the nearby hangar awaiting repairs. Rob got ready for a hard day’s work ahead to get them back on the flight line.**

Robin – known as Rob or Robbie – was born on 21 April 1943 in the small town of Murray Bridge, South Australia. As a boy, he had heard his Uncle Don’s stories of serving in the RAAF during the Second World War. So in 1960, aged only 16, Rob applied for an **apprenticeship** as an airframe fitter in the RAAF. He was selected, even though there was plenty of competition for the role. Rob put this down to being a prefect at school and a senior scout. His apprenticeship took him to Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, where he learned how to maintain and repair aircraft. In his spare time he played Australian Rules football and joined a local church youth group. At this youth group Rob met Bette, who had grown up in Wagga. Three years later they were married, and just settling into their first house in Canberra, when Rob was posted to a squadron stationed at RAAF airbase Butterworth in Malaysia. They arrived on Bette’s twentieth birthday, 13 May 1965.

At Butterworth, Rob worked on Iroquois helicopters, often referred to as Hueys. He had been there a year when, in May 1966, he was told that he would be joining No. 9 Squadron RAAF and going to Vietnam. He was told very little about the country, the war Australians were involved in, or what their mission was. Before they left, Prime Minister Harold Holt paid them a visit. With the squadron gathered around him, Holt explained that they “were going to Vietnam to help a small nation of people struggling for their freedom against **communism**”.<sup>1</sup> When it was time to leave, the families came to say goodbye to their loved ones at the airfield. Many years later, Rob asked Bette what she was thinking as she had watched him walk to the plane. She told him, “I was wondering if I would ever see you again.”<sup>2</sup>



**Rob working on cockpit instruments, 1966.**

Gerald Wallace Westbury, AWM VN/66/0009/03

**Rob and Bette (middle) leaving for Malaysia, farewelled by his mother (right) and sister (left).**

Image courtesy of the Gee family







1944

1950



1966



2003-Today

Rob felt anxious on the hour-long flight to Vietnam. This was not helped by the deafening noise when the plane landed on the steel matting on the airstrip in Vũng Tàu. Rob thought for a moment that they had crash-landed. The US Army provided their tents, which were hot, dusty, and crowded. Rob was given a metal trunk and a locker to hold all his belongings, and the only available showers were cold. The food, though, was generally good. Rob wrote to Bette on his first day, "For lunch there was ham steaks and vegetables plus sweets (not too bad either)."<sup>3</sup> After six months in Vũng Tàu, the men moved into a new **compound** on the airbase. There they had better rooms, proper toilets, hot showers, and even cinema facilities. As Rob put it, "Life became a lot easier."<sup>4</sup>



Rob's improved accommodation in the compound, 1967.

Robin Frederick Gee, AWM P05078.016

## The helicopter war

Early helicopters had been used for medical evacuations in the Korean War. However, it was in Vietnam that the helicopters' full potential was realised. They could take off and land vertically without the need for a long runway. This made them very useful in the hilly, jungle-covered landscapes of Vietnam.

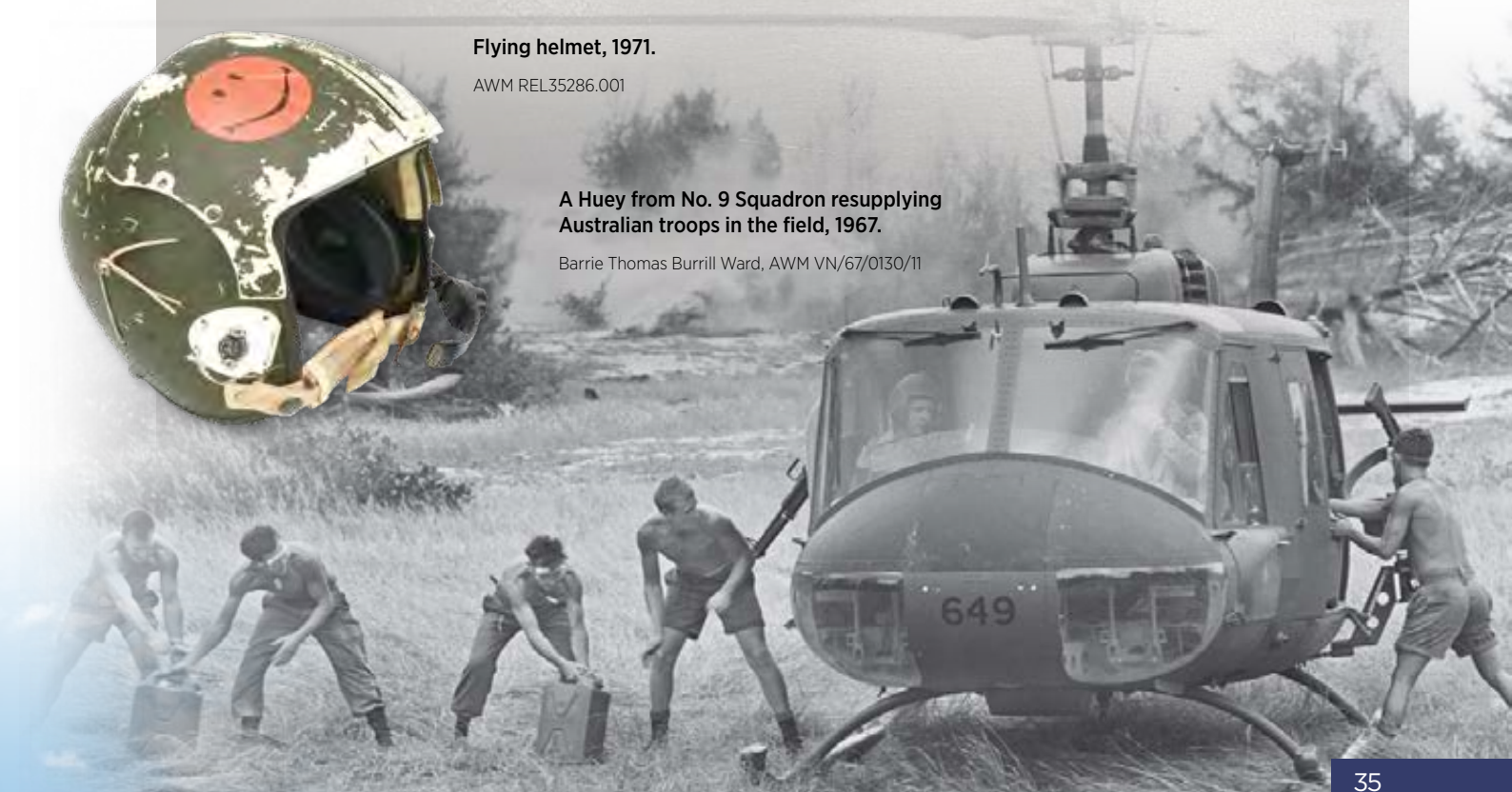
The Iroquois's nickname Huey comes from its original name, the HU-1. It was the most commonly used helicopter of the war. The main role for most Hueys was transportation. They could move people and supplies quickly over long distances, making it possible to carry out operations across South Vietnam from a small number of central bases. Medevac helicopters were able to get wounded soldiers to hospital quickly, saving many lives. Some Hueys were converted into **gunships** to support the troops on the ground. In the RAAF these gunships were referred to as "Bushrangers" and the transport Hueys were called "Slicks".

Flying helmet, 1971.

AWM REL35286.001

A Huey from No. 9 Squadron resupplying Australian troops in the field, 1967.

Barrie Thomas Burrill Ward, AWM VN/67/0130/11







1914



1917



1921



1941

Much like their accommodation, No. 9 Squadron's first worksite was in tents. They used these for two months before the RAAF was able to replace the tents with a hangar they transported from Australia. This hangar became the permanent worksite for the ground crews of both No. 9 and No. 35 squadron. No. 9 Squadron's eight Hueys sat opposite the hangar in an area known as the flight line. Due to the frequent missions and dusty environment, the exposed moving parts of the Hueys were often clogged up and damaged. Sometimes fitters like Rob would need to use the fire tanker to clean out the parts. Aircraft needed to be **serviced** twice as often as they would in peacetime. This, and the frequent damage sustained in combat, created a large amount of work for Rob and the other ground crew. They worked six days a week, but even when extra work was required, there was no shortage of volunteers to help. Officially they were expected to keep six of their eight Hueys "on line", but as Rob proudly stated, "usually it was 7 and sometimes all 8".<sup>5</sup>



No. 9 Squadron's first worksite, referred to by the ground crew as the "tent city", 1966.

Robin Frederick Gee,  
AWM P05078.004



The ground crew working in the hangar to replace a damaged tail fin, 1966.

Robin Frederick Gee, AWM P05078.008



Rob carrying out a tail rotor track, a test to check that the rotor at the back is straight, 1966.

Robin Frederick Gee, AWM P05078.011

## Rob's camera

Many of these photos were taken by Rob, using his Minolta camera (pictured). The photos were produced as slides that were projected onto a screen or a wall for viewing. At the time, slides were an accessible way of sharing photos with family and friends.

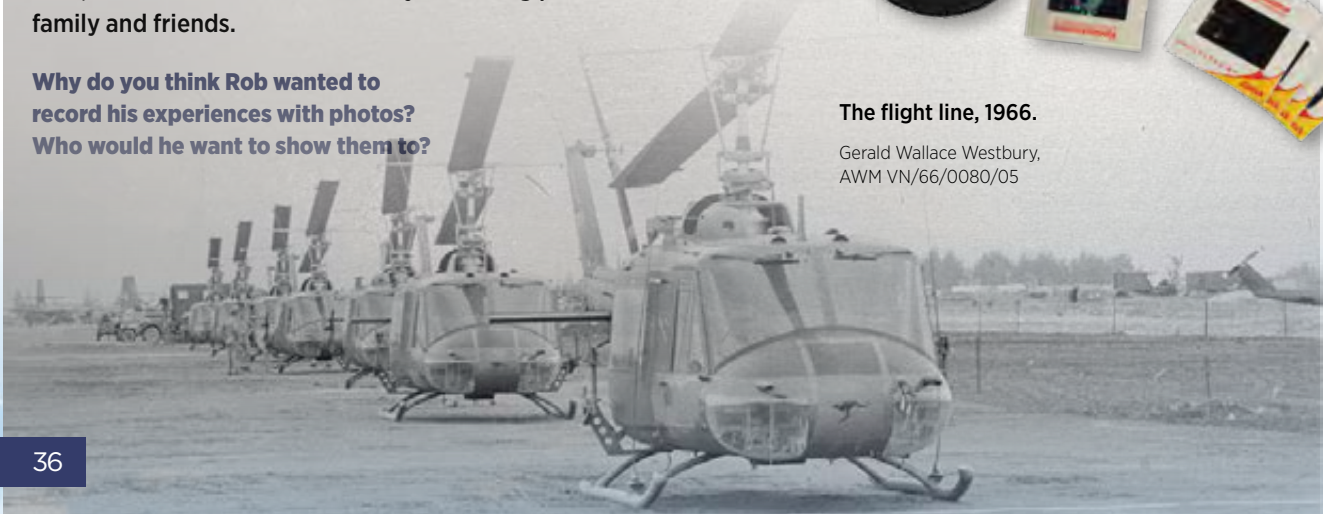
**Why do you think Rob wanted to record his experiences with photos?**  
**Who would he want to show them to?**



AWM ED05569,  
AWM ED05567

The flight line, 1966.

Gerald Wallace Westbury,  
AWM VN/66/0080/05







1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## No. 9 Squadron and the Huey

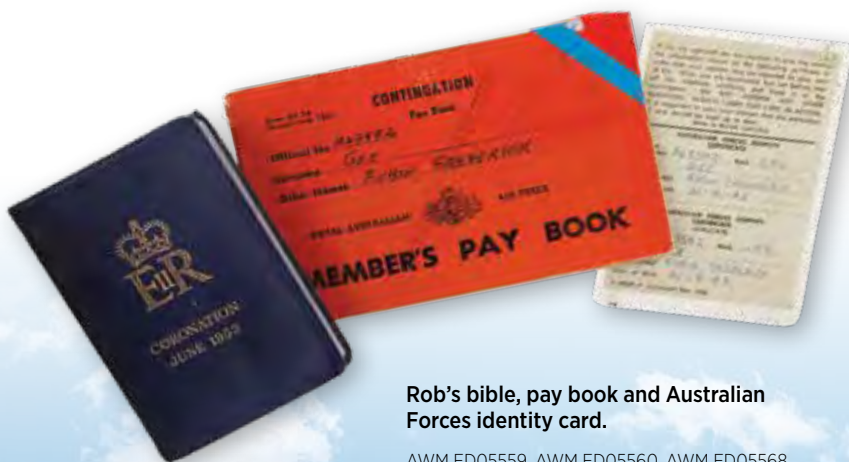
No. 9 Squadron was one of two helicopter squadrons in service when it was deployed to Vietnam in June 1966. Helicopters were quite new in the RAAF, so there were many challenges. At first, the squadron had only eight Hueys, and only a few air and ground crew had been trained to work with them. There were other problems – the Huey lacked armour, its crews had not yet been given protective flak jackets, and spare parts were hard to get. In time, all of these problems would be fixed – with more crews, new Hueys, and equipment from the United States Army. In their five years in Vietnam, No. 9 Squadron supported every major Australian operation and flew 237,424 sorties.



Ken McFadyen, *No. 9 Squadron helicopters coming in to pick up forward patrol, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam* (1968, painting, oil on canvas on hardboard, 35.3 x 54.9 cm, AWM ART40679)

No. 9 Squadron badge, c. 1966-71.

AWM REL37783



Rob's bible, pay book and Australian Forces identity card.

AWM ED05559, AWM ED05560, AWM ED05568

An unopened tin of emergency flying rations, issued in case the crew became stranded. The rations generally included high energy foods like chocolate, and tablets to purify water.

AWM REL35069

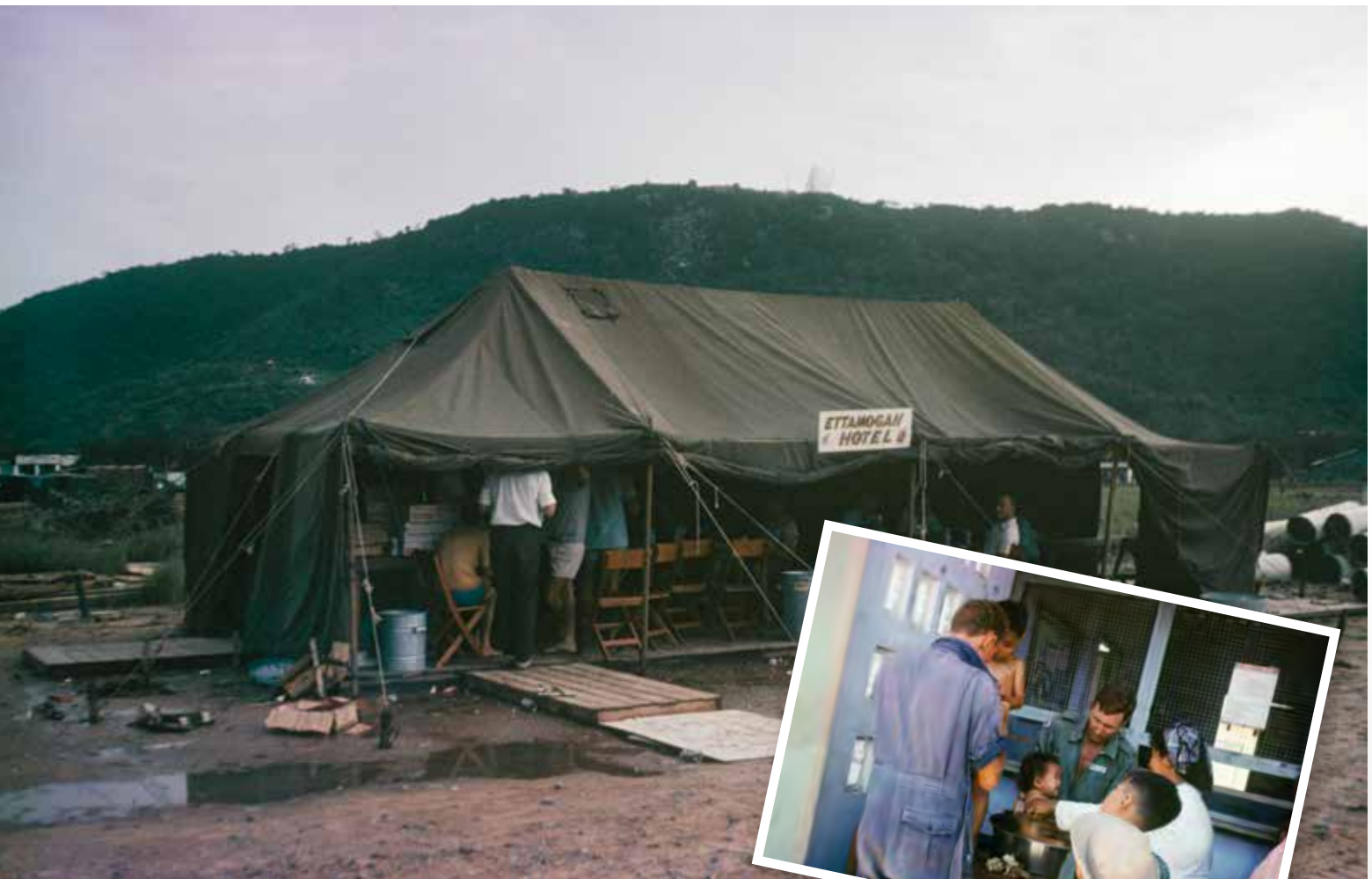
**What would you put in the tin for an emergency?**







After work, Rob and the other Australians had a few ways to pass the time. The local town of Vũng Tàu had markets, bars, and beaches, but getting there was not easy. The long and bumpy ride into town in the squadron's truck, nicknamed "Rumble Guts", soon made many of them look for somewhere closer to their base. So Rob and his mates built their own unofficial club that they called the Ettamogah Hotel, named after a famous Australian cartoon. The Ettamogah became the most popular place for the ground crew to spend their spare time and would later be turned into an official club by the RAAF.



**The Ettamogah Hotel, 1966.**

Robin Frederick Gee, AWM P05078.005

**Rob on a MEDCAP, 1966.**

AWM P05078.002

After six months at Vũng Tàu, Rob wanted to explore some of the country beyond the base. On his days off work, he began volunteering for the Medical and Civilian Aid Programs (MEDCAPs), which aimed to bring medical treatment and support to nearby towns. The MEDCAPs were intended to reassure the Vietnamese people that Australian troops were there to help – this was known as “winning hearts and minds”. On his MEDCAPs trips Rob went with medical staff to one of the nearby towns. Local mothers often brought their babies to the doctor for a medical check. Before seeing the doctor, the babies had a bath, and it was Rob's job to help with this task. After his first trip Rob wrote to his mother: “I don't know how many children I treated but I enjoyed myself. I really felt I was doing something to help.”<sup>6</sup>

While Rob was serving in Vietnam, Bette stayed on in Malaysia. She was pregnant with their first child, and Rob had leave in early 1967 to visit her. After the trip he wrote to his mother, “It is quite a worry knowing she is over there by herself & the baby is getting near.”<sup>7</sup> Fortunately Bette had plenty of support from other Australian military families living in Malaysia, and in July their daughter Karen was born. Shortly after, Rob's deployment was over. The three of them returned to Australia, able to see their friends and family for the first time in two years.





1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## Did you know?

Letters were not the only way service personnel kept in touch with their loved ones at home. In Vietnam, Rob had a tape recorder so that he could record messages and music for Bette or his family, and listen to tapes they sent to him.

Rob wrote to his mother: "Could you tell Kathy that I will send her a 600 foot [1 hour] tape soon, it is all music, when are you going to make a tape for me?"<sup>8</sup>

"I listened to your tape 5 times ... it was really great to hear George."<sup>9</sup>

**What would you record for your family on a tape like this?**



Rob's tape recorder and tape.

AWM ED05564,  
AWM ED05565

Rob continued to serve on bases in Australia, including at Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra and Wagga Wagga. In 1984, after 24 years of service, he retired from the RAAF. He took a job working with the Scouts, another of his great interests. For 18 years he managed the Scout Outdoor Centre, first in Wagga Wagga and later in Canberra. He maintained friendships with the people he had known during his service. Rob was involved in many aircraft **restoration** projects and commemorative events across the country. At the Australian War Memorial he helped to restore several Hueys and the Lancaster bomber "G for George". He also enjoyed sharing his story with students visiting the Memorial. Rob died in Canberra in 2013 and is survived by Bette and their two children, Karen and Mark.



Rob receiving an award for his volunteer work at the Australian War Memorial, 2008.

Steve Burton, AWM PAIU2008/06710



A gaggle of Hueys, 1968.

Alexander Murdoch Gall, AWM P06482.015







# Never give in: Wing Commander Linda Corbould

**The four engines of the massive Hercules aircraft roared overhead, much to the delight of the children watching. Linda smiled to herself. The look of awe on their faces reminded her of a similar moment when she was their age. That moment had inspired her dream of being a pilot. Maybe this would do the same for one of them.**

Linda Corbould was born in Launceston, Tasmania on 30 November 1962. When she was 12, her dad took her to the Launceston rowing regatta where she watched a RAAF aerobatic squadron – the Roulettes – flying overhead. She remembers, “I looked up and I thought, I want to do that.”<sup>1</sup> When Linda finished Year 12, she went to talk to the Defence Force recruiters about joining the RAAF. She shared her dream of being a pilot, which was dismissed as impossible. At that time women weren’t allowed to be pilots in the RAAF. While it didn’t sit well with her, she decided to join the RAAF as an air traffic controller. Linda enjoyed the challenge of being responsible for aircraft taking off and landing at an airbase. She served at bases all around Australia and found that it gave her confidence to see what she was capable of. In 1986, the Commonwealth Government announced that it was changing the rules, women would be allowed fly for the RAAF in a limited capacity. In 1989, Linda applied for the pilot training course and was accepted. Her dream was being realised.

Pilot training began at RAAF base Point Cook, near Melbourne. The course was intense, with cadets being expected to fly well in a short space of time. As the only woman in her course she faced additional challenges, including the lack of female changing rooms. It was difficult, but she was focused on her goal. She remembers thinking, “I’m not going to quit. Fail me and I’ll leave, fine. But I’m never going to quit.”<sup>2</sup> After six months at Point Cook she was transferred to RAAF Base Pearce, in Perth, to continue training. There she flew a small Aermacchi jet, which she remembers was like a “sports car of the sky”.<sup>3</sup> It was the same aircraft she had watched the Roulettes fly when she was 12. After 18 months of training, Linda graduated from her course and was presented with her wings, the symbol of being a RAAF pilot. She almost couldn’t believe it was happening. Her parents came to the ceremony and she remembers that “they were probably the proudest parents in Australia that day”.<sup>4</sup>

Linda was posted to No. 36 Squadron, flying Hercules transport aircraft. She said, “The Hercules ended up being a great choice for me ... I loved it from the first flight I ever did, to the last flight I ever did.”<sup>5</sup>



**Linda's pilot's wings.**

Courtesy of Linda Corbould

**Linda after graduating from her pilot's course, 1990.**

Image courtesy of Department of Defence





1944



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1966



2003-Today

## History of the “Herc”

On 13 December 1958, the first C-130 Hercules aircraft landed for service in Australia. It could fly bigger loads, further, and faster than its predecessor. It could take off and land on short runways, allowing it to get to places many other aircraft couldn't. The aircraft was originally crewed by five people: a pilot, co-pilot, **loadmaster**, flight engineer, and navigator. Today's Hercules have computers to manage many tasks, including flight engineering and navigation, and can be flown with a crew of three.

The Hercules has been able to adapt to a large number of different roles. Most commonly it has been used to transport people, cargo, and vehicles. It can be fitted out with medical equipment and stretcher beds to be used for medical evacuation. The Australian Army have used it to parachute behind enemy lines.

Australian Defence Force operations have relied upon the Hercules during conflicts in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, and in numerous peacekeeping missions. The Hercules has played a crucial role in disaster relief, evacuating people from Darwin after Cyclone Tracy, dropping medical supplies after the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, and even dumping hay for cows stranded during floods.

With aircraft technology changing at a rapid pace, the longevity of the Hercules stands out. With 60 years' of service (and plans to continue for decades more), it is the longest serving aircraft in the RAAF.

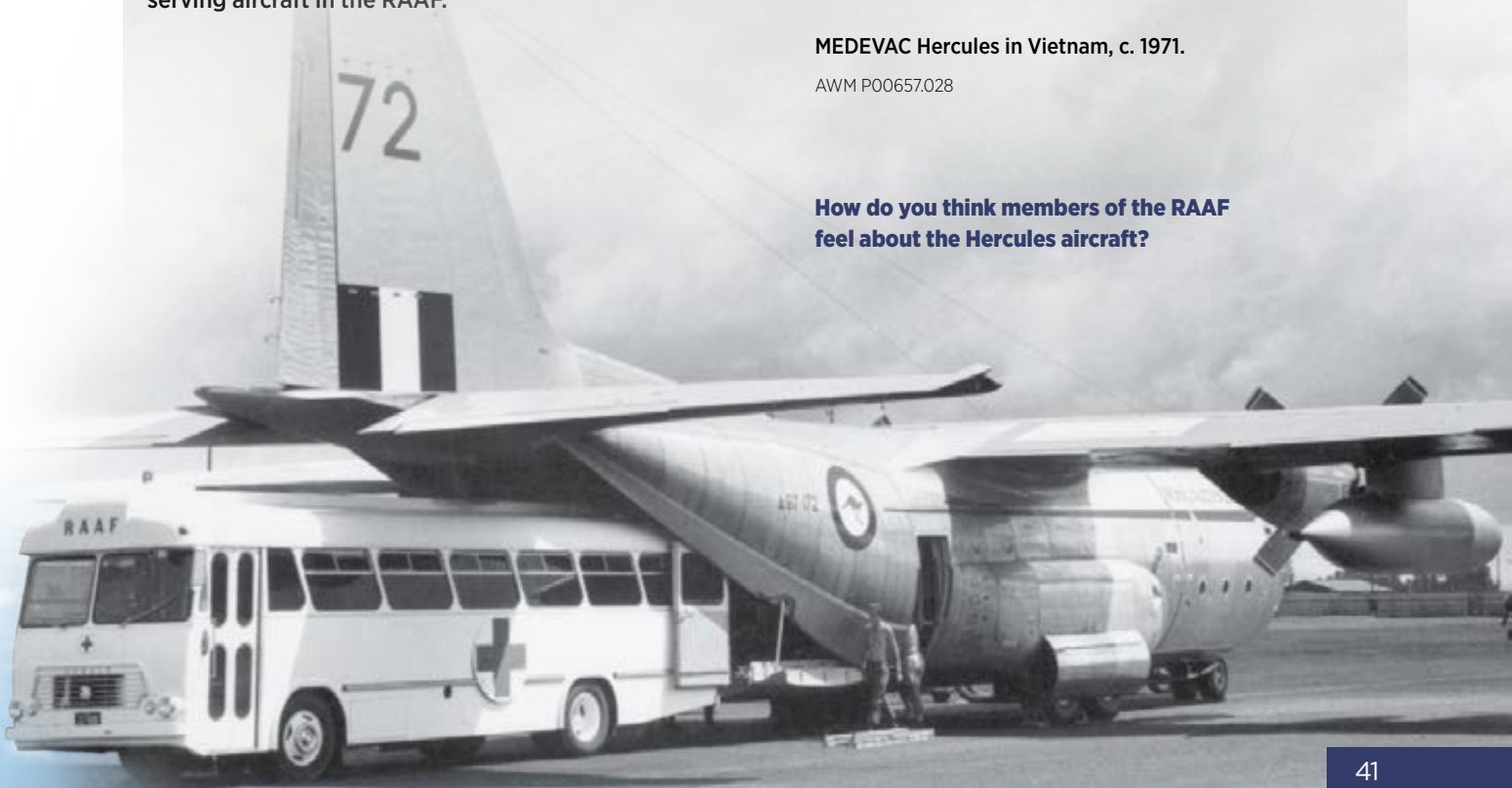


Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, *Late afternoon, flight line, military installation, Middle East* (2007, oil on linen, 31 x 31 cm, AWM ART93292)

MEDEVAC Hercules in Vietnam, c. 1971.

AWM P00657.028

**How do you think members of the RAAF feel about the Hercules aircraft?**







Something Linda loved about the Hercules, or “Herc” as it was known, was that it was a team effort to operate. The crew had to rely on each other to complete each mission safely. After two years learning about the aircraft, she flew her first mission as the pilot in command. She faced challenges as a woman in a male dominated career, but found that “if you worked hard and proved yourself it was all about mutual respect”.<sup>6</sup>

In 1994, Linda volunteered for a peacekeeping mission in Somalia. She was a part of the airfield management team, working to help Somalians rebuild their country’s airports. It was a challenging six months, with a **civil war** raging around the team, and rough living conditions, but Linda enjoyed getting to know the Somalian people. She described it as “a wonderful experience, but a sad experience because the country was so devastated.”<sup>7</sup> In 1999, Linda was involved in another peacekeeping mission, this time in East Timor. No. 36 Squadron’s job was to deliver army supplies for UN peacekeepers, and deliver food and medicine. Linda was running the operation, making sure everything was in place for the squadron to complete its mission. Throughout her career Linda also assisted in various humanitarian aid missions. In 1998 she transported baby formula, nappies, and a portable hospital to Vanimo in northern Papua New Guinea after a tsunami had devastated the area. She found it rewarding to see the positive impact she was having on people’s lives. For Linda, a highlight of her job was that she “did real world stuff”.<sup>8</sup>

In 2003 Linda was deployed to the Middle East to fly missions in support of the invasion of Iraq. She was in command of the first Hercules flight into Iraq’s capital city, Baghdad. She had to work with the navy, army, and United States military to plan the mission to



**Linda as the pilot in command, 2008.**

Image courtesy of Linda Corbould



**No. 36 Squadron patch. The horse symbolises strength, speed, mobility, and dependability.**

Courtesy of Linda Corbould

**Why do you think the squadron chose “Sure” as their motto?**

#### **Crew loading a Hercules with supplies for people trapped by floods in Western Australia, 2023.**

Courtesy of Department of Defence. 20230112adf8615597\_0397







1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

## Did you know?

The Globemaster is able to carry a considerably larger load much farther than a Hercules. The Globemaster's cargo hold is about the length of a cricket pitch, and can fit two semitrailer trucks.

No. 36 Squadron use it to transport large loads, such as tanks, fire trucks, and helicopters.

C-17 and ground crew in Afghanistan, 2009.

Nick Fletcher, AWM P09831.139



transport medical supplies into the city. For her role in the operation Linda was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. The following year, she returned to the Middle East for three months to serve as the commander of Hercules operations. During that time she flew numerous transport missions into Iraq and Afghanistan. She found one flight a particular challenge. It involved flying through the mountains of Afghanistan at night before landing on a short dirt strip with trees at either end. She remembers, "The hairs on the back of your neck might stand up, but we'd been really well trained to do this kind of stuff."<sup>9</sup> The crew worked together as a team to share the load and complete the mission, but it was Linda's responsibility as the captain of the aircraft to get them there safely.

In 2006 Linda was promoted to be the commander of her squadron, becoming the first woman in the RAAF to do so. She was also given an important task: to lead the transition of the squadron from Hercules to C-17 Globemasters. Linda led No. 36 Squadron through the complex training for the new aircraft, which needed to be done in the United States. The squadron moved to a new airbase at Amberley, near Brisbane, and she was able to shape how it was constructed to best suit her team.

In 2008, Linda started to think about leaving the RAAF. Her final flight with No. 36 Squadron featured an all-female crew, with two of her closest friends acting as co-pilot and loadmaster. Women now have the opportunity to fill any role in the air force, and to fly all types of aircraft, a change she is happy to see. In 2008 Linda moved to Launceston and transferred to a job in the Air Force Reserve. She is currently working with young people in the Air Force Cadets, encouraging them to pursue a career in aviation. Looking back on her career she said,

*I had a dream at 12 of what I wanted to do and even though Government and defence wouldn't let me do that originally, I never gave up on it. So never give up on your dream because you just never know... Never give in.<sup>10</sup>*

**The crew for Linda's final flight, 2008.**

Image courtesy of the Department of Defence  
20081208raaf8164101\_0074







## Where did these stories take place?

- 1 Richard Williams**
  - Melbourne (Point Cook)
  - Egypt
  - Palestine
- 2 Ross Macpherson Smith**
  - Gallipoli
  - Egypt
  - Palestine
- 3 Felix Sainsbury**
  - Syria
  - Egypt
  - Libya
- 4 Clare Grant Stevenson**
  - Australia
- 5 John Worley**
  - England
  - Berlin
- 6 Leonard Waters**
  - Morotai
- 7 Richard Creswell**
  - Perth
  - Darwin
  - Melbourne
  - Papua New Guinea
  - Korea
- 8 Robin Gee**
  - Malaysia (Butterworth)
  - Vietnam
- 9 Linda Corbould**
  - Melbourne (Point Cook)
  - Somalia
  - East Timor
  - Papua New Guinea
  - Iraq
  - Afghanistan







1944



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1966



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1914



1917



1921



1941

# Glossary of Aircraft



## Bristol F.2B Fighter

*Known as the "Biff"*

**AFC service:** 1917–19

**Crew:** 2

**Max speed:** 198 km/h

**Weight:** 793 kg

**Role:** Reconnaissance, fighter, ground attack

*Give me the Bristol Fighters and I will put two men in one of those aircraft and I'll have the reconnaissance back in no time and they can protect themselves.<sup>1</sup>*

Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams – Bristol Fighter pilot.

### Related stories

**Richard Williams** (p.4)

**Ross Macpherson Smith** (p.8)



## Curtiss P40-E Kittyhawk Mk.I

*Known as the "Kitty"*

**RAAF service:** 1941–47

**Crew:** 1

**Max speed:** 582 km/h

**Weight:** 2,858 kg

**Role:** Fighter, ground attack

*The squadron, in thirty thousand flying hours, never had a forced landing caused by mechanical failure. Which wasn't a bad record. That was the old Kittyhawk.<sup>2</sup>*

Wing Commander Dick Cresswell – Kittyhawk pilot.

### Related stories

**Felix Sainsbury** (p.12)

**Dick Cresswell** (p.30)

**Len Waters** (p.26)





1944

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1966



2003-Today

## Avro 683 Lancaster Mk.I

*Known as the "Lanc"*

**RAAF service:** 1942–45

**Crew:** 7

**Max speed:** 462 km/h

**Weight:** 18,600 kg

**Role:** Bombing

*It's all over now; we straggle through the ops room to go to breakfast. Further crews have come in – crews late because they had been lost, or been shot up by flak or fighters, or lost engines. Some faces have not yet appeared – probably will never appear.<sup>3</sup>*

Flight Lieutenant Don Charlwood RAAF – Lancaster navigator.

### Related stories

John Worley (p.20)



## Gloster Meteor Mk.8

*Known as the "Meatbox"*

**RAAF service:** 1951–63

**Crew:** 1

**Max speed:** 941 km/h

**Weight:** 4,853 kg

**Role:** Fighter, ground attack

*The blokes that flew the Meteor, they liked it, they thought it was a fairly rugged aircraft, and it was safe ... It was a very easy aircraft to fly. We called it the "gentlemen's aircraft".<sup>4</sup>*

Wing Commander Dick Cresswell – Meteor pilot.

### Related stories

Dick Cresswell (p.30)







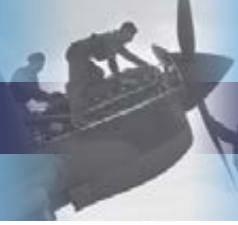
1914



1917



1921



1941



## Bell UH-1B Iroquois

*Known as the "Huey"*

**RAAF service:** 1962–89

**Crew:** 1–4

**Max speed:** 222 km/h

**Weight:** 2050 kg

**Role:** Transport, ground attack

*The advent of the modern helicopter in the Australian Air Force was a really spectacular change. Suddenly we were on the ground in amongst the reeds and amongst the trees with the soldiers.<sup>5</sup>*

Air Commodore Ross John Oddie (Ret'd) – Iroquois pilot.

### Related stories

Rob Gee (p.34)



## Lockheed C-130H Hercules

*Known as the "Herc"*

**RAAF service:** 1958–ongoing

**Crew:** 5

**Max speed:** 595 km/h

**Weight:** 28,577 kg

**Role:** Transport

*We go back to 1959 and look at the aircraft and we would never have thought that in 2021 we're still flying the Hercules ... It's such a versatile aircraft in terms of its multi-roles. I mean cargo, passengers, paratroops, medical evacuations, strange and outsized cargos, it's just so versatile.<sup>6</sup>*

Air commodore Ian Scott (Ret'd) – Hercules navigator.

### Related stories

Linda Corbould (p.40)





1944



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1966



2003-Today

## Size comparison



### Aircraft length

**Bristol Fighter:** 8 m

**Curtis Kittyhawk:** 10 m

**Avro Lancaster:** 21 m

**Gloster Meteor:** 14 m

**Bell Iroquois:** 12 m

**Lockheed Hercules:** 30 m





# Glossary

**administration** The process of organising or supervising.

**aerodrome** A small airport or airfield.

**aeronautics** The study of flight.

**Allies** The alliance of over 40 countries (including Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the United States of America, and Australia) that fought against Germany, Italy, and Japan during the Second World War.

**allies** Countries that are formally cooperating with each other for a military or other purpose.

**apprenticeship** A program in which a person learns a job by working with a skilled employer.

**armaments** Military weapons or equipment.

**armistice** A temporary formal agreement to stop fighting.

**automotive industry** The making or selling of motor vehicles.

**authorities** A group or organisation that have power or control over an area or issue.

**auxiliary** Providing support or additional help.

**Axis** The military alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan in the Second World War.

**bomber** A military aircraft designed to carry and drop bombs.

**bully beef** Preserved meat in a can. Also known as corned beef.

**casualties** Those who are dead, wounded, missing or taken prisoner in a particular battle or event.

**civil** Non-military people or organisations.

**civil war** A war between citizens of the same country.

**clerk** Someone who keeps records and accounts, and performs other routine administrative duties.

**Communism** A system of social organisation in which all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs.

**Commonwealth** A group of independent nations including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and others who were previously a part of the British Empire.

**compound** An open area enclosed by walls or a fence.

**deployment** The movement of troops or equipment to a place or position for a military operation.

**dominion** A self-governing nation that has the King or Queen of Great Britain as its head of state.

**fighter** A military aircraft designed for attacking other aircraft.

**fitter** A person who puts together or installs machinery, engine parts or other equipment.

**fla** A type of explosive shell designed to be shot into the sky to destroy aircraft.

**flying boat** A type of aircraft designed to take off and land on water.





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2003-Today

**formation** A group of aircraft flying together, usually organised in a particular shape or pattern.

**Great Depression** A period of severe global economic hardship lasting from 1929 until the start of the Second World War.

**gunship** A helicopter with weapons, designed to attack targets on the ground.

**humanitarian** Relates to the promotion of human welfare, dignity, and respect.

**intelligence** Information about the enemy.

**loadmaster** The member of an aircraft's crew responsible for the cargo.

**lobby** Seek to influence an issue.

**middleweight** A weight class in combat sports such as boxing. For fairness, competitors usually only fight against those in the same weight class.

**minefield** An area covered with explosives which are often hidden.

**muster** To assemble or bring together.

**navigation** The process of accurately establishing one's position and planning, following a route.

**officers** Members of the military with authority to take command over their subordinates.

**Pacific** A region encompassing the Pacific Ocean and its many islands.

**peacekeeping** The actions of international communities such as the United Nations or other organisations that step in to stop or prevent conflict between nations or communities.

**pension** A regular payment made by the Government to citizens meeting certain criteria.

**reconnaissance** The act of surveying a region to uncover information about military activity and resources.

**reinforcements** Extra people sent to increase the strength of a military force.

**regiment** A unit of an army; usually a mobile unit using horses, trucks, tanks or other methods to move quickly. Usually made up of 2,500–5,000 people.

**restoration** The act of returning something to its original condition.

**rigger** A person responsible for maintaining and fixing aircraft engines.

**ring barker** One who removes a ring of bark around the tree trunk in order to kill the tree.

**service** To perform regular maintenance or repair work on a vehicle or machine.

**signalling** To send signals as a form of communication.

**sortie** A combat mission of an individual aircraft.

**shell** A projectile that contains explosives or shrapnel.

**taxi** When a plane moves slowly on the ground either before take-off or after landing.

**United Nations** An intergovernmental organisation that aims to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, and achieve international cooperation.

**wireless** A type of communication using radio waves; also the machine that performs this.





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1944



1950



1966



2003-Today

### Keeping them on the flight line: Leading Aircraftman Robin “Rob” Gee

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### Royal Australian Air Force Officer Cadets taking part in the ensign raising ceremony for the Royal Australian Air Force 102nd anniversary commemorative service in Canberra. 31 March 2023.

Image courtesy of Department of Defence.  
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*As the sun sank behind Port Suez, we took our last look at Egypt, with little regret, but vivid memories of the good and the bad times, and most of all, sorry for our mates who did not make it, just lonely mounds of sand in the far off Western Desert.*

– Felix Sainsbury



Grave of a RAAF pilot with a propeller blade grave marker, Egypt c. 1942.

AWM P08442.024







There is no need for high-flown words  
when you are talking about the R.A.A.F.  
They have written their own story on  
the sky.

*The Argus*, 12 February 1953



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