



# UNITS OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

A CONCISE HISTORY



VOLUME 2

FIGHTER UNITS

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UNITS OF THE  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN  
AIR FORCE  
A CONCISE HISTORY

VOLUME 2  
FIGHTER UNITS

Compiled by the RAAF Historical Section

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

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*Between pages 24 and 25*

Captain A.H. Cobby at Leighterton,  
UK

The Bristol Bulldog

Members of 3 Squadron in the  
Middle East, 1941

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after scoring 3 Squadron's  
200th victory

Flight Lieutenant Garry Blumer

Leading Aircraftman N. De la  
Motte and Flight Lieutenant  
K.N. McRae

Squadron Leader Reginald Stevens

Flying Officer I.G. Pursey, Warrant  
Officer J.B. Taylor, Flying  
Officer B. Burton and Flight  
Lieutenant A.F. Lane

450 Squadron ground crew  
disarming a Macchi C.200

Squadron Leader P.M. Nash and  
Flight Lieutenant K.N. McRae

450 Squadron Kittyhawk  
maintenance

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a German 37mm shell

Corporals Stokes and Richards  
examine 20mm ammunition

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Colerne

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Kinninmont  
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Wing Commander C.R. 'Killer'  
Caldwell  
Squadron Leader K. 'Bluey'  
Truscott  
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Wing Commander A. Hodges  
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W.H. Simmonds  
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bombs for an F/A-18 Hornet  
F/A-18 Hornet

# INTRODUCTION

In November 1992 it was proposed that, as part of the RAAF 75th Anniversary celebrations to be held in 1996, a complete history of each unit of the RAAF should be prepared. The concept was to produce a concise history of each unit which would also serve as a basic reference for further research, and the realisation of that concept has resulted in a unique work. Other air forces have produced a history of all operational units, but no other air force has attempted to give a concise history of every unit which was an integral part of its organisation. An early decision was to produce 10 'generic' volumes, each pertinent to a given function of the Royal Australian Air Force. Every effort has been made to remain true to this concept, although it is conceded that some arbitrary decisions have been made as to which volume a unit would best fit into.

After much discussion, a standard format was established for each volume and requests circulated for volunteers to research and write the histories. Each history was to be based on the relevant Unit History Record and every care taken to ensure factual accuracy within a strict word limit. Only information up to November 1994 was to be included.

Over 110 volunteers, drawn from within the Service, ex-service organisations and interested civilians, forwarded pieces to the RAAF Historical Section, which undertook the collation of the manuscripts, final checking and liaison with the publishers. Except for editing for consistency of style the histories remain largely as they were written.

Fighter squadrons are the linchpin of air power and fighter operations must be successful if other forms of aerial warfare are to take place. Modern fighter pilots follow the traditions set by the World War I exploits of 'Harry' Cobby, Clive Caldwell's achievements in World War II and the daring of the pilots who flew the first RAAF jet fighter operations over Korea during 1951–1953.

This volume, *Fighter Units*, traces the development of the fighter arm—operations undertaken included Army co-operation duties, interdiction, night fighting and bomber escort duties—and the heroism of the men who inspired a nation.

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# 3 SQUADRON

*Operta Aperta (Secret Things Revealed)*



## CHRONOLOGY

6 July 1916	—2 Squadron formed at Point Cook, Vic.
25 October 1916	—number changed to 3 Squadron Australian Flying Corps
June 1919	—Squadron disbanded
1 July 1925	—reformed at Point Cook
17 July 1946	—Squadron disbanded
8 March 1948	—reformed in ACT
15 June 1953	—retained in name only
1 March 1956	—reformed to Williamtown, NSW
22 October 1958	—advance party arrived at Butterworth, Malaya
16 February 1967	—returned to Williamtown
17 February 1969	—returned to Butterworth
31 March 1986	—returned to Williamtown
November 1994	—based at Williamtown, NSW

## NARRATIVE

On 16 July 1916, 2 Squadron was formed. The nomenclature was changed to 3 Squadron on 25 October 1916, and 3 Squadron Australian Flying Corps commenced operations at the Australian Imperial Force Camp adjacent to the Central Flying School at Point Cook.

Within days the Squadron embarked on the troopship *Ulysses* and arrived in England on 28 December 1916, to be equipped with two-seater RE-8 aircraft. The pilots were given limited training in Lincolnshire and

then sent to Cambrai, in France, where they began active service in September 1917; the first Australian flying unit to arrive in France in World War I.

3 Squadron was in action from the time it reached France until the Armistice was signed. During that time it occupied 10 different aerodromes and flew nearly 10 000 hours of active service. In the course of this period it observed and reported the effects of Allied artillery on 735 occasions, dropped some 6000 bombs and fired approximately 500 000 rounds of small arms ammunition against enemy targets. During its photographic reconnaissance, over 6000 plates were exposed in photographing some 12 000 square miles of enemy territory.

Eighty-eight pilots and 78 observers were, at various times, attached to the Squadron and of this number 11 pilots and 12 observers were killed in action and 12 pilots and 12 observers were wounded. The average length of service for pilots was five months.

In the course of aerial activities over enemy lines the Squadron lost 11 aircraft (though many more were damaged and returned to base).

Enemy aircraft accounted for by the Squadron totalled 51, 16 being completely destroyed, eight shot down out of control and 27 damaged.

During the War the Squadron gave air support to the Australian Imperial Force and to the first joint Australian Imperial Force/United States Army operations.

In October 1918 the Squadron was re-equipped with Bristol fighter aircraft and flew its last offensive flight early on the morning of 11 November 1918.

After the Armistice the Squadron remained on the Continent and was used to transport mail for the Australian Imperial Force, then in March 1919 it returned to England where it was stationed for a short period before embarking for Australia and disbandment in June 1919.

3 Squadron was reformed on 1 July 1925 at Point Cook, Victoria, but moved soon after to Richmond, New South Wales. The Squadron consisted of three flights: an Army Co-Operation (equipped with DH-9s); another one with SE-5a aircraft; and a bomber flight (equipped with DH-9a aircraft).

During 1929, 3 Squadron was re-equipped with Wapiti aircraft and in 1935 it received its first Hawker Demon.

At the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, 3 Squadron had five operational crews flying 12 serviceable Hawker Demon aircraft at Richmond, New South Wales.

On 20 September 1939 the Australian Government approved the dispatch of an Australian air expeditionary force of six squadrons to proceed overseas before the end of the year. On 9 October 1939, Group Captain H. De La Rue, CBE, DFC was chosen to command the force. With the development of the Empire Air Training Scheme soon after, the expeditionary force was abandoned.

On 28 February 1940 the Australian Government decided that for national and training reasons the 6th Australian Division Australian Imperial Force should have an Army Co-Operation Squadron. On 15 July 1940, 21 officers and 271 airmen (most of whom were permanent members but with a number of Citizen Air Force and wartime volunteers) under the command of Squadron Leader I.D. McLachlan sailed from Sydney on the RMS *Orontes*. They transhipped to HMT *Dilwarra* at Bombay, India, on 7 August and arrived at Port Tewfik (Suez), Egypt, on 23 August 1940, becoming the first Australian Air Force unit to reach the Middle East in World War II.

From Port Tewfik part of the Squadron went to Ismailia RAF Station where it took possession of a number of Lysander Army co-operation aircraft and large quantities of stores. Other members were sent to Abu Suweir, another RAF Station, nearby. On 16 September 1940 the Squadron was ordered to Helwan, near Cairo, to be reconstituted on a three-flight basis—two of Gladiators and one of Lysanders—plus four Gauntlet aircraft which were to be used to train aircrew in dive bombing tactics.

In November, two flights of 3 Squadron moved to Gerawla (near Mersa Matruh) to commence operations against the Italian forces while the Lysander flight moved to Ikingi Maryout (near Alexandria) to act primarily as a reinforcement pool.

On 19 November 1940, 3 Squadron recorded its first combat mission in World War II when four Gladiator aircraft were attacked by no less than 18 Italian CR-42 aircraft. From this encounter the pilots claimed six enemy aircraft but, unfortunately, the Squadron recorded its first casualty in the War with the death, in action, of Squadron Leader P.R. Heath.

When General Wavell commenced his first desert campaign on 8 December 1940, 3 Squadron gave the Army air support with its aircraft flying offensive patrols over the Western Desert of Egypt and Italian Cyrenaica. The Squadron now began to be moulded into a happy, efficient fighting unit, with highly competent pilots and dedicated and

highly trained ground staff all knowing they were closely associated with the 6th Division AIF in this desert campaign.

In early January a flight, previously left behind at Ikingi Maryout, was re-equipped with Gladiator aircraft and joined the main Squadron at Gambut, between Bardia and Tobruk. Later in the same month the complete Squadron began to be re-equipped with Hurricane aircraft. With the end of the first desert campaign the Squadron headed towards Benina, a military aerodrome near Benghazi, the capital of Italian Cyrenaica. It arrived on 10 February 1941 and in April Rommel and his Afrika Korps commenced the first of many offensives and the Allied forces retreated from Cyrenaica. During the following 17 days the Squadron covered the retreat until it arrived at Aboukir, on the eastern side of Alexandria.

The Squadron was then sent to Palestine where, at Lydda (now Ben Gurion International Airport), it was re-equipped with American Tomahawk aircraft.

When 7 Australian Division Australian Imperial Force advanced against the Vichy French in Syria, 3 Squadron joined forces with it and commenced operations in this campaign by attacking Rayak satellite airfield on 8 June 1941.

The Allies forced the Vichy French capitulation on 12 July 1941. At this stage the Squadron was stationed at Rosh Pinna in Northern Palestine (now Israel) and it was there the Squadron commemorated the first anniversary of its departure from Australia by holding a joint officers/airmen's dinner in a small forest of Australian eucalyptus trees, on 15 July 1941.

The Squadron moved to Rayak and, on 3 September 1941, left Syria and moved back into Egypt where it commenced offensive patrols from Sidi Haneish.

The second Libyan campaign was scheduled to start on 18 November 1941 and the Squadron, during the early days of the offensive, claimed its 100th victory. Kittyhawk aircraft began to arrive and the Squadron commenced operations as a fighter bomber unit, a role it carried out until the end of the War. This Allied campaign was so successful that in January 1942 the Squadron was operating from Antelat, a landing ground south of Benghazi, well beyond the point it had reached in the first Libyan campaign.

4 The Afrika Korps struck and in February, 3 Squadron was back at Gambut, half way between Tobruk and Bardia. During March the unit

was withdrawn from operations and all personnel given leave, but within a month it was back in action.

On 22 May 1942 a large group of replacements arrived from Australia. The new members soon saw some real action, with a heavy German bombing attack taking place on 25 May as the Axis forces started their final offensive, which they hoped would take them right through to the Suez Canal.

As the Axis forces pressed forward the Allies retreated and 3 Squadron fell back to Amiriya, near Alexandria, flying many sorties every day.

With the Army holding the line at El Alamein, the Squadron flew daily in support of medium bombers and during this period flew more as fighters than fighter bombers. It was on one of these sorties that Squadron Leader Gibbes shot down the Squadron's 200th enemy aircraft.

The Allied forces, now under the command of General Montgomery, commenced an offensive on 23 November 1942 and the Squadron started a long hard campaign, finally being based at Kairouan in Tunisia on 18 April 1943. It stayed there until 9 May, when the Axis forces surrendered, before moving back to Zuar in Tripolitania.

On 3 July 1943 a skeleton maintenance crew went to Malta with the Squadron aircraft. The invasion of Sicily occurred soon after and on 16 July 1943 the advance parties of 3 Squadron landed at Pachino, in Sicily.

In September the ground staff began to move into Italy—firstly to Grottaglie, then Bari on the Adriatic and, soon after, to Foggia. In October another move, this time to Meline where the Squadron experienced its first taste of an Italian winter.

On 1 January 1944 the Squadron moved to Cutella, where it spent five miserable months in an extremely cold winter.

The next move was in May, to San Angelo, where the Squadron took part in the famous Cassino campaign. On 14 June it went to Guidonia, an airport near Rome. The Squadron moved to Falarium on 23 June, then to a landing ground named Crete on 9 July.

On 24 August 1944 the Squadron shifted to Jesi, again on the Adriatic, where it was re-equipped—for the last time during the War—with Mustang aircraft modified to carry two 1000-lb bombs. Then it was north again, to Fano, arriving in November 1944 and staying there until the end of February 1945, when it shifted to Cervia. It was at this stage the European war ended.

On 17 May, 3 Squadron moved further north to Udine, north of the Gulf of Venice, and later that month was ordered to return to Australia, where it was later disbanded.

3 Squadron reformed in 1948 at Canberra, under the command of Squadron Leader T.H. Saunders and equipped with Mustang aircraft. During 1956 it moved to Williamstown, where it was re-equipped with Sabre aircraft.

The government of the day decided to deploy two squadrons—3 and 77—to Butterworth, Malaya, as part of Australia's participation in the defence arrangement during the Malayan Emergency. During the latter part of the Malayan Emergency, 3 Squadron was engaged in ground attack work.

The Squadron returned to Williamstown in 1967 where it was re-equipped with Mirage interceptor aircraft and returned to Butterworth in 1969.

On 4 March 1969 a detachment of aircraft and support crews were sent to Tengah, Singapore, to provide further support to the Royal Malaysian Air Force. Then, between 9 and 24 September 1981, elements of 3 Squadron were deployed to USAF Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines to take part in Exercise 'Cope Thunder'. In 1983 the Squadron was deployed to Paya Lebar Air Force Base.

On 31 March 1986, 3 Squadron transferred its aircraft, duties and most of its personnel to 79 Squadron. The unit re-deployed to Williamstown to train on the newly acquired RAAF fighter, the F/A-18, and is still operating from that Base.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 September 1916	—Major D.V.J. Blake
16 October 1918	—Major W.H. Anderson
1 July 1925	—Flight Lieutenant F.W.F. Lukis
13 January 1930	—Squadron Leader A.H. Cobby
22 November 1931	—Squadron Leader W.D. Bostock
8 May 1936	—Flight Lieutenant R.H. Sim
10 November 1936	—Squadron Leader L.V. Lateral
2 February 1937	—Squadron Leader J.H. Summers
3 May 1937	—Squadron Leader J. Waters
10 May 1938	—Squadron Leader A.L. Walters
16 June 1939	—Squadron Leader A.X. Richards

4 December 1939	—Squadron Leader I.D. McLachlan
13 February 1941	—Squadron Leader P. Jeffrey
10 November 1941	—Squadron Leader A.C. Rawlinson
1 January 1942	—Squadron Leader D.R. Chapman
26 February 1942	—Squadron Leader R.H. Gibbes
19 April 1943	—Squadron Leader B.A. Eaton
19 June 1943	—Squadron Leader R.N.B. Stevens
21 August 1943	—Squadron Leader B.A. Eaton
22 February 1944	—Squadron Leader P.M. Nash
18 April 1944	—Squadron Leader R.H. Bayley
29 October 1944	—Squadron Leader P.M. Nash
8 March 1945	—Squadron Leader K.A. Richards
3 May 1945	—Squadron Leader P.M. Nash
8 March 1948	—Squadron Leader T.H.H. Saunders
9 March 1949	—Flight Lieutenant J.W. Hubble
16 May 1952	—Flight Lieutenant H.R. Baldwin
17 May 1953	—Flight Lieutenant G.L. Waller
1 March 1956	—Squadron Leader F.W. Barnes
15 January 1958	—Wing Commander C.G. Thomas
24 April 1961	—Wing Commander R.H. Glassop
29 January 1962	—Wing Commander R.M. Hanstein
3 January 1964	—Wing Commander E.W. Tonkin
14 January 1966	—Wing Commander R.E. Frost
24 July 1966	—Wing Commander K.A. Martin
2 February 1967	—Wing Commander V. Drummond
3 July 1967	—Wing Commander J.W. Newham
22 December 1970	—Wing Commander T.J. Scully
10 January 1973	—Wing Commander R.J. Bomball
9 December 1974	—Wing Commander D.W. Owens
5 January 1976	—Wing Commander R.J. Phillips
14 March 1977	—Wing Commander B.G. Grayson
7 March 1979	—Wing Commander J.K. Bricknell
16 June 1981	—Wing Commander R.B. Gregory
10 August 1983	—Wing Commander R. Conroy
12 June 1984	—Wing Commander B.R. Wood
31 March 1986	—Wing Commander B.J.S. Mouatt
14 December 1987	—Wing Commander R.B. Treloar
1 March 1990	—Wing Commander D.A. Pietsch
10 December 1992	—Wing Commander B.P. Crowhurst

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# 4 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

16 October 1916	—formed Point Cook, Vic.
27 March 1917	—arrived in England
18 December 1917	—landed in Europe and located at St Omer
7 December 1918	—stationed at Cologne
16 June 1919	—arrived in Melbourne, Vic. and disbanded
3 May 1937	—reformed at Richmond, NSW
1 January 1939	—renumbered 6 Squadron
17 June 1940	—4 Squadron reformed at Richmond
29 September 1940	—moved to Canberra, ACT
20 May 1942	—based at Camden, NSW
10 August 1942	—re-located to Kingaroy, Qld
21 November 1942	—arrived Bomana, New Guinea
March 1944	—moved to Nadzab, New Guinea
28 March 1945	—unit embarked at Lae
7 April 1945	—arrived at Morotai
23 June 1945	—arrived at Labuan
14 November 1945	—returned to Canberra
8 March 1948	—re-named 3 (Tac/R) Squadron

## NARRATIVE

4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps was formed at Point Cook, Victoria on 16 October 1916, and arrived in England on 27 March 1917, where it carried out further training at Castle Bromwich, near Birmingham.

The unit, equipped with Sopwith Camel aircraft, arrived at St Omer on 18 December 1917, and then moved to Bruay on 22 December.

On 9 January 1918, the first sorties were flown into Germany, to be followed four days later with the first aerial combat, resulting in the loss of one aircraft and the pilot being captured. This defeat was avenged on 24 January when an enemy machine was shot down near La Bassee.

Late in March, the German offensive on the Somme was unleashed at St Quentin, pressing back the British line. The pilots bombed and strafed with machine gun fire the masses of enemy troops and equipment moving to the front line.

In early April a move was made to Clairmarais North, where patrols were carried out between Lens and the Scharfe River. On two occasions during this period the Squadron engaged sharply with members of Richthofen's Red Circus in the vicinity of Douai.

Early in July a move to Redingham saw both 2 and 4 Squadrons together on the same aerodrome. From this drome two famous raids were carried out on 12 and 16 August against Haubourdin and Lomme aerodromes, with over 60 planes taking part. 4 Squadron led the attack with 19 aircraft on the first day and 17 on the second raid. In the course of these two days, three formations of enemy fighting machines were completely destroyed.

The unit moved to Serny in September and was re-equipped with Sopwith Snipe aircraft, before moving to Auchel on 30 October, and then to Emmetiers on 6 November 1918. The notable member of the Squadron was Captain A.H. Cobby, who was credited with 29 enemy aircraft destroyed, and was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and two bars and was Mentioned in Despatches.

As part of the British Army of Occupation, 4 Squadron was moved to Cologne on 7 December 1918. In March 1919, the Squadron was relocated to Salisbury Plain, England before embarking on the *Kaiser In Hind*, arriving at Melbourne on 16 June 1919 and subsequently disbanding.

4 Squadron was reformed as a unit of the Royal Australian Air Force at Richmond on 3 May 1937, and was equipped with Demon aircraft which were replaced by Avro Ansons on 31 July 1937. The Squadron was renumbered 6 Squadron on 1 January 1939.

The Squadron was reformed at Richmond on 17 June 1940, and was equipped with Demon aircraft which were replaced by Wirraways on 18 September 1940.

The unit was stationed at Canberra between 29 September 1940 and 19 May 1942, where it commenced training in Army co-operation tactics with various units of the Australian Military Forces. Two aircraft collided in flight and crashed near Government House at Canberra on 4 April 1941. Flying Officer Cox and Pilot Officer Baster parachuted to safety but a passenger, Corporal Ramsey, was killed. On 6 January 1942, Pilot Officer Ross and Sergeant Hadley were involved in a fatal accident at Williamtown when their aircraft crashed and was destroyed by fire. Pilot Officer Beveridge and Sergeant Smith were also killed as a result of an aircraft accident on 1 May 1942, near Howlong.

Based at Camden, New South Wales, from 20 May 1942 to 9 August 1942, 4 Squadron flew several uneventful anti-submarine patrols over the Broken Bay area. On 29 May, six Tiger Moths were allotted to the aircraft inventory, and the Squadron moved to Kingaroy, Queensland on 10 August 1942.

On 1 November 1942, the Squadron embarked at Brisbane and was established at Berry airstrip, Bomana, New Guinea, by the 21st.

While on a reconnaissance mission one aircraft crash-landed and was written off at Wairopi on the 21st; however Flying Officer T.H. Saunders and Flight Sergeant Bain managed to walk to Kokoda. The Squadron aircraft bombed and strafed targets in the Gona area on the 24th. Flights were detached on 26 November to Popondetta for co-operation with 7 Australian Division, and to Dobodura for the United States Army 32nd Division. General reconnaissance and bombing attacks were carried out over Wairopi, Buna, Gona, Sanananda and Cape Endaiadere. The aircraft frequently flew at tree top height to observe enemy movement.

Two aircraft disappeared in cloud on 11 December 1942 while on a bombing mission in the Buna area. It was a few days before information came through that one crew had baled out of their plane five miles west of the Gap. The wounded pilot, Flying Officer Dineen, had been picked up by some natives, but the observer Flight Sergeant Winter was, it was later established, killed by pro-Japanese natives. There was no word on the other crew. On the 15th another aircraft flown by Flying Officer Mowbray and Sergeant Cole was damaged by anti-aircraft fire, and on the 17th the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader D.R. Allshorn, and his passenger, Flight Lieutenant Marr, received minor injuries when their aircraft was extensively damaged whilst landing at Berry. On the 22nd Flying Officer Hockings and Major O'Hara were lost when shot down by anti-aircraft fire over the Buna area.

Pilot Officer J. Archer, and his observer Sergeant Coulston, while on artillery observation in the Buna area, destroyed an enemy Mitsubishi A6M 'Zeke' aircraft on 26 December 1942. Archer was awarded the American Silver Star for this action.

Two aircraft were hit by machine gun fire while on a reconnaissance in the Buna area on 1 January 1943, but no major damage was inflicted. Another aircraft, crewed by Flying Officer Boydell and Sergeant Cole, while on a reconnaissance in the Sanananda area on the 2nd, suffered engine failure and force-landed in kunai grass at Soputa, sustaining some damage. On the same day a flight of five Wirraways sighted and strafed

60 Japanese escaping seawards to Sanananda Point, causing a number of casualties. Warrant Officer S.J. Hart and Flight Sergeant H.W. Phillips crashed on a reconnaissance over the Gona area on 17 January 1943. They were taken prisoner and killed.

On 31 January 1943 an advance party and equipment moved from Berry to the Wau strip to prepare for unit operations there.

Four aircraft arrived at Wau strip on 3 February 1943 and one aircraft overturned on landing, but the crew was uninjured. From this strip the aircraft took part in the Battle of Wau, and operated supply drops, artillery observation, reconnaissance and gun spotting tasks. On the 6th, one Wirraway was destroyed and one damaged by an enemy bombing attack on the strip. Sergeant Cole suffered a minor shrapnel wound to his left shoulder.

On 24 May 1943 several pilots travelled to Sydney to take delivery of Boomerang aircraft allotted to the Squadron. Some Wirraways were delivered to the mainland on 16 June, and later the pilots flew back from Melbourne with Boomerang aircraft.

One aircraft was lost on 5 July 1943 when it was shot down by anti-aircraft fire from a United States landing craft over Nassau Bay. Flying Officer Collier put his Boomerang down on the beach but was killed when his head struck the protruding reflector gun sight; as a result the sights were removed from all unit Boomerang aircraft.

During the period 14–16 August, attacks in support of Army operations increased, and on the 16th support was given to 17 Brigade when it captured Kamiatum. On 27 August, as the main ground party were returning from Wau to Port Moresby by air, the Douglas transport carrying stores and Leading Aircraftmen Tarrant, Stocker and Conway, crashed shortly after take-off and all personnel on board were killed.

On 1 September, eight Boomerangs and two Wirraways were detached to Tsili Tsili in support of operations by 7 and 9 Divisions in the Lae/Nadzab campaign, and in the consequent Markham and Ramu Valley actions. One aircraft was reported missing on the 6th over the Hopoi area; Flying Officer T. Laidlaw was shot down by a 'Zeke', and Flying Officer S. Carter evaded an enemy fighter by flying up valleys before returning to Tsili Tsili.

On 30 October Flying Officer S.N. Trumper was reported missing on operations in the Ketoba area.

Flying Officer Stewart had a lucky escape when his Wirraway was shot down by a P-38 Lightning and crash-landed near Finschhafen on

15 November 1943. The plane caught fire and was totally destroyed, while the pilot suffered shock and cuts to the face. On the 26th, Flying Officer H.C. Munro and Flight Sergeant A.J. Salter were reported missing after both were last seen in combat with seven enemy fighters over the sea near the mouth of the Sanga River. Flying Officer Staley was reported as being killed on operations in the Mt Kubari area on 31 December 1943.

In December, six Piper Cub aircraft were 'borrowed' from the 5th Air Force. They were flown from emergency strips and used for courier duties, but were later destroyed in a kunai grass fire at Nadzab. Although the aircraft was unarmed, its manoeuvrability resulted in the destruction of a 'Tony', which went in to a high speed stall whilst attempting to match the Piper Cub, and crashed in the Ramu area.

By January 1944, operations were conducted from Gusap by 'A' Flight in support of 7 Division and 'B' Flight at Nadzab supporting 9 Division. Another feature of the work by the unit was the leading of Beauforts, Vengeances and Kittyhawks to bomb and strafe specific targets set by the Army. On the 6th, four Boomerangs were holed by anti-aircraft fire while on operations in the Kia area, with Pilot Officer Taylor being slightly wounded. Unit aircraft joined with others on 16 January 1944 in bombing and strafing of Yuale on the Bogadjim Road. Further attacks were carried out the following day against the Kankiryo saddle in the Shaggy Ridge area in support of the advance by the Australian forces.

The Squadron moved from Port Moresby to Nadzab in March 1944. A detachment was sent to Cape Gloucester to operate with the American 6th Army on 18 March. The work mainly involved the spotting of Japanese movement along escape routes from Arawe and Gasmata to the Gazelle Peninsula. For the next three months attacks in support of Army operations continued to be carried out in various areas, as well as normal reconnaissance missions and other tasks.

In July 1944 the Gusap detachment returned to Nadzab. In October, the Flight went to Madang to work with 6 Division, covering the Bogadjim, Erima and Angoram areas, while 'B' Flight carried out tactical reconnaissances in the Sepik River, Marienberg and Annenberg areas. In November 1944 a flight of aircraft was sent to Tadjji airfield at Aitape for operations.

The Madang and Tadjji detachments returned to Nadzab on 19 March 1945. On 28 March the unit embarked on the *Roger Sherman*, arrived at Morotai on 7 April and later moved to Labuan. The aircraft arrived at Labuan on 23 June and began tactical reconnaissances in the Kuching

area with Wirraways, while the Boomerangs were detached to Balikpapan for operations in that area. The role continued to be tactical reconnaissance and lead in for the Spitfire and Kittyhawk squadrons.

With the close of hostilities in August 1945, the Squadron's role changed to searching out and dropping messages to prisoners of war and the Japanese forces. In September flights were made carrying Army officers to Borneo in connection with surrender activities. The Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader B. Todd, landed at a secret Japanese airstrip at Kenangan and took charge of a Japanese 'Sonia' aircraft which was later flown to Labuan.

The Squadron returned to Australia on 14 November 1945 and was based at Canberra. During 1946 the Wirraways were replaced by Kittyhawks, but in February 1947 these in turn were replaced by Mustangs and Austers, and training commenced with these aircraft. Exercises began in mid-1947, and in September the unit carried out an offensive air support demonstration with rocket projectiles and geletrol for the cadets of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in the Braidwood area.

On 7 March 1948, the unit was re-named 3 Squadron, and 4 Squadron ceased to exist.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

16 October 1916	—Captain A. Lang
March 1917	—Major J.W. Sheldon
18 December 1917	—Major W.A. McCloughry
3 May 1937	—Squadron Leader D.E.L. Wilson
17 June 1940	—Squadron Leader J.R. Paget
24 February 1941	—Squadron Leader B.B. Cresswell
29 April 1942	—Squadron Leader J.H. Wright
8 August 1942	—Squadron Leader G.J. Quinan
3 December 1942	—Wing Commander A.W. Charlton
15 January 1943	—Squadron Leader W.F. Allshorn
4 October 1943	—Squadron Leader C.W. Munro
14 May 1944	—Wing Commander A.E. Cook
19 October 1944	—Squadron Leader O.N. Daley
17 November 1944	—Squadron Leader J.R. Mowbray
20 March 1945	—Squadron Leader B. Todd
12 October 1945	—Flight Lieutenant E.V. Walliker
22 October 1946	—Flight Lieutenant T.H.H. Saunders

# 5 SQUADRON

*Versatile*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 1 September 1917  | —formed at Shawbury, England                       |
| May 1919          | —disbanded at Minchinhampton, England              |
| 20 April 1936     | —reformed at Richmond, NSW                         |
| 1 January 1939    | —renumbered 9 Squadron                             |
| 9 January 1941    | —5 Squadron reformed at Laverton, Vic.             |
| 17 May 1942       | —moved to Rockhampton, Qld                         |
| 17 November 1942  | —re-located to Toogoolawah, Qld                    |
| 2 February 1943   | —based at Kingaroy, Qld                            |
| 11 June 1943      | —moved to Mareeba, Qld                             |
| 11 November 1944  | —arrived at Torokina, Bougainville                 |
| 17 February 1945  | —detachment sent to Cape Hoskins                   |
| 17 April 1945     | —detachment moved to Tadjji                        |
| 25 September 1945 | —return of Tadjji detachment                       |
| 31 January 1946   | —reduced to cadre basis                            |
| 22 February 1946  | —re-located to Pearce, WA                          |
| 18 October 1946   | —disbanded at Pearce                               |
| 4 May 1964        | —reformed at Canberra, ACT                         |
| 13 June 1964      | —moved to Butterworth, Malaysia                    |
| 12 April 1966     | —Butterworth Unit became 5 Squadron Detachment 'C' |
| 12 April 1966     | —9 Squadron at Fairbairn renumbered 5 Squadron     |
| 23 May 1966       | —Detachment 'C' at Butterworth disbanded           |
| 9 December 1989   | —Squadron disbanded at Fairbairn                   |

## NARRATIVE

5 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, was formed at Shawbury, England on 1 September 1917, and was disbanded at Minchinhampton, England in May 1919.

5 (Fleet Co-Operation) Squadron was formed from 101 (Fleet Co-Operation) Flight on 20 April 1936 at Richmond, New South Wales and was equipped with Seagull V amphibians and one de Havilland Moth aircraft. The new Seagull aircraft were first embarked in HMAS *Albatross* in August 1936 and, in October of that year, a detachment was embarked in HMAS *Sydney*.

During May 1937, an aircraft in co-operation with HMAS *Moresby* and Civil Aviation Authorities carried out surveys in the Darwin-Groote Island area.

On 11 June 1938, the Squadron farewelled its original mother ship, HMAS *Albatross* as it departed from Sydney for the United Kingdom. A further detachment joined the Fleet when, in the latter part of 1938, HMAS *Hobart* was allotted its aircraft and personnel.

The Squadron was re-named 9 (Fleet Co-Operation) Squadron on 1 January 1939.

5 (Army Co-Operation) Squadron was reformed at Laverton, Victoria on 9 January 1941, equipped with Wirraway aircraft. An aircraft crashed into the sea at Swimashore Bay, Wilson's Promontory on 6 October 1941, resulting in Pilot Officer P.A. Watchhorn being seriously injured and Sergeant J.S. Padman being killed. On 6 March 1942, Pilot Officer Littlejohns and Sergeant Madin were injured in a flying accident at Laverton; the pilot died of his injuries the following day. In another accident at Balliang on 21 March, both Pilot Officer J.V. Brittain and Sergeant W.D. Scotton were killed and the aircraft destroyed.

A move to Toowoomba, Queensland, was completed on 17 May 1942. During this period, the Squadron was busily engaged in photographic reconnaissance, surveys, Army co-operation exercises, co-operation with anti-aircraft defences, vertical photography and tactical reconnaissances. From 20 August 1942 Army co-operation exercises were undertaken with the United States Army 41st Division, 1st Australian Armoured Division and Joint Overseas Operational Training School. On 28 September Pilot Officer R.H. Wilkinson and Flight Sergeant J.R. Close were killed in an accident near Cryon, New South Wales, and Pilot

Officer W.H. Thorncraft and Sergeant H.J. Roberts were killed in a flying accident at Toowoomba on 28 October.

The Squadron Headquarters moved from Toowoomba to Toogoolawah, Queensland on 17 November to support the 2nd Australian Corps. The Squadron moved by road and air to Kingaroy, Queensland on 2 February. By 11 June a move to Mareeba had been completed. On 12 June Pilot Officer F.L. Parton and Sergeant G.F. Blanch were killed in a flying accident, and on 22 August two aircraft collided during air combat practice. Flying Officer J.S. Archer and Flying Officer R.R. Paxton parachuted to safety.

During October, Boomerang aircraft were ferried to Mareeba.

On 14 January 1944, Pilot Officer C.A. Morrison was killed when his aircraft made an emergency landing on a roadway, hit a stump, and overturned. On 17 March a further aircraft crash-landed after engine failure, injuring Flying Officer W.K. Thompson, who died four hours later. Engine failure of a Wirraway on 4 May resulted in Flying Officers F.A. Mitchell and P.T. Jeffery being killed. A Boomerang aircraft crashed and burnt near Mt Molloy on 5 November, killing Pilot Officer R.J. Granger.

The Squadron aircraft were flown to Piva North airfield at Torokina, Bougainville Island, on 11 November 1944; next day a tactical reconnaissance of the Numa Numa area was made. The equipment and vehicles were transported from Cairns on board the *India Victory* and arrived on 26 November; personnel embarked on the *Santa Monica* and arrived at Bougainville on 13 December.

On 7 December the aircraft led a strike by RNZAF Corsairs. On 30 December 1944 an attack was made against enemy targets on Pearl Ridge in support of the Army assault on that feature.

A Boomerang aircraft crashed and burnt at Mawaraka near Motupena Point on 11 January 1945, killing Flight Lieutenant W.R. Vernon.

On 6 February, an attack was made on enemy positions on Tsimba Ridge in support of the Army assault against the Japanese entrenched there; an aircraft plunged into the sea and Pilot Officer M.J. Oxley was reported missing, believed killed.

A detachment of one Wirraway and four Boomerang aircraft was sent to the airfield at Cape Hoskins on 17 February; personnel travelled by Dakota transport. On 3 March 1945, unit aircraft led a strike which destroyed two enemy tanks at Ruri Bay, and the Cape Hoskins detachment moved to Tadjji airfield on 17 April.

In the period 3–10 May, unit aircraft combined with others in attacks on enemy positions in support of the Army advance and capture of Wewak. The Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader B.M. Palmer, was injured on 29 May 1945 when he trod on an old American anti-personnel mine. During June, the Tadjil detachment flew a total of 188.40 hours on tactical reconnaissance, artillery direction, bombing, strafing and map corrections, and ferrying Army officers over the forward areas.

On 6 July a Wirraway aircraft struck the sea and sank. Flying Officer B. O'Connell was drowned, but Flying Officer J. Hatfield was rescued.

During July Army operations in the south of the island were seriously hampered because of a period of extremely bad weather. Two American Dakota transport planes were attached to assist the RAAF in supplying the Australian Army forward troops. As the USAAF pilots were unfamiliar with the drop sites, 5 Squadron pilots travelled in the C-47s.

Hostilities ceased on 15 August 1945. During the period 16–25 August the unit was engaged on the dropping of surrender leaflets to the Japanese forces.

Four Kittyhawk aircraft arrived at the Squadron on 9 September 1945. Aircrew personnel of the Tadjil detachment returned to the Squadron on 25 September 1945, leaving the ground staff to follow as soon as transport became available.

On 27 October, at the request of 3 Australian Division, a Wirraway with two storepedoes flew to Fauro Island on the first trip of what was to become a tri-weekly job. The storepedoes were successfully dropped to the 27th Australian Battalion.

Most of the aircraft were grounded on 15 November. The tropical weather conditions had seriously affected the fabric and airframes of these machines and they were unsafe for further flying. A Boomerang aircraft crashed into the sea on 17 December near Numa Numa after Flying Officer Nolan was forced to bale out.

Flying was restricted during December 1945. The only duties were the fortnightly drops on Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit stations at Sonana, Buin, Kieta and Numa Numa and despite a period of bad weather Christmas rations were dropped to each of these stations.

The unit was reduced to a cadre basis on 31 January and a move to Pearce, Western Australia, was completed by 22 February. The Squadron was partly reformed with Kittyhawk aircraft before disbanding on 18 October 1946.

5 Squadron was reformed at RAAF Fairbairn on 4 May 1964, equipped with Iroquois helicopters transferred from 9 Squadron. On 11 June 1964, the unit moved to RAAF Base Butterworth, Malaysia to operate as part of the anti-terrorist force. Squadron equipment was transported on board HMAS *Sydney*, arriving at Penang on 17 June.

During late June and early July 1964 the pilots, assisted by members of 10 Squadron RAF, carried out many familiarisation exercises in the jungle fort areas to the north-east and south-east of Ipoh. On 7 July, several airmen of the unit were flown to Vung Tau in South Vietnam to study American Army helicopter maintenance methods. A detachment took part with three helicopters in a joint exercise between the 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group and 224 Group (RAF).

During September the increased tempo of Indonesian confrontation required that RAAF Butterworth be placed on emergency alert.

On 8 September, a small party of Australian soldiers was reported missing close to the Thailand border and the assistance of the Squadron was sought. The missing party and a ground rescue team who had been searching for them were located on 10 September. Rescue operations continued throughout the following day, and a small relief party was lowered by winch into an area close by the stranded personnel and began to clear land. Twelve persons were winched out on the 13th.

On 7 October one of the helicopters was flown to Ubon, Thailand. The aircraft was fitted with a long range fuel tank and two stops for refuelling were necessary during the flight. Next day, the engine of a Sabre that had crashed was uplifted and flown back to Ubon. The aircraft returned to base on 9 October.

In October 1964, a total of 420 sorties were flown, most of which were in support of 3 Royal Australian Regiment, transporting some 250 troops to, or from, forward operational landing zones. Several sorties were carried out in co-operation with the Senio Praak troops, the Special Branch Malayan Police Force and the Aborigine Welfare Department.

On 18 November, a Squadron helicopter was detached to RAF Seletar to support the Singapore Regiment against Indonesian infiltrators in the East Johore area.

During early January 1965, the troops of the 2nd Malaysian Rangers Battalion were transferred from Fort Tapong in the central border area. On 8 January, a change over of Senio Praak personnel was accomplished between Grik and Dakoh. This type of operational flying, plus

reconnaissance sorties, communication flights and medical evacuations of personnel employed the unit for the greater part of the month.

The versatility of the Iroquois helicopter was demonstrated on 15 March, when a complete road grader was uplifted in sections and flown externally from Fort Kemar to Grik.

An air search was carried out over a fishing kampong 35 miles south of Butterworth in the area of Kuala Gula on 1 March, following persistent reports of an Indonesian landing. These could not be verified.

Aircraft unserviceability restricted the operational efforts of the unit during April and May 1965, and only essential tasks were attempted. However, several medivac were carried out during these months and numerous sorties were flown in support of the 1st Malaysian Rangers, the Senio Praak troops and the Special Police Branch. After modifications had been completed the aircraft returned to normal flying duties in June. Operational activity consisted mainly of troop movements and medivac until August when reconnaissance work was also carried out.

On 4 January 1966 the unit participated in Exercise 'Twelfth Night' on Penang, and on 17 January was presented with the Gloucester Cup by His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester.

A serious defect was discovered in a rotor head on 20 January, and flying was suspended until parts became available to modify the heads. Operational activity was curtailed during the latter part of January and early February. The highlight of the month occurred on 8 February, when an unconscious seaman was winched from HMS *Tidemarsh* and conveyed to 4 RAAF Hospital at Butterworth.

Operational activity returned to normal in March 1966 and on the 28th, three of the Squadron helicopters and their respective crews departed the unit to participate in Exercise 'Lion Roar', a joint exercise which concluded on 4 April 1966.

From July 1964 to 5 April 1966, the Squadron moved 21 638 passengers, 760 653 lbs of freight and carried out 727 medical evacuations.

On 12 April 1966, 5 Squadron became 5 Squadron Detachment 'C'. 9 Squadron at RAAF Fairbairn was renumbered 5 Squadron.

On 12 April, six unit aircraft from Fairbairn deployed to Shoalwater Bay, Queensland to support 6 Royal Australian Regiment during an 11-day exercise. On 11 April the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander R. Royston, flew to Eden to evacuate a patient who, unfortunately, died during the return flight.

Meanwhile, Detachment 'C' at RAAF Base Butterworth continued with its normal routine, with numerous sorties being flown in support of the Senio Praak troops and the Special Police Branch. The detachment was disbanded on 23 May 1966.

Between 20 and 23 October 1966, unit aircraft flew security patrols over Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane in connection with the visit of the President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnston.

The Commanding Officer flew to Megalong Valley on 10 August 1967 to recover the body of a girl drowned by flood waters, and to rescue three survivors of the same accident.

Flying Officer R.G. Enders and Flight Lieutenant W. Waterhouse (RNZAF) were killed on 29 January 1969, during a training mission, as were Flying Officers I.R. McLean and E.C. Collett on 2 April 1969.

On 3 September 1973, two people were rescued from the Kosciusko area. Three lost fishermen were found and winched to safety from the Jenolan Caves area on 6 February 1974; and on 17 March 1974, an aircraft was deployed to Williamtown for free fall parachuting tests.

Eight aircraft participated in the Jubilee Parade massed flypast over Parliament House in Canberra on 8 March 1976.

From 5 July 1976 a detachment of four aircraft, aircrews and technical personnel were posted to El Gorah, Egypt as part of the Multinational Force and Observers peace keeping force in the Sinai Desert.

In May 1984, Training Flight was re-equipped with AS.350B Squirrel helicopters to replace the UH-1B model Iroquois. The unit was continuously engaged on operations involving support of the Army, the training of helicopter pilots and of maintenance personnel. Apart from these tasks, the unit actively assisted in national emergencies such as flood and bushfire relief, medical evacuations, searches and other operations in support of government departments. It was also active in flood relief operations in areas such as Shepparton, Walgett, Gunnedah, Narrabri and Broken Hill.

The Squadron was disbanded on 9 December 1989, at Fairbairn and its 24 aircraft handed over to the Australian Defence Force Helicopter School.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

21 April 1936

—Flight Lieutenant L.V. Lachal

27 May 1936

—Squadron Leader C.B. Wincott (RAF)

21 May 1938	—Flight Lieutenant D.A. Connelly
7 April 1941	—Squadron Leader A.D. Charlton
9 March 1942	—Flight Lieutenant J.R. Perrin
27 May 1942	—Wing Commander A.D. Charlton
3 December 1942	—Squadron Leader G.J. Quinan
15 March 1943	—Flight Lieutenant C.W. Munro
21 September 1943	—Squadron Leader A.E. Cook
2 August 1944	—Wing Commander C.J. Sharpe
1 February 1945	—Squadron Leader B.M.H. Palmer
31 August 1945	—Squadron Leader A.W. Clare
27 November 1945	—Flight Lieutenant J.D. Hearn
4 May 1964	—Squadron Leader R.H. Martin
15 January 1965	—Squadron Leader L.O. Hindley
12 April 1966	—Wing Commander R.S. Royston
18 December 1967	—Wing Commander J.A. Paule
26 April 1968	—Wing Commander R.W. Hibben
24 July 1969	—Wing Commander J.A. Paule
8 July 1970	—Wing Commander R.M. Robinson
12 January 1971	—Wing Commander B.F.S. Nicolls
8 January 1973	—Wing Commander R.A. MacIntosh
20 July 1974	—Wing Commander H.R. Thomas
9 October 1976	—Wing Commander C.P. Ring
18 May 1979	—Wing Commander J.H. Dunn
April 1982	—Wing Commander W.N. Robertson
15 January 1985	—Wing Commander M.J. Haxell
10 August 1987	—Wing Commander G.R. Farrell

# 26 SQUADRON

*Enterprise*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 July 1981     | —formed at Williamtown, NSW                           |
| 22 July 1981    | —Squadron to be known as 'City of Newcastle' Squadron |
| 6 July 1982     | —moved to permanent facilities at Williamtown         |
| 2 February 1984 | —Fighter Squadron Museum opened                       |
| November 1994   | —based at Williamtown, NSW                            |

## NARRATIVE

26 (Auxiliary) Squadron was raised at RAAF Base Williamtown, under the command of Wing Commander J.A. Treadwell, on 1 July 1981. Next day Squadron Leader V.J. O'Brien was called up from the Air Force Reserve to become the first RAAF Active Reserve member of the unit. On 22 July 1981 the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Alderman Joy Cummins, announced that the Squadron would be known as 'City of Newcastle' Squadron.

The Warrant Officer (Disciplinary) of 481 Squadron, Warrant Officer Bruce Warwick, commenced the first recruit training course for 11 direct entry recruits during November 1981.

Squadron Leader J.B. Caldwell assumed command of 26 Squadron on 15 January 1982, and the unit moved in to permanent quarters at the corner of Frost Street and Eaton Road on 6 July. The first flying member to transfer from the General Reserve to the Active Reserve was Flight Lieutenant R.A. Slater, who arrived on 19 July. Flight Lieutenant Slater's

position was unique, as noted in the Unit History Record on 12 January 1982: Slater was the 'only intrepid Active Reserve aviator' currently flying RAAF aircraft.

A main role of 26 Squadron is to supply relief manpower to the active squadrons during exercises and other periods. On 6 September 1982 Squadron Leader O'Brien commenced duty with 77 Squadron as the Senior Engineering Officer during Exercise 'Westward Reward' at Learmonth, Western Australia. During the same period, Aircraftwoman McCarthy-Blanch was also attached to the same Squadron. During May 1983, six members of 26 Squadron supported Exercise 'Pitch Black' as operations officers, photographic interpreters and chefs, and the Squadron personnel have regularly trained with 2 Operational Conversion Unit, 77 Squadron and as far afield as Butterworth, Malaysia, with 3 Squadron. For example, in the period 20 November–2 December 1983, Flight Lieutenant Slater flew a Winjeel to Townsville for Forward Air Control duties with 2 Operational Conversion Unit. Annual exercises have their complement of 26 Squadron members making a contribution, whether as pilots, intelligence officers, clerks or suppliers with formations and units such as 81 Wing (at Tindal and Darwin), 1 Control and Reporting Unit or Air Movements Section at Darwin.

On 2 February 1984 the Fighter Squadron Museum was opened at Williamstown, after much work was undertaken by Squadron members. The Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader J.S. Caldwell, was appointed Officer-in-Charge of the Museum and the curator's appointment was filled by Squadron Leader D.A. Davis, MBE. He was assisted by Warrant Officers Keith Smith and Doug Norton and Flight Sergeant Gordon Harrell. The museum is a tangible means of retaining the traditions and equipment of the RAAF fighter arm.

The Squadron has proved its efficiency by winning the RAAF Association Trophy for the most efficient Active Reserve Squadron in 1983, 1984 and 1986. To maintain the standards set, on-the-job training is organised and small arms, fire fighting and first aid programs are conducted during training weekends at the base.

Members of the unit come from various backgrounds and civilian occupations, and participate in many ceremonial functions in the district such as Anzac Day marches.

On 18 August 1992, Squadron Leader Sue E. Graham assumed command of 26 Squadron—the first female commanding officer at Williamstown. The strength of the unit at this stage was 31 officers and



*Captain A.H. Cobby, highest scorer of the AFC, at Leighterton, UK*



*The Bristol Bulldog, standard fighter aircraft of the 1930s*



*Members of 3 Squadron in the Middle East, 1941.  
L-R: Squadron Leader P. Jefferies, Flight Lieutenants J. Perrin and A. Rawlinson,  
Flying Officers P. Turnbull and E. Jackson AWM 8198*



*Squadron Leader R.H.M. Gibbes (right) records his impressions after scoring  
3 Squadron's 200th victory CM 3773*



*Flight Lieutenant Garry Blumer of 450 Squadron—The Desert Harassers*



*Leading Aircraftman N. De la Motte and Flight Lieutenant K.N. McRae of 3 Squadron at Fano, Italy, January 1945*



*Squadron Leader Reginald Stevens of 3 Squadron photographed in Sicily, August 1943*



*L-R: Flying Officer I.G. Pursey, Warrant Officer J.B. Taylor, Flying Officer B. Burton and Flight Lieutenant A.F. Lane of 3 Squadron, Cervia, Italy, April 1945*



*450 Squadron ground crew supervise the disarming of an Italian Macchi C.200 fighter*



*Squadron Leader P.M. Nash, Commanding Officer 3 Squadron, and engineering officer Flight Lieutenant K.N. McRae, Italy, December 1944*



*450 Squadron Kittyhawk  
maintenance, Cervia, Italy, April 1945*



*Warrant Officer J. Taylor, 3 Squadron,  
examines a German 37mm shell which  
struck his aircraft but failed to explode*



*Corporals Stokes and Richards,  
armourers of 456 Squadron, examine  
20mm ammunition CH 4635*



*456 Squadron Mosquito crew, W. Kellett and F. Stevens, at Colerne, UK, June 1944*



*464 Squadron Commanding Officer, Wing Commander H.J. Meakin RAF, (second from left) and ground crew, December 1943*



*'B' Flight 456 Squadron, 23 September 1943*



*456 Squadron Beaufighter maintenance*

91 other ranks, 35 of whom were female. 26 Squadron is fulfilling an important role at Williamtown and providing a platform for expansion of the Air Force should the need arise.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 July 1981	—Wing Commander J.A. Treadwell
15 January 1982	—Squadron Leader J.B. Caldwell
13 January 1987	—Squadron Leader G.P. Rich
12 January 1988	—Squadron Leader M.J. Rowland
24 April 1989	—Squadron Leader M.M.J. Buick
10 January 1991	—Squadron Leader B. Vitnell
18 August 1992	—Squadron Leader S.E. Graham
10 January 1994	—Squadron Leader G.E. Devine

# 30 SQUADRON

*Strike Swiftly*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 9 March 1942     | —30 Squadron formed at Richmond, NSW                                  |
| 15 August 1946   | —Squadron disbanded at Deniliquin, NSW                                |
| 8 March 1948     | —30 Target Towing Squadron formed at Richmond                         |
| 21 March 1956    | —Squadron disbanded   |
| 11 January 1961  | —30 Surface-to-Air Guided Weapons Squadron formed at Williamtown, NSW |
| 20 October 1961  | —re-named 30 Surface-to-Air Missile Squadron                          |
| 30 November 1968 | —Squadron disbanded   |

## NARRATIVE

30 Squadron, the original Australian Beaufighter squadron, was formed at Richmond, New South Wales, on 9 March 1942, as a long range fighter unit under the command of Wing Commander B.R. Walker.

The Squadron staged at Bohle River, Townsville on its way north. It was from this base that the Squadron opened its operational record, with three of its aircraft being detailed to operate with torpedo carrying Beauforts of 100 Squadron and three Hudsons of 6 Squadron in an attack on a Japanese cruiser and destroyer. One aircraft crashed on take-off but the remaining two completed their mission.

On 12 September 1942, 30 Squadron arrived in New Guinea, bringing with it 23 Beaufighters, which later became known as 'Whispering Death'

by the Japanese. The Squadron arrived just in time to throw the weight of its armament into the stemming of the advancing Japanese thrust.

The unit title was changed to that of an Attack Squadron and on 17 September 1942, 12 Beaufighters were ordered to attack a concentration of Japanese barges at Sanananda Point and Buna Beach, terminal of the supply route of the Japanese in the Owen Stanley Ranges. This mission proved to be one of the most outstanding successes scored by the Squadron. Not expecting this type of aircraft, the enemy had taken no camouflage precautions, and the Australian pilots found the barges grouped together, offering a magnificent target. Three barges were left burning fiercely, four or five more were soon to be smoking and it was estimated that 50 per cent of the concentration was damaged. A large fire with many explosions resulted from the attack and thick volumes of black smoke were observable many miles away.

The Squadron sustained its first casualty in action on 23 September 1942 when seven Beaufighters briefed to attack enemy aircraft believed to have recently landed at Buna strip, found no trace of the aircraft and concentrated on attacking anti-aircraft installations. During the attack, aircraft A19-1 was shot down and the crew reported as missing.

On the same date six other Beaufighters were carrying out a patrol from Paiawa coastwise to Sanananda. These aircraft located and strafed two whalers at Waytutu Point, two barges at Sanananda and three at Buna; a dump and a house were raised by fire; two large houses at Zaribiria were strafed and Seputa village was also fired upon. During the remainder of September 1942, further successful attacks were made on enemy supply and communication lines between Buna and Kokoda, and a series of regular sweeps commenced, Salamaua to Buna. These sweeps were to become so regular that they became known in the Squadron as the 'Milk Run'.

As the Australian offensive over the Owen Stanleys gathered momentum during October, so did air operations against enemy troops, supply concentrations, lines of communication and installations in the Buna-Kokoda area, with extensions of the attack to the Huon Gulf bases of Lae and Salamaua. The aircraft of the Squadron attacked small boats at Salamaua and buildings at Kela Point and Isthmus on 1 October 1942. Beaufighter commitments during the month included a series of strafing attacks on buildings and villages on Goodenough Island. For a period, a detached flight of the Squadron operated from

Gurney strip at Milne Bay and completed a number of reconnaissances of the Louisiade Archipelago and Misima.

The outstanding work of 30 Squadron during the comparatively short time of its existence is evidenced by the fact that seven members of the Squadron were subsequently decorated for achievements performed during this period—Wing Commander Walker was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO); and Squadron Leader Little, Flight Lieutenant Uren, Flying Officers Sanford, Spooner and Maguire, and Pilot Officer Campbell were all awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

Beaufighter A19-68, with a crew of Sergeants T. Butterfield and H. Wilson, became the Squadron's second operational casualty on 12 October 1942, when it struck a hill near Kokoda and burst into flames. It had been flying under fighter cover from the 35th Pursuit Group during a morning strafing operation along the Kokoda–Buna Trail.

Bad flying weather intervened to cancel a number of missions during October but, when possible, regular sweeps and reconnaissances continued and on 27 October 1942, six aircraft with fighter cover were detailed to attack small boats and supply dumps at Lae. The Beaufighters were met with intense anti-aircraft fire. The aircraft penetrated the defences and three barges moored near the jetty at Voco Point were strafed and left burning. Stores of petrol and a round house were strafed and set on fire. A large explosion followed, and flames were visible 40 miles distant.

The aircraft of the Squadron were airborne almost every day during November, flying a series of strafing missions to harass the retreating Japanese. Attacks were made on anti-aircraft positions in the Buna area and on coastal barge traffic. The Beaufighters interspersed this program with sorties as a low flying diversionary force for bombers, and also featured in a series of strikes against enemy shipping as it attempted to reinforce and supply its beleaguered troops. On 4 November 1942, six Beaufighters with the aid of fighter cover were detailed to attack landing barges, stores and personnel near a strip at Salamaua. This target was not sighted so buildings and installations at Salamaua and Sanananda were attacked, moderate anti-aircraft fire was encountered and A19-55 was holed. On 8 November, three Beaufighters carried out an armed reconnaissance of the Wairopi–Buna track, paying particular attention to targets between Andemba and Popondetta.

On 16 November 1942, while intensive Allied bombing was taking place in the Buna, Sopotia and Gona areas, Beaufighters in pairs were maintaining a continuous armed reconnaissance seeking out pockets of enemy troops who, after withdrawing from Gorari area, were attempting to escape along the west bank of the Kumusi. Canoes, rafts and huts were strafed while villages and bush tracks were raked with gunfire. Probably the most successful and spectacular of the Beaufighters' November exploits were the series of devastating raids made on grounded aircraft and aerodrome installations at Lae. These raids were ushered in during the morning of 17 November 1942, when six Beaufighters with fighter cover made a surprise attack. The aircraft were actually making their run on the target when the air raid signal—three shots from the terrace—was observed and activity was noticed on the strip. About a dozen of the enemy were running from each of two aircraft—half of these were probably killed; two 'Sallys' parked together near the control tower and two 'Zekes' nearby were strafed; a third 'Zeke' parked under the wing of an unserviceable bomber was also hit with gunfire. Another 'Zeke', which had apparently attempted to take off, was seen to be standing on its nose at the south-east end of the runway; and at the north-west end of the field, one 'Sally' and one 'Zeke' were seen to be burning furiously. The departing Beaufighters thoroughly strafed the hut area of the strip.

Lae was again attacked by four Beaufighters of 30 Squadron, in co-ordination with A-20s, at last light on 28 November 1942. Five fighters in pens in the east corner of the strip received a severe pounding and the western edge of the strip was combed with machine gun fire. Fighters were also noticed dispersed on both sides of the strip, but after bombs were dropped the area was obscured and damage could not be estimated. On 2 December 1942, six Beaufighters attacked enemy barges and small craft unloading in the Buna area. Two barges, each containing 20 Japanese, were sunk some miles off Gona and hits were also scored on barges at Sanananda. In conjunction with five Bostons of 22 Squadron, an attack was made on Sanananda Point on the 4th.

1943 opened with a busy itinerary for the Beaufighters. Troop concentrations, grounded aircraft, barges, small shipping, enemy supplies and dumps, and landing parties were being the chief targets for 30 Squadron. Included in their operations were several strafing raids against Lae, Salamaua, Voco Point and Mubo village. Numerous offensive sweeps were also made in an endeavour to locate and attack any movement of the enemy along the coast. Considerable damage was

inflicted by the Squadron on the grounded enemy aircraft and ammunition dumps at Lae and on landing barges around this area.

During the remainder of January, 30 Squadron and its Beaufighters were completely absorbed in attacking the Japanese wherever and whenever the occasion arose, carrying out reconnaissances, strafing attacks and operations in co-ordination with its Allied squadrons. The number of Squadron operations for the month of January was 29, completed in 448 flying hours. The next three months were occupied mainly in routine flights and occasional raids—a well earned respite from the rigours of the previous month. On 13 May 1943, enemy aircraft raided the Moresby area but did not drop any bombs on the Wards Airfield area.

On 3 March 1944, 30 Squadron was placed under command of 71 Wing RAAF Goodenough and was again moved during June 1944 to Tadjj where it had the unfortunate experience of losing its Commanding Officer. Wing Commander P. Gibson was killed instantly when Beaufighter A19-115 crashed while taking off on a test flight at Tadjj. Fourteen Beaufighter aircraft departed from Tadjj for Noemfoor on 4 August 1944. In addition to the crews, each Beaufighter carried two passengers. The flight was completed without casualty, but one Beaufighter was left at Tadjj with two maintenance crew. A rear party comprising one officer and 22 airmen was left to demolish camp buildings and await the arrival of a ship to complete the Squadron move to Noemfoor. The remainder of the Squadron moved to Morotai on 2 March 1945.

On 3 May 1945, the Squadron was alerted to embark 108 personnel comprising nine officers and 99 other ranks on board the *Manoora* and the *Westralia* for transportation to Tarakan, where they disembarked on 7 May 1945 after an uneventful voyage. The large proportion of personnel still left at Morotai were engaged in the demolition of the old camp site and these personnel, together with the Squadron equipment, arrived at Tarakan by Landing Ship Tank convoy on 16 May 1945.

On 2 December 1945, the Squadron nucleus under the command of Flight Lieutenant R. Bruce departed Tarakan on HMS *Glory* with essential Squadron records, arriving at Sydney on 12 December 1945. The Squadron was held in nucleus at Deniliquin pending disbandment, and ceased to function on 15 August 1946.

30 On 8 March 1948, at Richmond, New South Wales 30 (Target Towing) Squadron came into being, under the command of Squadron Leader

C. Greenwood. Its duties comprised a variety of technical and training exercises, many of these being carried out as co-operation exercises with the Army and Navy Commands. At various times a flying program was instigated to satisfy the requirements of some particular aspect of work nominated by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. Mercy flights, search flights and parachute dropping flights were interspersed with aerial displays and recruiting drive flights.

During September 1952 the Squadron transferred to RAAF Base Canberra from where it operated until 15 April 1954, when it again moved back to Richmond. Here, on 1 February 1956, 30 (TT) Squadron ceased normal functioning and was disbanded on 21 March 1956.

On 11 January 1961, 30 Squadron was reformed at Williamstown as a Surface-to-Air Guided Weapons Squadron under the command of Wing Commander E. Tonkin, and equipped with Bloodhound Missiles. On 20 October 1961 the Squadron was re-named 30 Surface-to-Air Missile Squadron and on 30 January 1962 the Bloodhound Mk 1 System was taken over by the RAAF.

The Squadron formed an integral part of the Sydney/Newcastle/Wollongong Air Defence System and, in co-operation with fighter aircraft of 81 Wing, helped to defend the area from simulated bombing attacks by Canberra aircraft of 82 Wing.

The Bloodhound was a semi-active homing missile, guided by a reflection from the target of a radar beam projected towards the target from a source on the ground. Early warning on the enemy was supplied initially from 1 Control and Reporting Unit, Brookvale, New South Wales, and verified by the Squadron's own tactical radar. The Bloodhound could engage a supersonic high flying target well before it reached the line of bomb release.

On 11 June 1965 the Minister for Defence, Senator Shane Paltridge, announced that a detachment of 30 Squadron would be stationed in Darwin in order to strengthen northern defences. Preparation of the Darwin site began on 12 June 1965 and Detachment 'A' was deployed to Darwin until disbanded on 16 September 1968. 30 Squadron was disbanded on 30 November 1968.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

August 1942	—Wing Commander B.R. Walker
13 June 1943	—Wing Commander C.P. Glasscock

7 October 1943	—Wing Commander J.G. Emerton
22 January 1944	—Wing Commander P.L.B. Gibson
April 1944	—Squadron Leader F.R. Macquire
September 1944	—Squadron Leader J.T. Sanford
9 October 1944	—Wing Commander C.H.C. Thompson
3 July 1945	—Squadron Leader G.D. Wentworth
8 March 1948	—Squadron Leader C.A. Greenwood
January 1949	—Flight Lieutenant S.W. Dallywater
June 1949	—Flight Lieutenant W. Addison
January 1950	—Flight Lieutenant F.J. Inger
February 1951	—Squadron Leader R.J. Rankin
28 February 1952	—Wing Commander J.E.S. Dennet
July 1953	—Flight Lieutenant B. Parker
July 1954	—Flight Lieutenant F.P. O'Leary
11 January 1961	—Wing Commander E.W. Tonkin
18 January 1964	—Wing Commander R.H. Glassop
September 1967	—Squadron Leader B.T. Sweeney

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# 31 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

14 August 1942	—formed at RAAF Wagga Wagga, NSW
12 November 1942	—moved to Coomalie Creek, NT
27 November 1944	—moved to Noemfoor Island
7 December 1944	—moved to Morotai Island
October 1945	—moved to Deniliquin, NSW
12 March 1946	—moved to Williamtown, NSW
6 July 1946	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

31 Squadron was formed at RAAF base, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales on 14 August 1942, equipped with Bristol Beaufighter aircraft, the first of which was received on 23 August 1942.

In October 1942, the Squadron moved to Batchelor in the Northern Territory, the aircraft flying via Alice Springs. A period of intense training followed and familiarisation flights were carried out before moving to its operational base at Coomalie Creek on 12 November 1942.

Operations commenced on 17 November 1942, with a raid by six aircraft on Moabisse and Bobonaro in Timor. On this mission Squadron Leader D. Riding and Warrant Officer Clark were lost, crashing into the sea whilst evading an enemy aircraft.

A surprise attack against a large enemy base at Penfoei in the early hours of 2 December 1942 was made by staging through Drysdale River strip. The attack was a success, with three fighters and 15 bombers destroyed. On one attack, Sergeant E. Barnett and Sergeant P. Lennon found themselves being attacked head on by a 'Nate'. Sergeant Barnett returned fire and the aircraft was seen to crash into the sea.

By the end of December 1942, four Beaufighters had been lost in action. On 29 December A19-71, with Wilkins and Byrne as crew, was damaged by enemy anti-aircraft fire. Wilkins flew the aircraft to Bathurst Island and the airmen baled out. Wilkins landed in a swamp, but Byrne, who could not swim, landed in the sea about 1 kilometre off the coast and was rescued by Corporal Woodnutt of the island radar station. Woodnutt was awarded the British Empire Medal for his action. On the same mission, Gabb and Webb, in A19-20, landed their aircraft in the sea

off the Timor coast and spent several days dodging Japanese troops and local natives until contacted by the Army. They were later evacuated by HMAS *Arunta*.

On 30 January 1943, the Squadron attacked Penfoei. During the action a large ammunition dump exploded and showered the attacking aircraft with debris, damaging A19-66, crewed by Barnett and Lennon. On his second run over the target, Barnett damaged another aircraft, but failed to see a wireless aerial which embedded itself in the leading edge of the wing, bringing a Japanese flag with it. However, the flag dropped off a short distance from base.

Operations were shared with 2, 13 and 18 (NEI) Squadron Beauforts and Mitchells. Out of 57 sorties flown during February 1943, 45 were devoted to monotonous flying over convoys and RAN vessels and searches for enemy shipping.

Early in March, a lone enemy fighter strafed Coomalie strip, destroying A19-31, which was being refuelled. The Squadron was very active striking Fuiloro, Penfoei, Dobo, Lautem and Taberfane, flying at times through atrocious weather. The weather in March and April deteriorated and only 27 and 45 sorties respectively were flown.

On 2 May 1943 a large force of enemy aircraft attacked Darwin and the Beaufighters were dispatched to intercept the aircraft on their return to Penfoei, resulting in four enemy aircraft being damaged.

Another attack on Taberfane under adverse weather conditions caused two of the four aircraft to abort the mission, leaving the remaining two to carry out the attack. On returning to Millingimbi to refuel, the two were attacked by enemy aircraft. A19-72 was destroyed and A19-16 damaged after landing.

Strikes against Langgoer, Penfoei, Taberfane and Selaroe continued, with 12 enemy aircraft being destroyed and several damaged, but not without losses. The Squadron lost three crews on a raid against Penfoei and several aircraft were damaged on a strike against Taberfane.

Due to observed activity on Selaroe, the Beaufighters escorted 12 Squadron Vultee Vengeance dive bombers in an attack on 18 June 1943. After the Vultees had completed their attack the Beaufighters strafed the target and surrounding areas. The Beaufighters again visited Selaroe on 24 June, destroying two aircraft.

Taberfane, with its ever-present floatplanes, was the target for August. During a number of missions against this target, 10 enemy aircraft were destroyed in the air and one at its mooring. Two of the

Beaufighters collided in mid-air whilst attacking the same aircraft and another failed to return.

On 13 September 1943, Wing Commander Read handed over command of the Squadron to Wing Commander F.W.B. Mann. During September, the Squadron carried out harassing attacks against Selaroe, Tanimbar Islands and Taberfane. In a raid against the latter target one 'Pete' was destroyed, but A19-70, crewed by Mann and Harber, was damaged by anti-aircraft fire and subsequently force-landed in a swamp south-west of Millingimbi.

During the month the aircraft were modified in the field to carry two bombs fitted to bomb racks under the fuselage.

During October, six aircraft went on reconnaissance to Selaroe with orders to bomb the newly constructed strip. During the attack Squadron Leader Gordon shot down two enemy aircraft and McCord also shot down one enemy aircraft. On the return flight, Gordon and Jordan were forced to belly-land at Livingstone and Garnham and Delaney landed in a minefield at Bagot Road, much to the consternation of the Army, whose mines did not explode.

An attack on the Aroe Islands on 19 October found traffic moving down the Serwatoe River. This was strafed but some accurate rifle fire from a village caused the loss of Flying Officer Cridland and Pilot Officer de Pierre.

In December 1943 eight Beaufighters attacked Japanese shipping off the Timor coast, destroying six schooners and an 80-foot barge. A convoy of two 4000 to 5000-ton vessels escorted by a destroyer and carrying troops and equipment was sighted and reported to base, then strafed. The next day the convoy was found in Lautem Harbour, with one of the transports burning fiercely after being attacked by 18 (NEI) Squadron the night before. The Beaufighters attacked the remaining vessel and left it sinking and on fire.

Early in January 1944 operations continued against shipping in Tenau Harbour, Timor, resulting in the sinking of a 1200-ton transport and another damaged. Squadron Leader Gordon shot down a 'Betty' and strafed and destroyed a barge in Tenau Strait.

The Kai, Aroe and Tanimbar groups felt the brunt of 31's operations in February, as did many targets in Timor. On 19 February, six Mitchells and eight Beaufighters were directed to attack the Mina River bridge, an important bridge connecting Koepang with the interior. On 27 February,

Squadron Leader R. Gordon, DFC, and Flight Sergeant K. Smith were killed when test flying A19-165.

On 9 March, 14 Beaufighters and nine C-47 transports carrying 124 personnel and equipment departed for 'Potshot' (now Learmonth) to take part in the defence of the Western Australian coast. A Japanese task force was claimed to be in the Indian Ocean and it was rumoured that an attack on Australia was imminent. The Squadron returned to Coomalie on 23 March 1944.

On 6 April, during a search for shipping off Koepang, a camouflaged oil barge was found and destroyed in Pelican Bay, Saman Island. A19-156, crewed by Flying Officer D. Strachan and Flight Sergeant Brassil was hit in the starboard engine while pulling away from the target, and was forced to land on Cartier Island, 60 nautical miles south of Koepang. The crew were rescued by a Catalina of 43 Squadron.

On 18 April, two Beaufighters escorted 12 Spitfires of 54 Squadron in an attack on Babar Island installations. Considerable damage was done and all aircraft returned safely.

It was suspected that the enemy was monitoring the wireless frequencies used by the Squadron and on 1 July, after a raid on Babar Island, a voice was heard to say 'Come back here Wentworth, you bastard', to the astonishment of the crews on the operation. The Squadron used pilots' names instead of Squadron call signs, so it was suspected that an enemy radio operator had broken into the Squadron wireless communications.

On 16 July, Boyd and Anderson led a formation against Maumere on the island of Flores, 1046 kilometres from Broome, at extreme Beaufighter range. A number of enemy aircraft were damaged on the ground. Boyd shot down a 'Nick', Klugg damaged another and damage was done to a 1600-ton vessel. When Boyd landed at Truscott after 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours flying, one engine stopped whilst taxiing.

During August, rocket projectile equipment arrived at Coomalie, and the first mission using rockets was flown on the 29th, but no suitable targets were found and the rockets were jettisoned into the sea.

Two aircraft were lost returning to base on 24 August, the crews baling out. One of the navigators survived and walked back to base, but the others were posted missing. Smoke from grass fires which raged through the Northern Territory during September had obscured any land marks, and with wireless problems and low fuel, time was wasted trying to pinpoint their position.

On 18 October, two aircraft attacked and destroyed two 'Dinahs' on Lautem strip, despite heavy anti-aircraft fire, and on the 23rd, six aircraft attacked a column of motor transport near Cape Wetoh and destroyed it totally. Rocket projectile training was carried out, but one aircraft crashed on the range, killing the crew.

A move to Noemfoor being imminent, the first two weeks of November were non-operational. However, raids were carried out against targets in Timor and the Tinamba Islands during the remainder of the month.

The first operations against specific targets using rocket projectiles against the enemy were carried out against Japanese-occupied buildings at Hotelier on 16 November and Baucau on the 21st. Both targets were demolished. This was the last operation in the North Western Area carried out by 31 Squadron. On the 26th, 21 Beaufighters departed Coomalie Creek for Noemfoor Island via Merauke. They only stayed seven days and did two operations, both being escort missions to Catalina aircraft on air-sea rescue work.

On 7 December the Squadron moved to Morotai and flew its first operation on 9 December 1944 against troop concentrations and stores and the jetty at Jolo Island. Targets in the Halmaheras and Celebes attracted attention in January 1945. Eleven 31 Squadron Beaufighters and seven from 30 Squadron attacked Sidate in the Celebes and, on the next day, 21 Beaufighters with Mitchells and Lightnings of the USAAF attacked Mendano in the morning and afternoon. Napalm and general purpose bombs were used.

On 1 February, the Squadron attacked Tomohon in the Celebes. Anti-aircraft fire was intense and two crews were lost on the operation. Over Tondano, an aircraft piloted by Pilot Officer Souness was damaged by anti-aircraft fire and the crew were forced to ditch, both members being rescued by a Catalina. The Squadron also engaged in a new role, spotting during a bombardment by three RAN ships in the vicinity of Galela Bay.

On 11 February, 28 Beaufighters and 59 Kittyhawks dropped 26 tonnes of explosives on Tondano. The Beaufighters were led by Squadron Leader J.C. Black, and it was the first time that the three Beaufighter squadrons had operated together.

On 31 March one aircraft ditched in Haroeke Strait. Three Beaufighters covered the crew in the dinghy, who were later rescued by a Catalina, despite intense opposition from both sides of the strait.

The most important operation in April 1945 was a low level photographic reconnaissance of the Tarakan waterfront by a B-25 Mitchell, escorted by four Beaufighters operating through Zamboanga on Mindanao. The Beaufighters silenced the anti-aircraft opposition.

On 4 May a contingent of personnel from 31 Squadron left Morotai by ship for Tarakan. Another contingent left on the 22nd for Tawitawi in the Sulu Sea to participate in the operation against Labuan. Prior to the actual landings, operations were directed against targets in the Brunei area. On invasion day, two aircraft collided on take-off, killing three crew members.

On 8 June, six Beaufighters were scrambled to perform Army support work at Miri. On the 15th a squadron of Spitfires was escorted from Tarakan to Balikpapan and on the 30th a detachment of Beaufighters moved to Labuan and ranged south to Kuching searching for barges and targets of opportunity.

The Squadron's last operation was carried out on 1 August, when two Beaufighters carried out a rocket attack on a wireless station at Kuching.

When hostilities ceased on 15 August 1945, the Squadron had flown 2660 offensive sorties and claimed 20 enemy aircraft destroyed, two probably destroyed and 14 damaged in the air; 54 aircraft destroyed and 32 damaged on the ground; with nine ships destroyed and four damaged.

Towards the end of 1945, 31 Squadron moved by sea and air to the mainland of Australia, first being based at Deniliquin, and was disbanded on 6 July 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 September 1942	—Squadron Leader C.F. Read
13 September 1943	—Wing Commander F.W.B. Mann
May 1944	—Squadron Leader G.D. Wentworth
September 1944	—Squadron Leader J.A.P. Boyd
26 December 1944	—Squadron Leader J.C. Black

# 60 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 January 1942  | —formed at Wagga Wagga, NSW |
| 2 February 1942 | —moved to Cootamundra, NSW  |
| 3 April 1942    | —Squadron disbanded         |

## NARRATIVE

60 Squadron was formed at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales on 1 January 1942, at 2 Service Flying Training School. The Squadron had an establishment of 179 personnel, under the command of Squadron Leader B.R. Pelly, and comprised three flights of Wirraway aircraft. Each aircraft was armed with two forward firing Vickers Mk V machine guns and one Lewis or Gas Operated Vickers gun in the rear cockpit, and was capable of carrying four 250-lb or two 500-lb bombs.

The Squadron commenced training on 8 January 1942. Training consisted of flight formation, high dive bombing and air-to-ground gunnery in addition to ground lectures on armament and navigation.

After exercising in station ground defence with 61 Squadron and 1 Air Observers School on 1 February, the Squadron moved to Cootamundra during the following day. From Cootamundra, the Squadron exercised with the Wagga Wagga based 61 Squadron during the period 3-5 February 1942.

Both squadrons were under the operational command of the Station Operations Room. Ground defence was organised during the exercise, and air raid precautions observed, with air raid alarms and air raids occurring during both day and night. The Squadron flew approximately 300 hours without mishap, and the flying was 'generally excellent and tactics displayed by both squadrons up to a high standard'.

No flying training took place between 6 February and 3 April, although normal ground training continued. The Squadron was disbanded on 3 April 1942 and the Squadron equipment transferred to Uranquinty, with the personnel being posted to that base or to Deniliquin.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

- |                |                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 January 1942 | —Squadron Leader B.R. Pelly |
|----------------|-----------------------------|

# 75 SQUADRON

*Seek and Strike*



## CHRONOLOGY

4 March 1942	—formed at Townsville, Qld
21 March—	
3 May 1942	—sole fighter defence of Port Moresby
25 August—	
3 September 1942	—Battle of Milne Bay
14 April 1943	—last major air-to-air combat
4 March 1944	—last Squadron air-to-air claim
21 April 1944	—landed at Aitape
25 May 1944	—moved to Hollandia
1 May 1945	—Tarakan landing
28 March 1948	—unit disbanded at Williamtown, NSW
24 January 1949	—unit re-raised at Williamtown
21 June 1951	—embarked for Malta
4 January 1955	—returned from Malta
18 May 1967	—deployment to Butterworth, Malaysia
12 August 1983	—deployment to Darwin, NT
November 1994	—based at Tindal, NT

## NARRATIVE

75 Squadron was formed at Townsville on 4 March 1942, under the command of Squadron Leader P. Jeffery.

Training commenced on 14 August and was rudimentary, but the situation at Port Moresby made it imperative that the Squadron be deployed there as soon as practicable. On 21 March 1942, the first four

aircraft landed at the Seven Mile Strip, Port Moresby. Flying Officer Barry Cox and Flight Lieutenant John Piper shot a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft during the afternoon. Two hours after their success, Squadron Leader J.F. Jackson, the newly appointed Commanding Officer, led the remainder of the Squadron to the Seven Mile.

At dawn on the following morning, a surprise attack was made on the Japanese forces at Lae. Six Kittyhawks strafed the airstrip. Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull and Sergeant John Pettett, a section of the top cover, were credited with the destruction of two Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters. Flying Officer Wilbur Wackett and Flight Lieutenant Anderson were shot down. Wackett ditched at sea, swam to shore, and arrived back at Port Moresby after an epic escape over the Owen Stanley Ranges. Anderson was seen to crash some miles from the Lae airstrip.

The Japanese reacted on the following day, setting the tone for the 44 days deployment of the Squadron to Seven Mile. At the end of this period, the Australians had destroyed over 60 enemy aircraft in air-to-air combat and strafing attacks, for the loss of 12 pilots and 24 aircraft.

The Squadron returned to Townsville before moving to Kingaroy and Lowood to complete re-equipment and recuperation. The aircrew strength was supplemented by pilots who had seen service with Spitfire squadrons over Europe. 75 Squadron flew to Gurney Field, Milne Bay, where it joined 76 Squadron on 21 July 1942. Milne Bay was being developed to protect the left flank of Port Moresby, and to enable the Allies to project air power over the north coast of New Guinea and the Louisiade Islands.

On 8 August, the Japanese made their first air raid on the area, and were met by the combined forces of the two squadrons.

A Japanese force was sighted heading for Milne Bay on the evening of 24 August. On the same day, the squadrons fought Japanese raiders, claiming three enemy aircraft for the loss of three pilots. At dusk, the Kittyhawks combined with a lone Hudson based at the bay to attempt to prevent the Japanese approach to the bay. The low cloud and rain made dive bombing attacks on the ships impossible, so low level bombing attacks were undertaken. One transport was hit, but the air strength available was unable to prevent the landing of Japanese troops in the early hours of the morning of the 25th.

From dawn on the 25th, the Kittyhawks of both 75 and 76 Squadrons strafed Japanese troops, barges and stores. On the night of the 28th an attack on the airfields was expected, so the aircraft were withdrawn to

Port Moresby overnight. The expected assault did not develop, and the squadrons returned to undertake close support of the ground troops. Lieutenant General S.F. Rowell (Commanding Officer, Papua New Guinea Force) noted in his report that the efforts of the fighter squadrons were 'the decisive factor' in the ultimate victory over the invading Japanese forces.

Victory at Milne Bay was complete by September 1942. 75 Squadron withdrew south to Horn Island in November before deploying to Cairns, where Squadron Leader Wilfred Arthur assumed command. Arthur led the unit back to Milne Bay in January 1943. The Squadron flew cover patrols over the bay and Goodenough Island, shooting down two Mitsubishi G4M 'Betty' bombers. In July, during its last large air-to-air combat operation of the War, the Squadron shot down five enemy aircraft.

The tide of war had changed, and the subsequent movement of 75 Squadron reflected this. The move to Goodenough Island was to protect the Allied expansion into the Louisiades, and to bring the fighters within range of the Japanese facilities at Rabaul and Gasmata, on New Britain. The Squadron, commanded by Squadron Leader Geoff Atherton, commenced a period of training, interspersed with dive bombing strikes on Gasmata.

Three months later the Squadron moved west to Nadzab, where it flew close escort missions for US Liberator and Mitchell strikes along the north coast of New Guinea, and tactical strikes in support of Army operations at Sattelburg, plus escorting Australian Vengeance dive bomber missions. It was during an escort mission that Squadron Leader C.J. Lindemen claimed the Squadron's last air-to-air victory of the War, when he damaged an 'Oscar' which attempted to intercept the Liberator formation that the Squadron was escorting. Other duties included defensive patrols along the Markham Valley to prevent enemy incursions on Army operations and the airfield complex in the Dobodura/Nadzab area.

Squadron Leader J.R. 'Congo' Kinnimont was the Commanding Officer when the Squadron moved to Cape Gloucester on New Britain. Here the Kittyhawks flew close support missions to assist ground troops and also anti-shipping and convoy protection patrols.

The ground crew of 75 Squadron were among the first to land at Aitape where they assisted, often under enemy sniper fire, in the rebuilding of the Tadjai airstrip, from which the Kittyhawks operated

during May 1944. The landing at Aitape was designed to give aerial protection for the landing at Hollandia and to isolate the Japanese forces operating in the Wewak area. The Squadron flew combat patrols over the Hollandia invasion force and also close support missions for Army operations in the area.

The Squadron was called forward to Hollandia in August, where it remained for two months. When United States forces landed at Biak, the Kittyhawks of 75 Squadron formed part of the covering force for the invasion. Operations from Hollandia were approximately four and a half hours long. When the landing forces consolidated on Biak, 75 Squadron flew to operate from the island, dive bombing Japanese soldiers ensconced in caves and bunkers and interdicting barge traffic attempting to reinforce the Biak garrison.

Flight Sergeant Mogg and his companion disappeared in bad weather whilst ferrying two Kittyhawks from Hollandia to Biak during the period that the ground crew were being transported to the island of Noemfoor, after that island's capture by United States forces. The Squadron deployed to Noemfoor, from where it undertook long range patrols seeking enemy barges and interdicting airstrips at Ceram and other sites in the Halmaheras.

Shortage of fuel and weather conditions proved a fatal combination. Flying Officer Andrews and his flight were forced to bale out of their aircraft in cloud. Andrews parachuted to safety, but broke his ankle on landing. After much privation, he finally found sustenance with natives, and was evacuated back to Noemfoor after being saved by a Catalina. Another accident occurred when a formation was undertaking a turn about. Flight Lieutenant Jacklin flew his Kittyhawk back to base with some six feet of his port wing torn off from the impact; two pilots also collided and were killed.

The Squadron returned to Biak for a matter of weeks before deploying to the newly captured island of Morotai. From Morotai it operated over the Halmahera Islands, attacking Japanese airstrips and anti-aircraft sites.

The 75 Squadron ground crew were part of the forward troops which landed at Tarakan in May 1945. It was intended that they prepare the airstrip to enable the Kittyhawks of the Squadron to fly in two days after the invasion, but the airfield was not serviceable until mid-July. The men were under fire from Japanese light artillery and snipers and defensive

positions were manned to prevent Japanese incursions into the transport lines and other base facilities.

For the pilots at Morotai, the interminable wait was bad for morale. Some flew only about 12 hours during the period prior to flying to Tarakan. This flight, lead by a *Beaufighter*, took over five hours and the fighters arrived at Tarakan with almost empty fuel tanks. The formation was split in bad weather and four were lost after running out of fuel.

From Tarakan, 75 Squadron operated in a interdictory role, bombing Japanese facilities near Sandakan and supporting the Australian landings at Balikpapan. Weather was again a factor which caused casualties. Flying Officer Gilbert was forced to parachute from his aircraft over enemy territory. An Australian commando patrol discovered his mutilated body in a native village. After the Armistice the Squadron undertook general flying and reconnaissance flights over prisoner of war camps.

The aircraft were flown back to Oakey in Queensland, while the ground crew returned to Australia aboard *HMS Glory* arriving in Sydney in December 1945.

An officer and three airmen were the Squadron members who maintained the unit at Deniliquin, before it moved to Schofields in 1946. During September, Mustang aircraft were allocated for the use of the Squadron, but training was curtailed by the grounding of the aircraft. Flight Lieutenant 'Bay' Adams undertook the Squadron's first operational flight when he flew to Canberra to take part in an air display during January 1947. The Squadron was disbanded in late 1948.

A Vampire flight was established at the Aircraft Research and Development Unit and three pilots, including Flight Lieutenant Ian Olenrenshaw, were given instruction on the new jet fighter. In September 1949, three of these aircraft were flown from Laverton to Williamstown, via Wagga and Schofields, in 100 minutes—a feat which gained some publicity for the unit. 75 Squadron was soon training with the new fighter, and finding new problems. Little was generally known of the effects of compressibility as the Vampire reached its critical mach number. At least two pilots lost their lives when their aircraft became uncontrollable due to these phenomena.

The Squadron remained at Williamstown until 1951, when its personnel, with those of 76 Squadron, deployed to Malta as an element of 78 Wing. This Wing flew aircraft supplied by the Royal Air Force from Hal Far and flew in many North Atlantic Treaty Organization exercises.

The highlights were the deployment of the Wing to the United Kingdom, where it participated in the Coronation Flypast and Review; and Exercise 'Coronet', where the Wing deployed to Wahn, Germany. In January 1955 the Wing returned to Australia, and 75 Squadron flew Meteor Mk 8 fighters from Williamstown.

The highlights of the Meteor era were deployments to Pearce in Western Australia on exercise. During one of these exercises, the Squadron flew over the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1956 Commonwealth Games. Another highlight—or lowlight—was the attempt to shoot down a pilotless Auster over Sydney. Delayed by the fact that the Squadron had stood down and that the runway at Williamstown was obstructed by an unserviceable Sabre, Squadron Leader Hollinsworth flew to Sydney to have the embarrassment of his guns jamming after only firing a few shots. A Navy Sea Fury finally disposed of the Auster.

Squadron Leader J.H. Flemming commanded the Squadron when the first official aerobatic team, the Meteorites, was formed.

After re-equipping with the Sabre, the unit held Air Defence exercises in Darwin, often in conjunction with RAF deployments from the Far East. Flights were made through Townsville or Alice Springs, depending on the prevailing weather conditions—the flight from Townsville to Darwin was at the limit of the range of the Sabre. These exercises were not without mishap. A Sabre was lost, due to excess 'G' forces, whilst conducting a low level intercept of a Canberra over Darwin Harbour.

75 Squadron operated Sabres for approximately 12 years, before being the first fighter squadron to re-equip with the Mirage fighter in 1965. The first deployment to Darwin saw the aircraft pitted against RAF Vulcan bombers, which were attacking at extreme altitude. Initially the serviceability rate of the new fighter was low, but it increased markedly as the Squadron gained experience. But this did not remain a constant and when the Squadron deployed to Butterworth in 1968, high serviceability rates were common.

'Fast Caravan' was the code name for the deployment of the Squadron to Butterworth, via Darwin and Djuanda. On arrival at Butterworth, the Squadron became the first supersonic fighter squadron in the Far East.

Operations at Butterworth were interesting and varied, with exercises against RAF, RN and US Navy forces, as well as those of the Singaporean and Malaysian Air Forces. A permanent presence was maintained at Tengah on Singapore Island, initially with the RAF, and later as the

guests of the RSAF. Another important series of exercises were 'Cope Thunder', in which a force deployed from Butterworth to Clark Field in the Philippines to exercise with the US forces based there.

In 1981 the Australian Government decided to withdraw a fighter squadron from Malaysia and to base it at Darwin, pending the completion of the base at Tindal, near Katherine, in the Northern Territory. The Squadron flew into Darwin in August 1983.

Until 1988, the Squadron operated from Darwin, with regular deployments to Singapore. It was the last fighter squadron in Australia to operate the Mirage.

Since 1988 the Squadron, part of 81 Wing under command of the Commander, Tactical Fighter Group, has been equipped with the F/A-18 Hornet and based at Tindal.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

4 March 1942	—Squadron Leader P. Jeffrey
19 March 1942	—Squadron Leader J.F. Jackson
29 May 1942	—Squadron Leader L.D. Jackson
2 January 1943	—Squadron Leader J.F. Meehan
22 January 1943	—Squadron Leader W.S. Arthur
12 June 1943	—Squadron Leader G.C. Atherton
23 November 1943	—Squadron Leader J.R. Kinninmont
10 June 1944	—Squadron Leader C.W. Lindeman
28 September 1944	—Squadron Leader R.C.McD. Kimpton
12 February 1945	—Squadron Leader C.G. Tolhurst
27 June 1945	—Squadron Leader A.E. Thomson
20 January 1947	—Squadron Leader D.R. Beattie
24 January 1949	—Flight Lieutenant C.D. Murphy
18 May 1950	—Squadron Leader F.R. Schaaf
10 May 1951	—Squadron Leader P.G. Ottewill (RAF)
2 June 1952	—Squadron Leader K.C. Andrews
18 September 1953	—Squadron Leader S. Bradford
1 January 1954	—Squadron Leader W.C. Horsman
18 March 1957	—Major W.R. Wilson (USAF)
9 May 1958	—Major H.H. Sealey (USAF)
3 November 1958	—Wing Commander J.I. Adams
17 July 1961	—Wing Commander J.R. Kinninmont
2 January 1962	—Wing Commander C.D. Murphy

14 March 1963	—Wing Commander F.W. Barnes
13 February 1964	—Wing Commander C.G. Thomas
26 April 1966	—Wing Commander J.H. Flemming
21 May 1968	—Wing Commander E.J. Myers
28 April 1969	—Wing Commander S.S.N. Watson
15 April 1971	—Wing Commander J.S. Puleston-Jones
8 January 1974	—Wing Commander H.J.F. Roser
16 July 1976	—Wing Commander A.M. Parer
12 July 1978	—Wing Commander D.T. Bowden
26 June 1980	—Wing Commander B.G. Weston
6 July 1982	—Wing Commander R.J. Conroy
12 August 1983	—Wing Commander P.D. Condon
12 August 1985	—Wing Commander W.A. Evans
10 November 1988	—Wing Commander R.J. Fox
2 August 1990	—Squadron Leader R. Ambler
9 July 1991	—Wing Commander P.F. Devine

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# 76 SQUADRON

*Attack*



## CHRONOLOGY

14 March 1942	—formed at Archerfield, Qld
29 October 1948	—Squadron disbanded
24 January 1949	—reformed at Williamtown, NSW
16 March 1955	—Squadron disbanded
11 January 1960	—reformed at Williamtown
24 August 1973	—Squadron disbanded
1 January 1989	—reformed at Williamtown
November 1994	—based at Williamtown, NSW

## NARRATIVE

76 Squadron was formed at Archerfield, Queensland, on 14 March 1942 and was equipped with Kittyhawk P-40E aircraft. It was the second Kittyhawk squadron formed in the RAAF and early activities concerned training of pilots in operation of the Kittyhawk. The Squadron transferred to Weir Strip, near Townsville, on 16 April 1942 and by the end of June was considered ready for operations. During April the Squadron ferried seven of its P-40Es to 75 Squadron at Port Moresby and received replacements from Bankstown. On 1 May an enemy reconnaissance aircraft was reported over Townsville and the Squadron scrambled five P-40s but no intercept was made. On 13 May two air raid warnings were sounded but no contact with enemy aircraft was made.

During June 1942 the Squadron received its full complement of aircraft (24) and 38 pilots were given as much training as possible. An advance party left for Milne Bay, New Guinea in early July and on

14 July the Squadron vacated Weir Strip. Personnel embarked on the SS *Swartenhondt* at Townsville on the same day and equipment and transport was loaded onto SS *Japara*. Personnel arrived at Milne Bay on 18 July and the move of aircraft and equipment was completed by 30 July. The aircraft took off from Townsville on 19 July for Cairns and arrived at the Seven Mile Strip (Port Moresby) on 20 July. On 22 July, Squadron Leader Turnbull led six P-40s on a strike of enemy positions at Gona Mission. Two flights of enemy 'Hamps' were encountered and a fight developed, however no losses were sustained by either side. In August, 76 Squadron moved to Milne Bay and there commenced a very intense but difficult period of operations because the strip and dispersal areas were not completed. Owing to the high and consistent rainfall and the type of soil, aircraft were constantly becoming bogged and operating most of the time from a rain soaked quagmire. The Squadron carried out defensive patrols, strafing of enemy troops and gun positions and bombing of transports and barges. Air raids and strafing attacks were experienced and the Squadron was shelled from enemy cruisers in the bay. On 27 August, Squadron Leader Turnbull was killed while strafing enemy troops.

During the eight days between 26 August and 5 September, 220 sorties were carried out. In the early part of September the Squadron was heavily engaged attacking enemy troop concentrations and landing barges. At night they were subjected to continual shelling from enemy cruisers in the bay and to several bombing and strafing raids. By 8 September the Japanese had been driven back and Squadron Leader Turnbull's aircraft was located and his remains recovered for burial. On 21 September, 76 Squadron was relieved by 34 and 36 USAAF Squadrons and on 22 September, Squadron aircraft departed Milne Bay for Darwin. On 24 September, Squadron personnel and equipment were embarked on the MV *Van Heutz* for Darwin. Letters of appreciation for the Squadron's work at Milne Bay were received from Brigadier General Clowes, the Australian Commander and from Major General George Kenny, Allied Air Force Commander, South West Pacific Area.

Squadron aircraft arrived at Batchelor, Northern Territory on 30 September and moved to Strauss Field on 9 October 1942. The MV *Van Heutz* disembarked the personnel at Darwin on 5 October. Owing to the shortage of equipment and sickness of personnel from malaria the flying effort for October was severely curtailed. Two enemy raids were experienced in November and about 40 bombs fell near the Squadron's

camp on 26 November, but the only damage sustained was shrapnel holes in the tents. Forty-eight operational hours were flown in November and 135 in December, mainly on convoy patrols and escort. The Squadron was scrambled several times during January 1943 and soon after midnight on 21 January four P-40s were scrambled to patrol over Darwin. Squadron Leader Truscott made a head-on attack on three Japanese 'Bettys', but all but one gun jammed and in a following beam attack all guns jammed. The following day North Western Area Headquarters confirmed one 'Betty' shot down by Squadron Leader Truscott.

On the evening of 29 January, Squadron personnel embarked on the MV *Maetsuyker* and sailed on 30 January for Onslow, Western Australia, arriving on 4 February. Meanwhile the Squadron aircraft had operated from Drysdale River Mission strip and Derby, giving air cover to the ship. Unloading at Onslow commenced on 5 February, but as no camp had been prepared personnel remained billeted on the ship until tents could be unloaded and erected. Unloading was completed on 6 February but on 8 February orders were received for the Squadron to move to 'Potshot' as the water supply at Onslow was insufficient to support the needs of a squadron. The MV *Maetsuyker* was recalled, reloaded and sailed on 12 February, arriving at 'Potshot' on the same day. Unloading commenced, but a cyclone developed and some barges were lost, thus it was not until 16 February that unloading got under way again, this time using the ship's life boats.

Operational training and patrols were conducted from both Onslow and 'Potshot' for the remainder of March. At approximately 1735 hours on 28 March 1943, Squadron Leader Truscott, flying P-40 A29-150, struck the water. Diving operations commenced and continued until midnight but no trace of Truscott was found. The search continued next day and at approximately 1000 hours the aircraft was located in 40 feet of water and recovered and loaded onto a barge by 1800 hours. At 1815 hours the body of Squadron Leader Truscott was removed from the cockpit and at 2230 the barge pulled alongside the jetty and the body of the late Commanding Officer was carried ashore by the officers of the Squadron. On 31 March a full Squadron parade headed a cortege which conveyed the late Squadron Leader Truscott to a waiting Avro Anson and the body was flown to Perth for burial. As the Anson taxied slowly to the end of the strip all ranks stood at the salute and the Squadron aircraft flew overhead. These aircraft joined the Anson to dip their wings in salute

over the position where Truscott had crashed into the sea, then flew over the strip and disappeared over the horizon in 'V' formation.

Tribute was paid to the US Naval Unit at 'Potshot' which, without hesitation, provided the equipment and divers to recover the body of Squadron Leader Truscott. Long after there was any possibility of Truscott being alive, diving continued and only at midnight at RAAF request did the divers discontinue until the following day. Finally US Naval officers and men joined the Squadron in the parade at the airstrip when the aircraft carrying Truscott departed for Perth.

Operational training, seaward and coastal patrols continued throughout April 1943 with operations from both 'Potshot' and Onslow. Other strips used were Carnarvon, Geraldton, Munderoo and Yanrey. During April much work was carried out to improve the airstrip, the camp and water supply. On 27 April orders were received for the Squadron to move to Bankstown and re-equip. The existing Squadron aircraft were allotted away and after handing over to a flight of 85 Squadron, 76 proceeded to Bankstown. On 8 May the Squadron received 24 new P-40M Kittyhawks and under command of Squadron Leader J. Perrin commenced shake-down flying and operational training. The Squadron was then ordered to deploy to Goodenough Island, deployment to be completed by 15 June. The Squadron aircraft left Bankstown on 10 June, deploying through Amberley, Townsville, Horn Island, Port Moresby and Milne Bay, and arrived at Goodenough Island on 27 June 1943. Squadron ground personnel and Squadron equipment had travelled by sea and arrived several days earlier. At Goodenough the Squadron formed a unit of 73 Wing and entered a period of continuous operations against the enemy. It was successively based at Kiriwina, Momote, Noemfoor, Morotai, Tawitawi and Labuan. Throughout this period Kittyhawk squadrons were engaged in bombing and strafing attacks on enemy troop and gun emplacements, enemy airfields, supply points, shipping (particularly barges and small craft), and as escort for bomber aircraft. The Squadron carried out its final attack mission on 14 August 1945 when four P-40s strafed Japanese aircraft in revetments in the north Keningau area on Borneo. The following day, the news of the cessation of hostilities was received. On 29 August volunteers for the occupation force for Japan were called. Many tour-expired personnel left for home but the Squadron continued a flying training program as it waited for the new Mustang aircraft to arrive and for further news on its move to Japan.

During September the Squadron received its full complement of Mustangs and the Kittyhawks were issued off to 30 Air Stores Park. The main body of 76 Squadron left Labuan by sea on 11 February 1946, disembarked in Japan on 21 February and moved into quarters at Iwakuni. The Mustangs took off from Labuan on 26 February for the first leg to Clark Field. The Squadron moved to its permanent base at Bofu, Japan. In February 1948 the Squadron moved from Bofu back to Iwakuni and on 29 October 1948, 76 Squadron was officially disbanded at Iwakuni, Japan.

The Squadron reformed at Williamtown on 24 January 1949 and was again equipped with Mustang aircraft until converted to Vampire aircraft towards the end of 1951. From July 1952 to early 1955, the Squadron served with 78 Fighter Wing, then based at Malta, as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces in the Mediterranean area. During this period it flew Vampire aircraft and participated in the Coronation Flypast and Review at Odiham, United Kingdom, and also in Exercise 'Coronet' at Wahn, Germany. The Squadron returned to Williamtown in February 1955, and disbanded on 16 March 1955. It reformed at the same base on 11 January 1960 with Vampire aircraft, and in May 1961 re-equipped with Sabre aircraft. During 1968, the Squadron re-equipped with Mirage aircraft, and has since then concentrated its activities on air superiority, air defence, interdiction and close air support roles. In 1968 the Squadron continued sorties of various types including dive bombing, air-to-air practice and training missions. Later that same year a situation arose requiring a deployment of the Squadron to Darwin. In 1969 the Squadron concentrated on air-to-air gunnery, varied navigational exercises, dive bombing and strafing. Operations continued along the same lines until 24 August 1973, when the Squadron disbanded.

On 1 January 1989, 76 Squadron reformed again 16 years after disbandment. Squadron headquarters were located in a demountable near the Australian Joint Warfare Establishment complex, quite a distance from the flight line. The Squadron was equipped with Macchi MB326H and Winjeel aircraft. Flying operations commenced on 16 January 1989 and until the present day Winjeels have operated in a forward air control role and Macchis have assisted Navy and Army in fleet and ground support roles. The Squadron has participated in such activities as 'Kangaroo 89' and 'Tasman Link'.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

14 March 1942	—Wing Commander P. Jeffrey
13 May 1942	—Squadron Leader R.E. Brooker (RAF)
May 1942	—Squadron Leader P.B.S. Turnbull
27 August 1942	—Squadron Leader K. Truscott
8 May 1943	—Squadron Leader J.R. Perrin
November 1943	—Squadron Leader I.S. Loudon
May 1944	—Squadron Leader F.L. Bowes
25 December 1944	—Flight Lieutenant P.B. Jones
August 1945	—Squadron Leader D.L. Wilson
August 1948	—Squadron Leader F.J. Lawrenson
June 1951	—Squadron Leader F.R. Schaaf
December 1951	—Wing Commander D. Wilson
October 1960	—Wing Commander J.J. O'Donnell
June 1962	—Wing Commander D.C. Hurst
March 1964	—Wing Commander G.R. Harvey
April 1966	—Wing Commander W.C. Horsman
29 August 1968	—Squadron Leader J.A. Treadwell
1 July 1969	—Wing Commander K.R. Janson
3 March 1972	—Wing Commander N.B. Williams
1 January 1989	—Wing Commander G.R. Lee
30 June 1992	—Wing Commander C.J. Patching

# 77 SQUADRON

*Swift to Destroy*



## CHRONOLOGY

16 March 1942	—formed Pearce, WA
July 1942	—Darwin
23 November 1943	—Milne Bay
15 June 1943	—Goodenough Island
7 March 1944	—Los Negros
14 September 1944	—Noemfoor
13 April 1945	—Morotai
30 June 1945	—Labuan
March 1946	—Japan, with British Commonwealth Occupation Force
25 June 1950–	
27 July 1953	—operations during Korean War
February 1959	—moved to Butterworth, Malaysia
November 1994	—based at Williamtown, NSW

## NARRATIVE

77 Squadron was formed at Pearce, Western Australia on 16 March 1942, under the temporary command of Squadron Leader D.F. Forsyth, with an initial strength of three officers and 100 airmen. Equipped with Curtiss P-40E Kittyhawks, it formed the main air defence for Perth until July when it was sent north and became the first Australian fighter squadron to serve in the Darwin area.

The Squadron drew its first blood on 23 November when the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader R.C. Cresswell, intercepted and shot down a 'Betty' bomber, the first night kill over Australian soil.

On 23 November 1943, with new P-40K Kittyhawks, the Squadron moved to Milne Bay. Flight Lieutenant R.C. Kimpton and Flying Officer J.A.T. Hodgkinson made the unit's first daylight kill on 11 April. Hodgkinson destroyed one Zero and Kimpton damaged another.

The Japanese launched a large air strike on Milne Bay on 14 April. For the loss of one Kittyhawk, piloted by Sergeant L.C. Melrose, four bombers and two fighters were destroyed with another five bombers claimed as probables. 77 Squadron's share of bombers fell to Squadron Leader Cresswell, Flight Lieutenant D.M. Sproule and Flying Officers D.H. Kelly and J.A.T. Hodgkinson; with probables to Flight Lieutenants I.R. Kinross, J.A. Cox, and Johnstone and Flying Officers Kelly and A.W.C. Morrison. Flight Lieutenant R.P. Sudlow scored a fighter.

The Squadron moved to Goodenough Island on 15 June 1943. From 22 July, several major RAAF raids were made on Gasmata airfield utilising the Kittyhawk as a fighter bomber. On 2 August, apparently struck by flak, Flight Lieutenant Sproule crash-landed on a beach, and was captured and killed by the Japanese. On 3 November, Sergeant R.W. McDonald was killed during an attack on Pal Mal Mal Plantation, Jacquinot Bay.

The Americans landed on Los Negros on 29 February 1944. It was planned to establish air operations on the islands as soon as possible with 76, 77 and 79 Squadrons RAAF providing fighter support. Resistance was heavy and 77 Squadron's ground party of nine officers and 194 airmen, arriving by landing craft seven days later, walked straight into the front lines. The first Kittyhawks to arrive on 7 March were those of 76 Squadron. Threatened by Japanese sniper fire, and working in appalling conditions, the party maintained these aircraft until 76's own ground crew could fly in six days later, along with the first Kittyhawks of 77 Squadron.

77 Squadron's main task was to cover supply shipping, but strikes were made supporting the Americans on nearby Manus Island. On 24 March, Pilot Officer E.N. O'Reilly was killed when his Kittyhawk hit palm trees. The islands were finally secured on 30 March.

By August, the Americans on Los Negros no longer required fighter cover and 77 Squadron transferred to 81 Wing on Noemfoor, arriving at Kamiri Airstrip on 14 September. Wing Commander Cresswell returned on the 26th for his second tour as Commanding Officer.

The Squadron bombed enemy positions on the Vogelkop Peninsula throughout October but also suffered losses. On 8 October, Flight

Sergeant B. Johnson was killed when his P-40N crashed while landing after a sweep. Six days later, Warrant Officer P.G. Schlencker was lost on a bombing mission and on the 25th Flying Officer H.D. Summons failed to return.

77 Squadron's Kittyhawks arrived on Morotai on 13 April 1945 and flew their first sorties on the 21st. While returning, Warrant Officer L. Hanson ran short of fuel and baled out. He was rescued by an American PT boat. On this same day, Flying Officer K. McFadden was killed taking off when a bomb under his aircraft dropped off and exploded. Four days later, Flying Officer H.O. Krause baled out after reporting engine failure but his parachute did not open.

81 Wing took part in the invasion of Labuan Island and Brunei and 77 Squadron's first operation, an attack on Keningau and Spong (North Borneo) occurred on 3 July. The first casualty followed on the 15th when Flight Lieutenant H. Cooper crashed after hitting tree tops. The rest of July was spent attacking Japanese targets in North Borneo.

The end of the War in August did not mean 77 Squadron was going home. It went instead to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force.

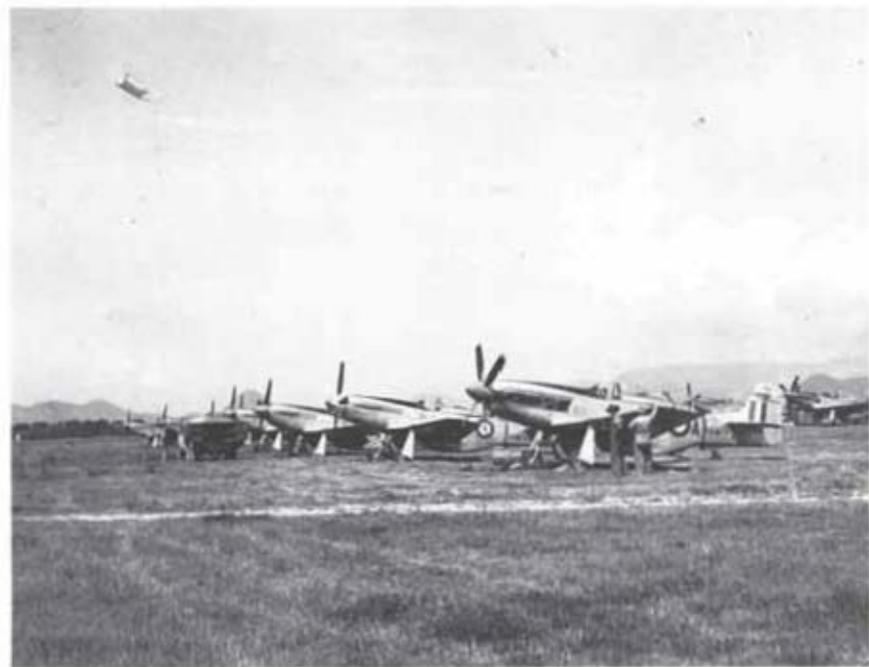
The Squadron arrived in Japan during March 1946. Equipped with F-51D Mustangs, for the next four years its duties included surveillance patrols over Yamaguchi, Hiroshima, Tattori, Shimane and Shikoku, and an anti-smuggling vigil over the Inland Sea and the Tsushima Strait. In September 1948, the decision was taken to disband all 81 Wing units other than 77 Squadron, which became directly responsible to Headquarters British Commonwealth Air Forces. By 25 June 1950 only 77 Squadron at Iwakuni represented the RAAF in Japan. It was making ready to depart when North Korean forces invaded South Korea.

Operations began from Japan on Sunday, 2 July, making it the first non-American unit to go into action. By the end of the day 16 sorties had been flown without loss. The first casualty occurred on 7 July when Squadron Leader G. Strout's Mustang was lost near Samchok. The Squadron was occupied slowing the North Korean advance to relieve pressure on the US 8th Army, which was making a stand within the Pusan perimeter. By the end of August, the Squadron had destroyed 35 tanks, 212 trucks and other vehicles, 4 locomotives, 14 box cars and 15 ammunition or fuel dumps.

On 3 September Pilot Officer W. Harrop crash-landed in enemy territory and was killed by the North Koreans. On the 9th, the



*77 Squadron personnel, Livingstone, 1943*



*76 Squadron Mustangs at Takamatsu, Japan, August 1948*



*Flying Officer N. Hutchinson in a 4 Squadron Wirraway, Wau, 1943*



*4 Squadron personnel pose before domestic accommodation, Lae, 1943*



*453 Squadron ground staff pose before a Spitfire Mk IX*



*Refuelling Pilot Officer J. Barrien's 453 Squadron Spitfire*



*453 Squadron ground crew arrive in France, 4 July 1944*



*453 Squadron ground crew camp in Normandy*



Wing Commander  
J.R. 'Congo' Kimmimont



Air Vice Marshal J.I. 'Bay' Adams



Wing Commander  
C.R. 'Killer' Caldwell



Squadron Leader K. 'Bluey' Truscott



*450 Squadron personnel enjoy recreation at Sant'Angelo, Vado, Italy, January 1945*

#### 450 SQUADRON COMMANDERS



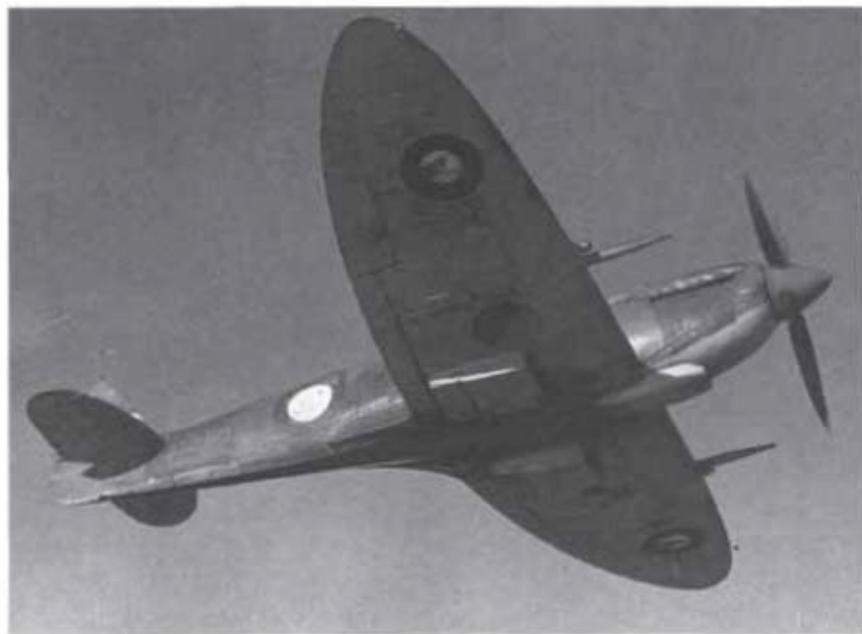
*Squadron Leader G.H. Steege, May 1941 and...*



*...Squadron Leader R.J. Gibbs*



*457 Squadron Spitfire, Sattler, NT, February 1945*



*Spitfire Mk VIII*



*The Kittyhawk equipped 10 RAAF fighter squadrons during World War II*



*The Australian-designed Boomerang proved a useful Army co-operation aircraft*

Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Louis Spence, was killed when his aircraft dived into the ground in the centre of Angang-ni. He was posthumously awarded the American Air Force Medal. The new Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader R.C. Cresswell, arrived from Australia—his third time in command.

By the end of September, United Nations forces had crossed the 38th Parallel and it was decided to move 77 Squadron from Japan to a Korean airfield so the Mustangs were closer to their North Korean targets. The Squadron moved to Pohang on 12 October.

On 19 October Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, was captured and it appeared the War would soon be won. Advancing United Nations forces pushed towards the Yalu River, the border between Korea and Manchuria. The Communist Chinese, who until now had been supplying the North Koreans with arms and equipment, entered the War in early November 1950, halting the United Nations forces in their tracks.

The Squadron moved north to Yonpo on 16 November but within weeks, because of the Chinese onslaught, it had to hurriedly evacuate south to Pusan.

77 Squadron continued striking at supply lines, destroying many trucks, railroads and bridges, but anti-aircraft fire brought down Sergeant D. Ellis, who was on a reconnaissance near Pyongyang, on 22 December. 77 Squadron's Sergeant C. Stephens crashed in unexplained circumstances on 6 January near Munsan. During a strike on the Chinese Communist forces headquarters in Pyongyang on 19 January, Flight Lieutenant G. Harvey force-landed and he was taken prisoner.

February was a black month. On the 14th, Warrant Officer S. Squires and Flight Lieutenant K. Matthews perished in a mid-air collision. On the 29th, Sergeant K. Royal was killed as he tried to force-land.

On 15 March, Seoul was retaken by United Nations forces and they crossed the 38th Parallel again on the 31st. Four days later, Sergeant H. Strange baled out of his stricken Mustang but his parachute failed to open. Next day, 20 March, witnessed one of the most dramatic helicopter rescues of the War when Sergeant C. Sly parachuted from his crippled Mustang behind enemy lines. Three days later, the Squadron participated in 'Operation Tomahawk', the largest parachute operation of the War.

The Squadron flew its last Mustang sortie on 6 April then moved to Japan next day for conversion to Gloster Meteors. Shortly after arriving, the Squadron suffered its last Mustang casualty when Sergeant R. Robson was killed in a flying accident at Iwakuni.

The first British jets arrived accompanied by four RAF pilots to help during conversion. Squadron Leader Cresswell and Flight Lieutenant D. Murphy had already checked out on USAF jets at Itazuke.

After conversion, the Australians returned to Korea, this time to Kimpo. The first Meteor mission on 29 July was an uneventful sweep accompanied by Sabres. 77 Squadron suffered its first jet casualties on 22 August when two pilots were killed in a mid-air collision.

The first inconclusive MiG contact came on 25 August. Four days later the first serious fight occurred when eight Meteors led by Squadron Leader D. Wilson met more than 30 MiG-15s. One Meteor was lost and Wilson's aircraft heavily damaged. Warrant Officer R. Guthrie ejected at a record 38 000 feet and spent the rest of the War as a prisoner of war.

On 26 September, Flight Lieutenant R. Dawson was credited with probably damaging a MiG, this being the Squadron's first successful jet combat claim.

On 1 November the Squadron was awarded the Korean Presidential Unit Citation but on the 11th, two Meteors collided losing one pilot, Sergeant D. Robertson, and both planes. Flying Officer K. Blight ejected.

The Squadron's first confirmed MiG-15 'kill' came on 1 December. Flying Officer B. Gogerly sent one down and it was seen to explode into flames. A second MiG was credited as a Squadron 'kill' but three Meteors were lost. Sergeants B. Thompson and V. Drummond were captured but Flight Sergeant E. Armitt was killed.

In January 1952, 77 Squadron was assigned the role of area defence and adapted for ground attack. Its first ground attack mission occurred on the 8th. Two of the aircraft were hit by flak and it would be this which would account for most Meteor losses for the remainder of the War. During separate strafing missions on the 27th, Flight Lieutenant M. Browne-Gaylord and Sergeant B. Gillan were lost. On 6 February Flight Lieutenant J. Hannan was shot down and captured.

Australian engineers designed an air-to-ground napalm rocket and the new weapons were tested on 8 February. The Squadron's new Commanding Officer, Wing Commander R. Susans, led four Meteors in an attack on several buildings causing numerous fires. The rocket proved very useful against vehicle convoys and troop concentrations. March saw two more pilots lost to ground fire, Sergeants I. Cranston and L. Cowper.

To try and protect their ground forces, the Communists began sending MiGs further south. Again there were clashes but at a lower altitude where the Meteors were less disadvantaged. On 4 May, Pilot

Officer J. Surman probably destroyed a MiG and four days later Pilot Officer W. Simmonds had his kill confirmed when the pilot was seen to eject. On 2 October, Flying Officer O. Cruickshank, an RAF exchange pilot, was surprised and killed.

77 Squadron set a record on 13 October by flying 80 sorties in one day with only 22 serviceable aircraft.

Probably its most successful mission occurred on 16 March 1953 when a convoy of 150 trucks was shattered. Blocking the convoy at both ends, the Meteors then flew up and down its length rocketing and strafing and finally called in USAF assistance to complete the job.

On the 27th, the Meteors had their last clash with MiG-15s. Sergeant George Hale probably shot down one and damaged another. One Meteor was damaged. However, during the month, the Squadron lost three pilots: Squadron Leader D. Hillier, Flying Officer R. James (RAF) and Sergeant P. Chalmers, all victims of anti-aircraft fire. Sergeant Ken Murray left for Australia having flown a record 333 sorties.

77 Squadron also carried out armed reconnaissance missions at night, disrupting enemy supply routes without respite.

An extremely successful rocket strike against enemy troops housed in 51 buildings near Chinnampo was carried out on 18 May. Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire, 16 Meteors destroyed every building without loss.

On 11 June, Sergeant D. Nolan was killed in action and two days later Sergeant W. Monaghan's plane was hit by flak and he force-landed on an offshore island. The Squadron broke its own sortie record on 15 June with 88 in one day. Sergeant D. Pinkstone was shot down and captured.

The Korean War ended on 27 July 1953. 77 Squadron's contribution had been outstanding. It had flown 18 872 sorties—3872 in Mustangs and 15 000 in Meteors. Thirty-eight personnel were killed and seven pilots captured. The Squadron was credited with destroying three MiG-15s in the air; three other aircraft on the ground; 3700 buildings; 1500 vehicles; 16 bridges; 20 locomotives; 65 railway carriages; and an unknown number of enemy personnel.

77 Squadron stayed in Korea until 16 October 1954 when the Meteors were flown to Iwakuni for the trip back to Australia.

Loaded with the 41 remaining Meteors, Squadron personnel and equipment, HMAS *Vengeance* entered Sydney Heads on 3 December. On its way up Sydney Harbour a formation of 12 Vampires from

Williamtown, led by Wing Commander Cresswell, flew overhead in a 'double seven' formation. The Squadron had been away from home for over 11 years.

77 Squadron began operations from Williamtown on 5 January 1955, the first major duty being 'Operation Welcome Home' involving an around the country tour performing flypasts over each capital city. During August, the Squadron formed its own aerobatic team, the 'Meteorites'. The team's first public performance was on 22 September over Rathmines and during the next six months it performed at Camden, Newcastle and the Hobart Regatta.

The era of the Meteors was ending and 77 Squadron flew its last Meteor mission during August 1956. On 19 November 1956, 77 Squadron reformed at Williamtown re-equipped with new Avon Sabres. It was not until the 22nd that flying commenced in earnest, resulting in 21 Sabre and two Vampire sorties.

In December 1958, 77 Squadron left Williamtown to move to Malaysia. It reached Butterworth in February 1959.

On 13 August, six aircraft flew 77 Squadron's first Sabre operation, dive bombing Communist terrorists. In June 1960 it took part in two more strikes. On 22 July, Flight Lieutenant Worth and Flying Officer Bartrop collided in mid-air. Both ejected successfully. Flying Officer Bartrop was rescued almost immediately, but Flight Lieutenant Worth spent three nights in the jungle before recovery.

Tensions in South-East Asia kept 77 Squadron in Malaysia until early 1969 when it returned to Australia to re-equip with the Dassault Mirage.

The Squadron launched its first Mirages at Williamtown on 7 July 1969 and the 'French Lady' served faithfully until phasing out began in July 1986. The first F/A-18 Hornet was received on 29 June 1987.

To this day, 77 Squadron remains one of Australia's premier fighter units.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

23 March 1942	—Squadron Leader R.E.P. Brooker (RAF)
20 April 1942	—Squadron Leader R.C. Cresswell
20 August 1943	—Squadron Leader B.E. Brown
5 January 1944	—Squadron Leader C.W. Starke
26 September 1944	—Wing Commander R.C. Cresswell

22 August 1945	—Squadron Leader R.P. Curtis
28 March 1947	—Squadron Leader R.T. Susans
4 October 1948	—Wing Commander W.J. Keenan
22 November 1948	—Wing Commander G.T. Newstead
28 February 1950	—Wing Commander L.T. Spence
1 November 1950	—Squadron Leader R.C. Cresswell
16 August 1951	—Wing Commander G.H. Steege
26 December 1951	—Wing Commander R.T. Susans
20 July 1952	—Wing Commander J.R. Kinninmont
20 January 1953	—Wing Commander J.W. Hubble
5 June 1953	—Wing Commander A. Hodges
24 November 1953	—Wing Commander D.R. Beattie
27 July 1954	—Wing Commander R.S. Royston
19 November 1956	—Wing Commander M. Holdsworth
14 April 1958	—Squadron Leader G.R. Harvey
1 February 1960	—Wing Commander J.W. Hubble
29 September 1962	—Wing Commander E.J. Myers
16 January 1963	—Squadron Leader B. Gogerly
10 August 1963	—Wing Commander V.B. Cannon
11 September 1963	—Squadron Leader B. Gogerly
2 March 1964	—Wing Commander V.B. Cannon
25 February 1965	—Wing Commander L. Reading
14 December 1966	—Wing Commander K.A. Martin
30 June 1969	—Wing Commander J.A. Treadwell
30 November 1969	—Wing Commander W.H. Simmonds
1 January 1972	—Wing Commander R.W. Bradford
12 February 1973	—Wing Commander R.V.A. Johnston
2 January 1975	—Wing Commander A.F. Taylor
17 December 1976	—Wing Commander D.G. Stenhouse
7 December 1978	—Wing Commander L. Naylor
16 December 1980	—Wing Commander G.R. Gent
1 August 1983	—Wing Commander A.R. Titheridge
29 July 1985	—Wing Commander R.A. Wilson
1 July 1987	—Wing Commander J.W. Kindler
9 July 1990	—Wing Commander W.M. Johnson
16 January 1994	—Wing Commander J. Blackburn

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# 78 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

20 July 1943	—raised at Camden, NSW
27 November 1943	—moved to Kiriwina Island
12 January 1944	—moved to Nadzab, New Guinea
21 March 1944	—completed move to Cape Gloucester, New Britain
24 April 1944	—first fighters to Tadj, Aitape
15 May 1944	—moved to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea
20 July 1944	—moved to Noemfoor
21 December 1944	—moved to Morotai
6 May 1945	—main echelon disembarked at Tarakan
17 December 1945	—moved to Deniliquin, NSW
1 April 1948	—disbanded at Williamstown, NSW

## NARRATIVE

78 Squadron, equipped with Kittyhawks, was formed at Camden, New South Wales, on 20 July 1943, under the temporary command of Flight Lieutenant R.S. Osment. Squadron Leader G.F. Walker assumed command on 14 August 1943.

The first aircraft arrived at Camden on 2 August and training continued without incident until 12 October 1943, when the advance echelon travelled, via Woodlark Island, to Kiriwina Island, where they arrived on 27 November. The Squadron was under command of 73 Wing, and the Squadron Leader and Flight Commanders participated in operations with 76 Squadron, dive bombing targets at Gasmata, New Britain. By the end of the month 78 Squadron, in company with 76 and 77 Squadrons, was escorting B-24 Liberators attacking Gasmata and Ring Ring Plantation.

During December, the Squadron participated in attacks on Gasmata and other targets in New Britain. These attacks were often made in wing strength—on 12 December 41 Kittyhawks from 76 and 78 Squadrons attacked Gasmata with excellent results. The Squadron flew top cover for Vultee Vengeance dive bombers of 24 Squadron on 19 December—the first Vengeance operation from Kiriwina—and 22 Squadron Bostons striking at Cape Hoskins during 21 December. During this strike, some

Japanese 'Val' dive bombers were engaged but escaped into cloud; and 'Zeke' fighters were sighted but they did not attack the Allied aircraft. 76 and 78 Squadron aircraft ground strafed buildings and a probable radar site on the north end of Cape Hoskins Airstrip, leaving two 'Vals' destroyed on the ground.

These operations were followed by offensive sweeps over central New Britain, but bad weather restricted flying operations.

1944 commenced with the Squadron being scrambled in an attempt to intercept enemy aircraft returning to Rabaul; patrolling between Father Reef and Bamus. On 12 January 1944, 78 Squadron completed its deployment to Nadzab, New Guinea, where it came under the operational control of 78 Wing. Next day the Squadron commenced operations, 18 aircraft flying an early morning sweep over the 7 Division area down the Bogadjim Road, returning along the coast of the Huon Peninsula. Later, 12 aircraft bombed Japanese supply dumps at Erima Plantation, 17 miles south of Madang. Operations included the bombing of Mining Ridge, Kankiryo, as a precursor to the Army attack on Shaggy Ridge. The Squadron flew ground support operations in their own right, or as escort to Mitchell and Vengeance aircraft striking at targets such as Mataloi Village, Gragat Island, Sia, Jomba and Jabob Island.

The total of 368 sorties flown in February 1944 was the most that the Squadron had flown to date. On eight occasions, the Squadron flew Markham Valley patrols, but the emphasis was on escorting Mitchell, Boston and Vengeance strikes and Dakota aircraft. On 21 February eight Kittyhawks escorted 12 Vengeance dive bombers on a mission to Miniri Village and, on the 26th, 36 Vengeance aircraft from 21, 23 and 24 Squadrons attacked Alexishafen and Madang. Thirteen 78 Squadron Kittyhawks formed part of the escort during this raid. A feature of the February operations was the dropping of belly tanks on Isingham Village on 23 February.

78 Squadron suffered its first flying casualty on 2 March 1944, when Flying Officer E.H. Weber was shot down. His aircraft was leading an attack on an anti-aircraft position at Malala, when it was seen to explode and crash close to the target. Flying Officer Gales' aircraft was damaged by machine gun fire during the same mission. By the end of the month, 78 Squadron was flying mainly escort missions, and was wholly responsible for the aerial cover of the United States forces landing at Yalau Plantation on the Rai Coast on 5 March.

On 12 March 1944, the advance echelon departed by air for Cape Gloucester, New Britain. The aircraft followed on the 16th, and the main body was transported to Cape Gloucester aboard the USS *Henry T. Rainey*, arriving on 21 March. Shortly after its arrival, the Squadron commenced co-operating with US PT boats. On 27 March, during a barge sweep, two PT boats were accidentally strafed near Bangula Bay; delays in the RAAF signals and cypher organisation had prevented the information that the PT boats would be in the area from being passed to 78 Squadron in time to brief the crews as to their whereabouts.

The main dive bombing and strafing activities were directed against Garove Island. Missions were flown against anti-aircraft positions, barges, jetties and buildings on the island, commencing on 18 March. Armed reconnaissance missions were flown over Commodore Bay to Numundo Plantation, Radar village was strafed, and on 25 March the Squadron participated in a combined attack by all 78 Wing squadrons on a suspected Japanese headquarters in the Cape Hoskins area. These operations were not without loss of aircraft. On 25 March 1944, Flying Officer C.H. Heard was forced to ditch after a strafing run over Cape Hoskins. Fortunately, he was rescued by a PT boat after being in the water for 30 minutes.

The stay at Cape Gloucester was short. On 17 April 1944 the main party left by sea for Tadjik airstrip at Aitape. The aircraft landed at Tadjik on 24 April, the first Allied aircraft to do so. During the following day 23 aircraft patrolled over the beachhead at Hollandia. Bad weather prevented further flying until 29 April, when the Squadron recommenced patrols of Hollandia. In addition, strafing raids were made on targets at Kamti and Savago villages.

During May, the Squadron was mainly involved in escorting USAAF C-47 aircraft to Hollandia, and patrolling that area and Tadjik. On the 7th, Squadron Leader A.H. Bryce led 16 Kittyhawks to Hollandia, where they flew patrols over the Hollandia–Tanamerah–Humbolt Bay area, before returning to Tadjik on 10 May. Action was also taken against targets in the Wewak area, before the Squadron moved to Hollandia on 15 May 1944.

Next day 78 Squadron escorted Liberators striking against Biak Island and, in conjunction with 80 Squadron, covered the US landing on Wakde Island on the 17th. The Squadron also covered the successful United States forces landing at Biak. During May, the Squadron flew 575 sorties.

The highlight of June operations was the interception of a formation of enemy aircraft over Biak on 3 June. In the final analysis, Cowley,

White, Baker, Griffiths and Barker were credited with shooting down an 'Oscar' each; Osment and White were credited with the destruction of a 'Kate' each, while White and Cowley were also credited with damaging a 'Kate' and an 'Oscar', respectively. Griffiths and Blesing shared an 'Oscar'. Flight Sergeant W.H. Harnden was lost in this action, his aircraft being last seen with two 'Oscars' on its tail. The crew of a destroyer reported that Harnden had baled out of his aircraft, and that his parachute had failed to open.

On 10 June 1944, Flight Lieutenant D.R. Baker shot down a 'Tony', after sighting the enemy fighter over Japen Island. This victory marked the last for the RAAF during the New Guinea campaign. The times allocated to the Squadron for patrol over Biak prevented it from taking further action against enemy aircraft. On 12 June, USAAF Thunderbolts shot down six 'Kates' 30 minutes before the Australians were due to take over the patrol and, on the 28th, Thunderbolts destroyed two 'Helens' and two 'Zekes' only minutes after relieving 78 Squadron.

Patrols off Hollandia continued until 20 July, when the Squadron moved to Kamiri airstrip on Noemfoor Island—its sixth move in nine months. Hollandia operations were not without loss. On 13 June Flying Officer C.R. Harvey was on patrol when his aircraft went into a spin in cloud, forcing him to bale out. He landed in the jungle and was picked up three weeks later by a Walrus aircraft from the Idenburg River, being supplied and directed by a Piper Cub. On the 9th, Pilot Officer J.R. Cornell crashed into the sea off the Wiroe River.

Operations from Kamiri commenced on 21 July, patrolling the area from dawn to dusk. Whilst co-operating with PT boats, the Squadron participated in sweeps and strikes over Geelvink Bay and the Jefman-Samate areas. On 31 July, US troops attacking Sansapor were covered, and these operations continued for the first three weeks of August. This activity was followed by attacks designed to neutralise the Japanese airstrip at Babo, watercraft sweeps and attacks on a sawmill at Cokas. Pilot Officer G.H. White crashed into the sea off Garoewah village whilst on a barge sweep of the McCluer Gulf on 8 August, and Flight Sergeant R.P. Brown failed to return while on a sweep of the Warpopier to Sarkorem area two days later.

In September, US heavy bombers based at Noemfoor commenced operations over the Halmaheras, Moluccas and Mindanao. 78 Squadron flew strikes against enemy airfields in the Vogelkop and Bomberai Peninsulas and in the Kai Islands, as well as bombing airstrips at Samate,

Jefman, Babo, Utarom, Ransiki, Faan and Langgoer. These successful operations were designed to protect the flank of the American attack on the Philippines, and the Noemfoor based squadrons were undertaking anti-watercraft sweeps as far afield as the Kai and Aroe Islands and along the western side of Ceram. These flights were up to five hours in duration, and the aircraft often staged through the airfield at Middleburg Island. Despite the difficulties, the only fatalities recorded by the Squadron during the period were Sergeant D.A. Way, who crashed into the sea and was killed on 24 September when returning from a raid on Babo and, on 25 November, Sergeant S.J. Hattersley's aircraft was seen to dive vertically into the sea north of Doom Island during a bombing raid on installations near Cape Noejew. Early in December, aircraft commenced to stage through Morotai, and the advance party and aircraft were based on that island by 21 December. The main party, with the Squadron's heavy equipment, joined early in January 1945.

During the period January–April 1945, 78 Squadron attacked targets in the Halmaheras and Celebes. Targets included Lolobata, Hatetabako and Galela. Between 7 and 21 January 1945, the Squadron flew 267 sorties, dropped 153 630 lbs of bombs and expended 77 000 rounds of ammunition, but the sortie rate decreased in February. March continued the lower sortie rate and, on 10 April 1945, the Squadron was ordered to cease operations in preparation for the Oboe I landing at Tarakan, which was planned for 6 May.

The main echelon departed for the Tarakan landing on 27 April, and disembarked on the night of 6 May. It had been planned that the aircraft be flown into the airstrip soon after the landing, but the condition of the strip made it impossible to operate aircraft until 18 July. In the meantime, the ground crew at Tarakan assisted Army engineers with road construction and, at times, spent some time in the front line with the troops.

78 Squadron was operational on 20 July, operating in the Sandakan area of Borneo. On the 24th, in conjunction with aircraft from 75 and 80 Squadrons, an attack was made on airfields at Banjarmasin in southern Borneo. The last operational sortie was against Mastyn Estate, which was strafed and bombed on 9 August 1945.

After the Armistice, 78 Squadron dropped leaflets and flew reconnaissance missions. The aircraft were flown back to Australia early in November, and the Squadron personnel embarked on HMS *Glory* for the return voyage to Sydney, arriving on 12 December 1945.

The Squadron moved to Deniliquin, New South Wales, on 17 December. Most members were on leave until 16 January 1946, and, with postings and discharges taken into account, the unit strength stood at two officers and 15 other ranks at the end of July. After moving to Williamstown, New South Wales, on 5 August 1946, the unit received four Mustangs and a Wirraway to enable flying to recommence. During March 1947, the Squadron participated in naval exercises near Jervis Bay, using aircraft borrowed from 75 Squadron. During July, mock dive bombing attacks were made on HMS *Thesus* and HMS *Glory*, and the Mustangs were intercepted by Seafires and Fireflies from the two carriers.

When the Squadron disbanded at Williamstown on 1 April 1948, there were approximately 20 personnel on strength.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

14 August 1943	—Squadron Leader G.F. Walker
28 June 1944	—Squadron Leader A.H. Brydon
25 August 1944	—Squadron Leader R.J. Cowan
12 February 1947	—Squadron Leader J.R. Kinninmont

# 79 SQUADRON

*Born for Action*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 26 April 1943    | —raised at Laverton, Vic.                               |
| 26 June 1943     | —operational at Vivigani, Goodenough Island             |
| 18 August 1943   | —deployed to Kiriwina Island                            |
| 16 March 1944    | —deployed to Momote, Los Negros                         |
| 12 January 1945  | —deployed to Sattler, NT                                |
| 6 February 1945  | —advance party departed for Morotai                     |
| 12 November 1945 | —Squadron disbanded                                     |
| 1 June 1962      | —reformed at Ubon, Thailand                             |
| 31 July 1968     | —reduced to 'name only' status at Butterworth, Malaysia |
| 31 March 1986    | —reformed at Butterworth                                |
| 30 June 1988     | —disbanded at Butterworth                               |

## NARRATIVE

79 Squadron was formed at Laverton, Victoria, on 26 April 1943, and moved to Woolloomanata at the end of the month. Commanded by Squadron Leader A.C. Rawlinson, the Squadron received its first Spitfire Vc aircraft on 3 May 1943 before receiving orders to deploy to Goodenough Island.

The advance party departed on 17 May 1943, the pilots and aircraft on 4 June and the main party embarked from Sydney on the MV *Cremer* three days later. The deployment of the aircraft was marred by tragedy; on 13 June Flying Officer V.P. Brennan, DFC, DFM died of injuries

received after a landing accident at Cairns. Brennan was a very experienced fighter pilot, having served for a period on Malta during the height of the air fighting over that island.

The Squadron was scrambled from Gurney airstrip, Milne Bay on 19 June, while it was still en route to Vivigani. By 26 June, the Squadron was operational at Vivigani, but no interceptions were made. Between 9 and 18 August, the Spitfires redeployed to Kiriwina Island. There was considerable enemy aerial activity in the area—casualties were suffered from enemy air raids, and a radar station was destroyed—and 79 Squadron operated under adverse conditions, alongside 76 Squadron, from the northern end of the airstrip.

It was not until 31 October that the Squadron claimed its first victory, when Flight Sergeant N. Faulks and Sergeant Callister sighted an enemy Kawanishi Ki 21 'Tony' diving away to the north. The enemy had spotted the two Spitfires and attempted to outrun the Australians. Callister shot the enemy fighter down in flames, but was killed when his Spitfire collided with a Kittyhawk during an early morning take-off six days later.

After a period of training and defensive scrambles, the Squadron flew its first sweep over enemy territory on 27 November 1943, when Squadron Leader M.S. Bott led eight Spitfires over Gasmata. On the following day, Flying Officer A.W. Moore was on a test flight, when he heard a scramble ordered. Following the directions given, he intercepted a 'Dinah' reconnaissance aircraft and, despite both of his cannons failing, shot it down into the sea five miles south of Kitava.

On the 5th and 20th of December the base was raided and, although 150 bombs were dropped, negligible damage was done. On 21 December Flying Officer J.R. Richards and Pilot Officer Barrie intercepted another 'Tony' and shot it down, and a Mitsubishi A6M 'Zeke' was strafed on the ground at Gasmata on the 28th. These actions were not without loss. Flying Officer L. Wettenhall disappeared during an offensive patrol over New Britain on 31 December 1943.

With the advent of the new year, 79 Squadron presented a more aggressive posture, flying offensive sweeps over New Britain, strafing enemy installations and escorting bombers. Operations during January were hampered by heavy, constant rain which caused the postponement of at least one operation for a week and played havoc with radio telecommunications. The weather also contributed to a landing accident

on 12 January, when a Spitfire overturned after running up the bank in front of the alert hut; the brakes had no effect on the saturated runway.

During February 1944, the Squadron continued bomber escort and strafing duties, with losses of aircraft and men. Flying Officer Tassicker baled out after a strike in the Angen River area and was rescued by a US Catalina on 3 February, and Sergeant Faulks crash-landed short of the airstrip after an engine failure on the 10th. On the 19th, Flying Officer K.H. Slayter reported an engine failure at 24 000 feet. At 15 000 feet he reported a glycol leak, and the Spitfire crashed and exploded short of the runway.

The main body of the Squadron arrived at Momote, Los Negros, in the Admiralty Island Group on 16 March 1944, after passage aboard the *Marcus Daly*. Although the Japanese were still in control of portions of the island, and the Squadron camp area was overgrown with jungle, the fighters were operating from the airstrip on 29 March. The first strike was a strafing attack against targets on Pityilu Island.

Early operations out of Momote consisted of strafing enemy positions on Manus and adjoining islands. By the end of April, with the occupation of the Admiralty Islands by US forces, the Squadron changed to a mainly shipping escort role. Operations were hampered by the lack of spare parts, and only the untiring effort of the ground crews enabled operations to be undertaken.

During 16 April 1944, the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Bott, was killed when his aircraft collided with that of Squadron Leader Pilcher during take-off.

Next month the Squadron flew 244 hours of shipping escort duties, and the aircraft were becoming more difficult to maintain. With 12 aircraft at 15 Aircraft Repair Depot for major servicing, only two were available for operations. Flying hours had to be limited to urgent operational work only. This situation continued until late November, with two aircraft being lost when their pilots were forced to bale out in 'thick' weather over the sea during an exercise on 31 July. Another loss was that of Flight Lieutenant Darcey, who was killed when a borrowed P-38 suffered engine failure on take-off on 6 October.

Three enemy aircraft dropped anti-personnel bombs in Hyane Harbour on 9 November 1944. Flight Lieutenant O'Dea and Flying Officer Kennare were scrambled, but were unable to intercept. However, a three aircraft dusk patrol was inaugurated until 22 November. Two days later, 79 Squadron was released from operations, pending a move to

Darwin, which was completed on 12 January 1945. The Squadron did not remain at Sattler, south of Darwin, for long, as the advance party departed for Morotai on 6 February 1945. The Squadron was thus operating with difficulty, and this did not ease its re-equipment with Mk VIII Spitfires.

By the end of March, the Squadron had 11 Spitfire Mk VIII aircraft on strength, attacking enemy installations, ships, barges, transport and fuel dumps in the north-west Halmahera Island area. The Squadron flew 151 operational hours in March, and the tempo increased in April, with the Squadron flying armed reconnaissance missions over Galela, Mita, Kaoe, Oba, Hiri and Djailolo. Although no enemy air resistance was met, the ground defences were still effective. Flight Lieutenant L.S. Reid baled out on 11 April, after his aircraft was hit in the port radiator whilst flying a sweep over Miti, and was rescued by an American PT Boat.

Under the command of Squadron Leader James, 79 Squadron continued to harass the enemy until the end of the War on 15 August 1945, again incurring casualties. On 2 August, the wing of a Spitfire flown by Flying Officer Newman broke off at the cannon, and the aircraft flicked into the trees after strafing two huts near the Teba River. After the surrender of the Japanese forces, the Squadron dropped leaflets and was disbanded on 12 November 1945.

On 1 June 1962, 79 Squadron was re-established at Ubon, Thailand, 30 miles from the Laos border and only 50 miles from Cambodia, as part of Australia's South-East Asia Treaty Organization commitment to the defence of Thailand. The Squadron was equipped with Sabre fighters, which had been flown to Ubon through Singapore and Bangkok. Servicing facilities and accommodation were, initially, under canvas.

The Squadron maintained aircraft on alert at all times, and the first scramble occurred on 20 June 1962, when the GCI radar spotted bogeys. No contact was made, but scrambles took place at irregular intervals during the Ubon deployment; on 1 December 1965 an unmarked C-123 was identified. During 21 October two Sabres scrambled and shadowed a Beechcraft twin turboprop aircraft, which turned back over the Laos border, while on 7 February 1968 hot scrambles were made to search for suspected IL-28 bombers.

Potential threats to the security of the base were not only of the aerial variety. For example, from 3 to 5 November 1964 the camp was alerted by Thai Intelligence sources of possible sabotage activity and during the period 24–27 July 1966 an 'Amber' alert was issued due to a radar contact

of a suspected hostile helicopter being landed 10 miles to the north-east of the base, and all personnel were issued with arms and ammunition.

The Squadron pilots flew tactical reconnaissance, strike and navigation exercises; one training strike was on the famous bridge on the Kwai River. United States Air Force aircraft also participated in training with the Australians, who flew air-to-air missions against F-100 Super Sabres from Takhli, F-102 Delta Darts from Don Muang and, later, F4 Phantoms of the 431st Tactical Fighter Squadron which shared Ubon in 1965. The Sabres would intercept the Phantoms as they returned from strikes over South Vietnam, and adopted tactics flown by MiG 17 pilots to assist in the training of the USAF pilots.

Although they did not contribute directly to the air war over Laos or Vietnam, the members of the Squadron had cryptic reminders of those actions. On 18 November 1967 the alert hut had to be evacuated when a Phantom landed with a fused time-delay 750-lb bomb. There were also some of the 'perks' of living close to the USAF; on 23 December 1967 comedian Bob Hope hosted his Christmas Show at Ubon. One of the troupe was film star Raquel Welch, whom the Squadron 'adopted' and presented with an orange flying suit. As the Unit History Record states, 'a flying suit will never be filled like that again'.

Flying out of Ubon was not without incident. On 21 June 1962 two Sabres caught fire around the engine starter exhaust area. Instead of IPN starter fluid being used, white spirits had been used in lieu, with the obvious result. On 24 September 1964 Flight Lieutenant I.B. McFarlane ejected after an engine malfunction. His aircraft crashed 20 miles from the base near the village of Ban Pon Muang, and McFarlane was recovered by a Thai Search and Rescue helicopter, uninjured. Pilot Officer M. McGrath crashed on 3 January 1968, his aircraft burning and destroying houses in a nearby village.

On 31 July 1968 eight aircraft deployed to Butterworth, completing 79 Squadron's association with Thailand. The Squadron was reduced to 'name only' status.

The Squadron was re-established at Butterworth on 31 March 1986, under the command of Wing Commander B.R. Wood, to undertake 3 Squadron Mirage tasks until the withdrawal of the aircraft from Malaysia during 1988. The Squadron was equipped with 11 Mirage III0, one Mirage III0 and a Caribou.

Pilots of the Squadron flew air-to-air and air-to-ground training exercises, and participated in exercises with the Republic of Singapore

Air Force A4 Skyhawk, Hunter and F-5 aircraft during deployments to Paya Lebar, Singapore. The first such deployment was in March 1987.

A highlight of normal operations was a program in which live firing of the Matra R550 missile took place. The program, which commenced on 29 April 1986, was the first time that the missile had been fired by an RAAF squadron.

On 6 May 1986, 79 Squadron participated in its first Air Defence Exercise, training with 1 Squadron F-111 and A4 Skyhawk aircraft.

The Squadron deployed to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines on 11 May 1987, where it teamed with the F-5 and F-15 aircraft of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing, USAF as defenders against incursions of F-111, F4 Phantom and F-15 aircraft during the annual 'Cope Thunder' exercise. The Mirage aircraft returned to Butterworth on 31 May 1987.

The Caribou was employed supporting the Army in Malaysia and flew training missions into Thailand and Indonesia, where the crews visited Sumatra, Java, Bali and neighbouring islands.

79 Squadron was disbanded at Butterworth on 30 June 1988.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

26 April 1943	—Squadron Leader A.C. Rawlinson
8 November 1943	—Squadron Leader M.S. Bott
16 April 1944	—Squadron Leader S.W. Galton
4 May 1945	—Squadron Leader K.E. James
1 June 1962	—Wing Commander J.W. Hubble
24 November 1962	—Wing Commander R.M. Hanstein
13 February 1963	—Wing Commander V.B. Cannon
15 April 1963	—Wing Commander R.M. Hanstein
14 May 1963	—Wing Commander V.B. Cannon
31 July 1963	—Squadron Leader B. Gogerly
11 September 1963	—Wing Commander R.E. Trebilco
6 November 1963	—Wing Commander M.A. Outhwaite
31 December 1963	—Wing Commander V.B. Cannon
24 February 1964	—Wing Commander E.W. Tonkin
1 May 1964	—Wing Commander J.C. Kitchenside
17 June 1964	—Squadron Leader B. Gogerly
12 August 1964	—Squadron Leader M.A. Outhwaite
7 October 1964	—Squadron Leader R.E. Frost
2 December 1964	—Squadron Leader J.C. Kitchenside

28 January 1965	—Squadron Leader P.G. Larard
24 March 1965	—Squadron Leader J.S. Puleston-Jones
20 May 1965	—Squadron Leader R.E. Frost
16 July 1965	—Squadron Leader J.C. Kitchenside
9 September 1965	—Squadron Leader P.G. Larard
4 November 1965	—Squadron Leader J.S. Puleston-Jones
1 January 1966	—Squadron Leader R.G. Funnell
24 February 1966	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
24 April 1966	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
19 May 1966	—Squadron Leader J.S. Puleston-Jones
14 July 1966	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
11 August 1966	—Squadron Leader P.G. Larard
22 September 1966	—Squadron Leader R.G. Funnell
19 October 1966	—Squadron Leader L.B. Weymouth
12 January 1967	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
9 February 1967	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
20 April 1967	—Squadron Leader H. Roser
15 June 1967	—Squadron Leader L.B. Weymouth
9 August 1967	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
5 October 1967	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
4 December 1967	—Squadron Leader D.G. Stenhouse
22 December 1967	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
31 December 1967	—Squadron Leader D.G. Stenhouse
23 January 1968	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
22 March 1968	—Squadron Leader H.F. Freeman
1 May 1968	—Squadron Leader D.G. Stenhouse
3 July 1968	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
1 April 1986	—Wing Commander B.R. Wood
22 July 1986	—Wing Commander W.G.A. Fitz Henry

# 80 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

10 September 1943	—formed at Townsville, Qld
9 October 1943	—moved to Weir Strip, Aitkenvale
24 February 1944	—deployment to Nadzab completed
21 March 1944	—moved to Cape Gloucester, New Britain
29 April 1944	—moved to Tadjji, Aitape
15 May 1944	—moved to Hollandia
1 July 1944	—moved to Biak
20 July 1944	—moved to Noemfoor
21 January 1945	—move to Morotai
13 July 1945	—moved to Tarakan
19 December 1945	—moved to Deniliquin, NSW
9 May 1946	—moved to Schofields
11 July 1946	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

80 Squadron was formed at Townsville, North Queensland, on 10 September 1943, and commenced training at Aitkenvale on 3 November.

The Squadron completed training and deployed to Nadzab, Papua New Guinea on 24 February 1944. The Squadron was under the control of 10 Operational Group. Operations included patrols of the Markham Valley to prevent Japanese incursions against the Nadzab airfield complex, escorting Allied bombers and strafing enemy targets at Alexishafen, Madang and along the Bogadjim Road.

On 21 March 1944 the Squadron deployed to the airstrip at Cape Gloucester, from whence it flew convoy protection patrols and armed reconnaissance missions. On 29 April 1944, 22 Kittyhawks deployed to Tadjji airfield, Aitape. The landing at Aitape was made to cover the landing at Hollandia, and the Squadron patrolled over Tadjji and Hollandia and covered the invasion convoy, before moving to Hollandia on 15 May 1944.

80 Squadron covered the Wakde and Biak landings and, during June, undertook fighter bomber strikes, patrols and escorts. During 1 July 1944, 120 men and the aircraft moved to Biak, and the transport section deployed to Noemfoor on 20 July, to prepare a camp site for the main

body of the Squadron. On 22 July the Squadron was united at Noemfoor, and commenced strikes over the Manokwari-Jefman area.

Casualties were suffered in August, with three aircraft lost and one pilot reported 'missing, believed killed'. During the month following, two aircraft were shot down by anti-aircraft fire, two collided on landing and another two were damaged in taxiing accidents. Operations consisted of watercraft sweeps and attacks on sawmills on Kokas Island, before ranging over the Halmaheras during October. In December two pilots were lost and the Squadron deployed to Morotai on 21 January, from where it continued strikes on the Halmaheras. The rate of operations decreased, and those which were undertaken mainly comprised dive bombing missions and strafing.

On 11 April 1944, 80 Squadron was taken off operations to prepare for the Oboe 1 landing at Tarakan, Borneo. The ground crew participated in the landing, with the aircraft remaining at Morotai, to follow when landing facilities became available. This did not occur until 12-13 July, when 22 aircraft flew to Tarakan; the lack of activity at Morotai was the cause of a marked lowering of morale among the pilots.

From Tarakan, the Squadron flew Army close support missions until the Armistice on 15 August. During September, the rate of flying was limited, and this did not improve before the unit embarked on HMS *Glory* for passage to Sydney, via Manus Island. *Glory* arrived in Sydney on 12 December 1945, and interstate members of the Squadron were granted leave. The remainder progressed to Deniliquin, New South Wales, where the strength of the Squadron decreased to the point that, at 31 December, it consisted of Flying Officer R.D. Taylor and five airmen.

80 Squadron was reduced to a 'number only' status on 9 May 1946 and disbanded on 11 July.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

10 September 1943	—Squadron Leader G.A. Cooper
21 July 1944	—Squadron Leader G.C. Atherton
15 September 1944	—Squadron Leader J.L. Waddy
1 June 1945	—Squadron Leader D.R. Kelly

# 82 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

18 June 1943	—formed at Bankstown, NSW
4 May 1944	—Ross River, Qld
30 August 1944	—Wards Field, Papua New Guinea
18 September 1944	—Kamiri, Noemfoor Island
3 March 1945	—Morotai
11 June 1945	—Labuan, Borneo
22 February 1946	—Iwakuni, Japan
18 March 1946	—Bofu, Japan
15 March 1948	—Iwakuni, Japan
29 October 1948	—disbanded at Iwakuni, Japan

## NARRATIVE

82 Squadron was formed at Bankstown, New South Wales, on 18 June 1943, with a strength of 15 officers and 264 airmen. Although the unit was to be fully equipped with P40M Kittyhawk aircraft, one flight flew P39D Airacobras.

The highlights of the training undertaken from Bankstown were the participation of five of the Squadron's Kittyhawks in a flypast over the town of Lithgow on 1 November 1943, and manoeuvres with 1 Australian Paratroop Brigade during Exercise 'Gladiator' on 8 December.

During April 1944, the organisation of the deployment of the Squadron to Hughes Airfield in the Northern Territory commenced. An advance party of 16 officers and other ranks departed by rail on 10 April 1944, and were followed by another 36 by sea on the 24th. Three days later another 105 personnel followed. However, the Squadron was not destined to operate from Hughes. The orders to do so were countermanded, and the unit finally concentrated at Ross River, Townsville. The ferrying of the aircraft from Bankstown was completed on 4 May 1944.

82 Squadron's training schedule included practice strafing attacks, naval co-operation and sea navigation exercises and high level dive bombing using 250-lb bombs over Hopkinson's Reef. One of the more interesting exercises was co-operating with members of 3 Repair and Salvage Unit on 12 July, when that unit undertook a practice assault

landing near Cape Pallarenda. Undertaken with the co-operation of the local Army and Navy elements, the aim of the exercise was to capture two heavily defended coastal defence works. 82 Squadron supplied air support in the form of four defending and eight attacking aircraft.

On 30 August 1944, the aircraft of the Squadron had deployed to Wards Field, near Port Moresby, where they remained until 18 September, when 15 Kittyhawks landed at Kamiri, Noemfoor Island, after staging through Nadzab and Tadjj. The deployment had not been without difficulty. In an attempt to make the flight two days earlier, the formation had been turned back by severe weather, and Flying Officer R.H.C. Harris crashed whilst taking off from Nadzab. On the 17th two aircraft were prevented from flying out by engine trouble; that flown by Warrant Officer H. Walker crashed on take-off. En route to Nadzab Warrant Officer D.H. Harrison was forced to bale out, and reached Kamiri via Yule Island.

A 24-man maintenance team flew into Kamiri by Dakota on the 18th, and stores and equipment requested from the Squadron rear element at Townsville on the 22nd. The retention of 85 per cent of the Squadron's equipment and ground staff at Townsville placed a great burden on the 38 pilots and 23 servicing personnel of the forward echelon at Kamiri. This problem was not overcome until the rear element joined the Squadron on 12 November 1944. Maintenance and refuelling was carried out by all members of the Squadron; pilots would fly missions and also assist with the refuelling and re-arming of the aircraft. Despite this, the Squadron commenced operations on 30 September, when it joined 77 Squadron to dive bomb Samate airstrip. During October it flew 441½ hours, bombing Babo and Utarom airstrips, patrolling over Noemfoor Island and attacking enemy shipping and installations when they were found. This was not undertaken without casualties. Flying Officer F.A. Hewlett was severely burnt when his aircraft swung off the airstrip and collided with an American radar truck on 17 October. Next day Flying Officers A.G. Weymouth and M.A. Bellert failed to return from an attack on Toad Island.

With the arrival of the rear element, the latter period of November was marked by a lack of flying activity as the Squadron personnel erected the camp facilities and undertook much needed aircraft maintenance.

During December, 82 Squadron returned to operations, flying watercraft sweeps and bombing and strafing flights against enemy

installations and airfields in the Halmahera and Ceram Islands and the south-west coast of New Guinea.

On 9 December, the Squadron was warned of an impending move to Morotai, which had been captured by the Allies on 15 September 1944. It was not until 31 January that instructions were received for the sea movement of the Squadron; it was not until 1 March 1945 that the Squadron finally commenced the voyage to Morotai.

Operations did not cease. On 14 February 1945, Squadron Leader Grace led both the dawn and dusk patrols; the former destroyed a fuel laden truck and strafed enemy troops near Ransiki and the latter attacked a launch near Manokwari.

Although the seaborne members of the Squadron landed at Morotai on 3 March 1945, it was not until 5 April that the aircraft deployed to Wama airstrip.

Eight days later the Kittyhawks were dive bombing enemy occupied areas near Djailolo in the Halmaheras. During the remainder of March, 82 Squadron aircraft flew patrols over convoys bound for Borneo and attacked important enemy strongholds at Kaoe, Ternate, Mawea and Doro.

Operations from Morotai ceased on 22 May to enable final arrangements to be made for the embarkation of personnel and equipment participating in the Labuan landing—code name Oboe 6. Landing Craft Infantry Numbers 662 and 735 were allocated for the use of 82 and 77 Squadrons, which arrived off Labuan on 11 June 1945. Next day 82 Squadron personnel disembarked and travelled to a newly prepared camp where most of the domestic buildings had been completed. Later that day, a party of enemy troops broke out of a pocket of jungle and invaded the camp areas during the hours of darkness. This was the final organised resistance on the island, although sniper activities made it essential to maintain strong guard posts during darkness.

Squadron Leader Grace led the first of the aircraft to Labuan on 25 June, with the remaining aircraft arriving on 3 July 1945.

Operations flown by the Squadron until the end of hostilities were close support of the Army and dive bombing targets on the Borneo mainland. A memorable set of operations took place on 8 and 10 August, when the Squadron made a 900-mile round trip to attack Kuching. The first strike, led by the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader F.R. Schaff, DFC, destroyed two enemy aircraft as they attempted to take off from the airstrip; a transport was destroyed and two others damaged. The Allied

fighters then attacked barges near Kuching town and on the Sarawak River. When Kuching was again attacked on the 10th, few targets were available for the marauding fighters.

The cessation of hostilities with the Japanese was announced on 15 August 1945 and there was speculation that the Squadron would be one of the units earmarked to deploy to Japan as a element of the Occupation Forces.

In anticipation of this event, 82 Squadron commenced re-equipping with Mustangs on 12 September 1945. Conversion to the type continued to 11 January 1946, when notification was received that 81 (Fighter) Wing—of which 82 Squadron was an element—would be deploying to Japan. Two aircraft were lost during the conversion process. On 17 September Flight Sergeant B.J. McArthur struck a grader during take-off and Flight Sergeant A.J. Hunter failed to return from an oxygen climb exercise. Although an extensive search was made, Hunter was not found.

81 (Fighter) Wing departed for Japan aboard HMS *Glengyle*, with 82 Squadron's stores and equipment being transported aboard LST Nos 321, 324, 403 and HMAS *Murrumbidgee*. The men disembarked from the *Glengyle* at Kure on 22 February 1946, and departed by special train to the base at Iwakuni, where the cold, snow and rain was a marked contrast to the tropical climate of Labuan. The living and working facilities at Iwakuni were neglected and work was required to bring them up to an acceptable standard before operations commenced. As an interim measure, the airfield at Bofu, in the Yamaguchi Prefecture, was selected as an alternative base.

The first Mustangs, from 76 Squadron, landed at Bofu on 9 March 1946. In all, 83 Mustangs were ferried to Japan, being escorted by Mosquito, Beaufighter, Dakota and Catalina aircraft whilst staging through the Philippines and Okinawa. Twelve 82 Squadron aircraft arrived at Bofu on 13 March and another 10 Mustangs landed on 18 March 1946. The deployment was not without tragedy; three Mustangs and an escorting Mosquito crashed in the vicinity of Cape Sandan, south-west of Shikoku when they encountered extremely bad weather. They were only 60 miles short of their destination.

82 Squadron commenced operations in April 1946, flying surveillance patrols over the Prefectures of Hiroshima, Shimane and Yamaguchi. In addition, the Squadron participated in various flypasts and attended annual armament camps at Miho. On 24 January 1947, six Squadron

aircraft joined with 76 Squadron to effect dummy attacks on HMAS *Shropshire*, *Warramunga* and *Bataan*, which were en route to Kure.

With the withdrawal of Royal Air Force squadrons from Japan early in 1948, 82 Squadron moved from Bofu to Iwakuni. The move was completed on 15 March 1948, in time to participate in a mock attack on the Tokoyama oil refinery by aircraft of the US 5th Air Force. The attacking forces were intercepted by 81 (Fighter) Wing and RNZAF Corsairs. The US formation had not been briefed that they were to be intercepted.

82 Squadron was disbanded at Iwakuni on 29 October 1948.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

18 June 1943	—Squadron Leader S.W. Galton
29 December 1943	—Squadron Leader G.C. Atherton
8 March 1944	—Squadron Leader B.A. Grace
7 July 1945	—Squadron Leader F.R. Schaff
15 February 1947	—Squadron Leader G. Falconer
9 June 1947	—Squadron Leader M.O. Carr

# 83 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- 26 February 1943 —Squadron formed  
4 January 1946 —Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

83 Squadron was formed on 26 February 1943 under the control of Headquarters Eastern Area. The main purpose of the Squadron was the interception of unidentified and hostile aircraft, surface vessels and submarines. The first appointed Commanding Officer of the Squadron was Squadron Leader W. Meehan. Initially the entire Squadron was based at Strathpine, Queensland, but several weeks later the Squadron activities were transferred to Petrie Strip, with headquarters remaining in Strathpine. In March 1943 the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal G. Jones, visited the Squadron and other squadrons in the northern area.

Initially the Squadron's established strength was 27 officers and 310 airmen though the actual size was 10 officers and 27 airmen. The Squadron operated six Airacobra and 16 Boomerang aircraft with, at this stage, a Moth Minor aircraft expected in the near future.

The first operations of the Squadron included defensive patrols over Brisbane and the surrounding areas. No intercepts were actually made despite the numerous calls to which the Squadron responded.

On 21 March 1943 the Commanding Officer departed to take command of 86 Squadron. In his absence Flight Lieutenant Cooper took temporary command of the Squadron.

March 1943 saw an incident in which the pilot and his passenger were very fortunate to survive; the aircraft was approaching the runway with obvious problems when it crashed onto the field, burst into flames and the two airmen were lucky to escape with their lives.

A year later the Squadron was to experience the first of two fatalities; Leading Aircraftman C. Roberts was disembarking a truck when the rifle he was carrying fired and killed him instantly and Warrant Officer Wrightson was killed eight months later when his Boomerang crashed at Exeter, New South Wales.

The final entry in the Unit History Record was made on 30 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

26 February 1943	—Squadron Leader W. Meehan
25 March 1943	—Squadron Leader C. Lindeman
5 November 1943	—Squadron Leader W. Allshorn
8 January 1944	—Squadron Leader R. Goon
2 January 1945	—Flight Lieutenant I. Mackenzie

# 84 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

5 February 1943	—formed at Richmond, NSW
1 April 1943	—moved to Horn Island, Qld
21 May 1944	—moved to Aitkenvale, Qld
22 June 1944	—moved to Macrossan, Qld
17 November 1944	—moved to Ross River, Qld
29 January 1946	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

84 Squadron was formed at RAAF Base Richmond, New South Wales, on 5 February 1943, and was equipped with the Australian-built Boomerang fighter. Under the command of Squadron Leader N.P. Ford, the Squadron deployed to Horn Island, North Queensland. The main party departed by train to Cairns, via Townsville. From Cairns they embarked on TSS *Islander* for transit to Horn Island, where they arrived on 1 April 1943.

Although the Squadron was declared operational on 4 April, it was not until the 7th that it flew its first operational flight, when six aircraft flew a patrol over Augustus Downs. However, the unit was not united until 1 May 1943, when the rear party arrived from Cairns.

On 8 May 1943, two aircraft flew a standing patrol over Merauke. On the 16th Flying Officer Johnstone and Sergeant Stammers contacted three 'Betty' bombers over Merauke, but without result. From the 18th the standing patrol was increased to four aircraft. Patrols over Merauke were to be a major commitment of the Squadron until it was re-equipped with Kittyhawks.

The Squadron saw little action. However, on 17 June 1943 a Japanese flying boat dropped bombs in the sea near Horn Island and, on 30 August, a red air raid warning resulted in aircraft unsuccessfully attempting to intercept incoming raiders. The only loss to enemy action occurred on 9 September 1943, when a Boomerang was destroyed by fragmentation bombs during a raid on Merauke by 17 'Betty' bombers and 15 'Zeke' fighters.

The Boomerang was not a success in the interceptor role, and the first Kittyhawk arrived on 20 September 1943 to commence the re-equipment of the Squadron with this aircraft.

On 12 March 1944, 21 Kittyhawks flew to Livingstone, Northern Territory, where they remained until the 24th. Two accidents marred this deployment. On 18 March Flying Officer K.J. Oliver crash-landed at Darwin and Sergeant Oswald ran off the runway whilst landing at Livingstone on 20 March.

During 17 May 1944 the advance and main party of the Squadron embarked in the *George Eastman* bound for Townsville and, ultimately, Aitkenvale, where they arrived on 21 May 1944. From Aitkenvale 23 aircraft were allocated to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot, and it was decided to disband 84 Squadron. This direction was partially reversed on 12 June, when a signal was received that the unit would be reduced to cadre status, with a strength of approximately 30 personnel. Two days later, a letter was received to the effect that it was planned to reform 84 Squadron.

On 22 June the unit completed its move to Macrossan and, to implement the order to reform the Squadron, received its first Kittyhawk aircraft on 25 August 1944. Such was the state of the Squadron equipment that tools had to be borrowed from 13 Aircraft Repair Depot at Breddan to service the aircraft.

When 3 Repair and Servicing Unit was disbanded at Ross River, it was decided that 84 Squadron would complete its reformation using equipment from the disbanded unit. 84 Squadron moved back to Ross River on 17 November and personnel and aircraft were posted and allotted to the Squadron. The aircraft came from 1 Tactical Air Force resources and the disbanded 86 Squadron.

During April 1945 the Squadron participated in Army co-operation exercises and barge strafing training. It was also during April that Flight Lieutenants J.A. See and K.H. Kearney were killed in a mid-air collision.

The arrival of the Squadron's first Mustang fighter on 21 May 1945 was a morale booster. All the Squadron aircraft had been delivered by 29 July 1945, but the unit was not destined to fly the aircraft in combat. On 30 August 1945, six of the new fighters were allocated to 1 Tactical Air Force, and the pilots ferried the aircraft to Labuan. The first ferry flight commenced on 7 September, followed by other flights during the month. The Squadron activity decreased until it was disbanded on 29 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

24 February 1943	—Squadron Leader N.P. Ford
14 March 1944	—Flight Lieutenant W.R.C. McCulloch
12 January 1945	—Squadron Leader J.A. Cox

# 85 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- 23 February 1943 —formed at Guildford, WA
- 30 April 1943 —move of detachment to Exmouth Gulf, WA
- 1 October 1943 —detachment to Derby, WA
- 1 February 1944 —emergency detachment to Derby
- 12 May 1945 —commenced move to Pearce
- 29 November 1945 —Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

On 23 February 1943, Squadron Leader C.N. Daly was directed to form 85 Squadron at Guildford, Western Australia. It was to be located at Dunreath Aerodrome. The first officers and men had arrived on 15 February 1943. These were Squadron Leader Daly, Flight Lieutenant M.V. Monteflore, Flying Officers L. Wettenhall, J.G. Johnston and J.R. Chamberlain (Stores Officer), Pilot Officers R.T. Knight, G. Plain and M.Y. Stevenson, Sergeants J.C. Bailey, J.P. Crothers, D.Y. Prowse and G.O. Scott and 20 airmen.

Flying commenced with Brewster Buffalos and approximately 140 hours were flown on these aircraft before the first 11 Boomerangs arrived on 30 April, having flown from 83 Squadron at Strathpines, Queensland. The flight was led by Flight Lieutenant Roy Goon. Twenty-three ground staff, led by Flight Lieutenant A. Mitchell, accompanied the flight and serviced it on the way. On reaching Dunreath they were informed that they would be accompanying the Boomerangs to 'Potshot', Exmouth Gulf, to form half a squadron there. They were flown in the same Dakota which had brought them from Queensland.

At 'Potshot' the aircraft landed on a dusty strip parallel to the coast and close to the United States Navy base on the shore line. The aircraft were immediately serviced for any action. All personnel were billeted in a Nissen hut at the base until masonite huts were completed between the as yet unfinished airstrip and the coast. The huts were several kilometres north of the dust strip and were occupied on 16 May 1943.

On 20 May 1943, 6 Fighter Sector reported that unidentified aircraft were approaching. Two Boomerangs—A46-61, flown by Flight Lieutenant R. Goon and A46-58, flown by Flying Officer Goode—were

airborne, but no sightings were made. During the evening of the 21st, three unidentified aircraft flew over the airstrip. Flying Officer Stevenson and Flying Officer Wettenhall took off in Boomerangs to intercept. Wettenhall was orbiting the North West Coast at 18 000 feet when he sighted the exhaust flames of an aircraft about 3000 feet below and travelling north. He put on full power and, travelling at 260 mph, was slowly overhauling the aircraft when his engine cut due to lack of petrol. He put on his cockpit lights, changed tanks, but lost sight of the aircraft, returning to base on a lean mixture and with 15 gallons of fuel remaining. Wettenhall claimed that the aircraft was a 'Betty'. Flying Officer Stevenson reported nil sightings.

Training exercises began in earnest, the planes being operated from the new bitumen strips. After becoming familiar with the area the pilots carried out formation and gunnery exercises, security patrols, co-operation with the anti-aircraft batteries and night flying.

It was not long before some serious engine problems developed, caused by loose dust which lay heavily on the old unsealed airstrip. Another problem was when salt water entered fuel drums which had been unloaded from a barge and rolled onto the beach through water. Some spares, tools and equipment were lacking. A suitable pump for inflating undercarriage and tail wheel struts was never issued despite repeated requests and tyre tubes for a small towing vehicle could not be obtained.

Training exercises at Guildford took place with gunnery, security patrols, interceptions ordered by 6 Fighter Sector, conversions to type for new pilots, test flights, dog fights, cloud flying, aerobatics, anti-submarine patrols, shadow shooting, air fighting at 20 000 feet, night flying, Army co-operation and travel. There was a fatal accident at Guildford due to an aircraft swinging on take-off. The aircraft burnt and the pilot died in hospital six days later.

In June 1943 there was heavy rain at 'Potshot' which not only interrupted flying but prevented food being delivered and the base was on short rations.

On 23 June, lights were reported off Exmouth Cape. A party was sent and it proved to be distress signals sent by a patrol vessel which had run aground. On 3 July, a United States Navy Catalina suffered an engine failure while making a low pass over the strip. It landed on the spinifex scrub and overturned. Flight Sergeant Alan Mitchell saw the accident and, together with Flying Officer Pascoe and the tender driver, raced to

*Left: 93 Squadron unofficial crest  
'Spookus Sneakinus'*



*Below: Flying Officer Farrant and  
Flight Lieutenant Sims of 93 Squadron  
with their rescuers Anthony Bong and  
Sang Tong, Labuan, 28 August 1945*





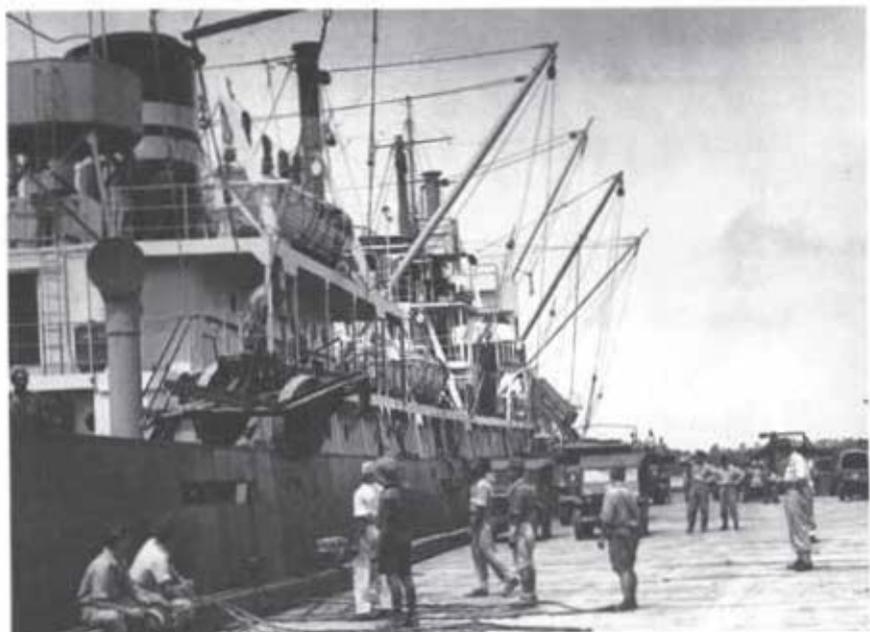
*84 Squadron Mustangs at Townsville*



*Wing Commander  
B. 'Black Jack' Walker*



*Wing Commander Lou Spence*



*81 Wing personnel arrive in Japan, February 1946*



*82 Squadron Mustangs at Miho, Japan, October 1947*



*3 Squadron Mustang with practice rockets, Townsville, August 1951*



*77 Squadron Meteors on the Iwakuni flight line*



*Flying Officer K. Blight and Sergeant K. Mitchell of 77 Squadron discuss the features of a Meteor with two USAF pilots*



*Sergeant Vance Drummond*



*77 Squadron Commanding Officer,  
Wing Commander A. Hodges,  
5 June 1953*



*Pilot Officers J.L. Surman (left) and W.H. Simmonds shot down a MiG 15 each on 4 and 8 May 1952, respectively*



*Sergeant G. Hale scored 77 Squadron's final MiG 15 'kill' on 27 March 1953*



*Airmen's accommodation, Kimpo, Korea*



*HM Queen Elizabeth inspects a 78 Wing guard of honour, Malta, 3 May 1954*

*Right: Sergeant L.B. Weymouth flew with 78 Wing at Malta*



*Below: 'Bay' Adams jokes with Australian variety performer Kitty Bluett at Malta, September 1952*

*Bottom: 78 Wing Vampires scramble during Operation 'Drago'*



the scene. The two pilots were unconscious; one had an arm severed at the shoulder by the starboard airscrew, which had swung inboard. The injured were flown south in an Anson but the pilot died later.

On 15 September 1943 there was a yellow warning at 2330 hours. Four aircraft were airborne for two hours but there were nil sightings.

A signal was received on 30 September 1943 to move Boomerang aircraft to Derby for an emergency operation. Four Boomerang aircraft arrived on 1 October 1943 and another nine the following day. On 3 October 1943 a fatal accident occurred at Derby when Pilot Officer Armstrong was detailed to locate and drop a message to the SS *Koomilya* in King Sound. After doing so, the aircraft rolled and plunged into the Sound. Meanwhile at Guildford there were two fatal accidents in a fortnight. On 22 September 1943, Sergeant B.O. Wolf died when his aircraft crashed and burnt and, on 2 October 1943, Flight Sergeant A.H.D. McDonald died in the crash of A46-22 after structural failure in the tailplane. All aircraft were subject to an examination and several were returned from Exmouth Gulf for further examination.

Exercises at Derby were from dawn to dusk flying pairs of aircraft which were airborne from two to two and a half hours at a time, patrolling from the strip at Derby to Point Torment. Patrols took place from 6 to 13 October, after which Flight Lieutenant Wilson led 11 aircraft back to 'Potshot'.

Several accidents occurred in the following months. On 27 December Flight Sergeant W.J. Turnbull was killed when his aircraft landed, hit a ditch and burnt.

In January 1944 the last of the Buffalos was flown to Eagle Farm by the Commanding Officer. There was another emergency movement of airmen to Derby on 1 February 1944, followed by 18 Boomerang aircraft between the 10th and 14th. Patrols began on 17 February, and continued until the 26th. The following day the aircraft began returning to Guildford.

On 11 March 1944, two Spitfires arrived from Geraldton. These were followed by 18 from Carnarvon and a further four from Kalgoorlie on the 12th. Another was delivered from Geraldton on the 23rd.

On 6 April 1944, another detachment, led by Flight Lieutenant Wilson, was sent to Derby, returning on the 13th. On the 14th a further five aircraft went to Derby, patrols took place from the 18th to the 28th and the aircraft returned to Guildford on 1 May 1944. Another flight of six

aircraft went to Derby on 12 May, to be followed by another 19 aircraft on the 13th.

During July 1944, the Squadron began gearing up to fly Spitfires. A fatal accident occurred on 4 July when Leading Aircraftman J.E.J. Williamson, an armourer, was cleaning a gun on a Boomerang.

During August 1944, air-to-ground and air-to-air gunnery exercises, and fighter affiliation exercises with Vultee Vengeance aircraft from 25 Squadron, were flown.

During September 1944 the first of the Spitfires arrived and Squadron Leader K. James assumed command. Early in October 1944 the process of re-arming with Spitfires received an impetus when three Spitfires arrived from Gorrie. With them came Flight Lieutenants 'Nobbie' Clark and Lock Munro who were attached to the Squadron for six weeks to give instruction.

An accident happened early on the morning of 2 November 1944 when Warrant Officer G.S. Cuming crashed a Boomerang close to the strip. He escaped with minor injuries although the wreckage spread more than 100 yards.

On 10 December 1944, 12 Spitfires engaged Vultee Vengeance aircraft in an exercise: also height tests were carried out at 31 000 feet. On the 20th the airmen's Christmas party took place and on the 22nd, four Spitfires flew over Gloucester Park in support of the United States Navy Christmas party. Late in December two more Boomerangs left Guildford and Spitfires carried out cross country flights to Quaraiding, Dowerin, Lake Yomdamung, Harvey and Guildford.

On 12 January 1945, the Commanding Officer led a flight of 12 Spitfires in a Squadron formation. The last of the Boomerangs left Guildford for Kalgoorlie, the Squadron now being fully equipped with Spitfires.

On 13 January, Leading Aircraftman J. Roberts was presented with a Certificate of Merit for a gallant attempt to rescue a pilot from a burning Airacobra at Wards Strip, Port Moresby, in September 1943.

Flight Sergeant Doyle was injured when his aircraft collided with another Spitfire after landing on 26 February. Doyle was flown to Melbourne for specialist treatment, and subsequently recovered.

On 4 April 1945 eight Squadron aircraft, led by Squadron Leader Lewis, escorted the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester's Avro York from Cunderdin to Perth, and personnel participated in a march past for the

Duke and Duchess in Perth on the 9th. Late in April there were cross country flying practices, battle climbs and combat flying.

On 11 May 1945 the Squadron received instructions that it was to move to Pearce; the first truck moved off to Pearce next day. Flying resumed at Pearce and cross country flights were made to Cunderdin and Kalgoorlie. Flights were also made over HMS *Illustrious* in Fremantle Harbour.

During June 1945 air-to-ground gunnery was carried out at Lancelin Island, although bad weather and heavy rain restricted flying.

On 7 July, the Squadron had the sad task of escorting the aircraft carrying the remains of the late Prime Minister, John Curtin. On 15 August, Sergeant Dunn force-landed a Spitfire near Rockingham due to engine failure. He was not injured but the plane was a write-off.

On the 16th, 17 aircraft, led by Squadron Leader M.S. Lewis, flew over Perth in perfect formation during the Victory Pageant. During the rest of the month there were numerous cross country flights to Cunderdin. During September 1945 more formation flying; cross country exercises were undertaken and dog fights with a Beaufort from 14 Squadron eased the tedium.

Flying officially ceased on 20 September and the Squadron officially ceased to function on the 24th. Aircraft were allotted to 6 Aircraft Depot. On 11 October it was announced that 29 November would be the last day of 85 Squadron. During October the Spitfires departed; one was damaged in landing at Kalgoorlie on the 6th, another became unserviceable at Parafield due to a glycol leak. From the 20th onwards disbandment proceeded and offices, tool stores and maintenance shops were all vacated.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

23 February 1943	—Squadron Leader C.N. Daley
September 1944	—Squadron Leader K.E. James
27 March 1945	—Squadron Leader M.S. Lewis

# 86 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

4 March 1943	—formed at Gawler, SA
27 May 1943	—arrived at Ross River, Qld
5 July 1943	—deployment to Merauke completed
25 April 1944	—moved to Strauss, NT
26 May 1944	—5 Repair and Servicing Unit to form at Bohle River, North Queensland from personnel and equipment of 86 Squadron
24 June 1944	—nucleus commenced move from Bohle River to Macrossan
30 November 1945	—moved to 1 Replacement Personnel Pool
20 December 1945	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

86 Squadron, equipped with P-40M Kittyhawk fighters, was formed at Gawler, South Australia, on 4 March 1943, under the command of Squadron Leader W.J. Meehan.

The Squadron arrived at Ross River, North Queensland on 27 May 1943, before deploying to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea on 5 July 1943. The Squadron remained at this location until relieved by 120 (NEI) Squadron during April 1944.

Whilst at Merauke, the Squadron flew standing patrols over the area, undertook Army co-operation exercises and supply dropping, and escorted vessels like the *Islander* and *Soedoe* which travelled between Merauke, Thursday Island and Tanahmerah.

A highlight of the deployment was a strike made on Aika and Japero, which was flown in conjunction with aircraft from 84 Squadron.

On 25 April the Squadron, having been relieved by 120 (NEI) Squadron, commenced moving to Strauss in the Northern Territory. The ground crew travelled by ship; the aircraft staged through Horn Island, Townsville and Cloncurry before arriving at Strauss.

Whilst at Strauss, 19 of its P-40M Kittyhawk aircraft were passed to 77 Squadron to replace their P-40Ns.

The future of the Squadron was now in doubt. During 26 May 1944, a

Bohle River, North Queensland, on that date. This Unit was to be formed from the personnel and equipment of 86 Squadron, which was to be reduced to cadre strength forthwith, and become a lodger unit at 1 Replacement Personnel Pool. All the Squadron aircraft were to be used to re-arm 80 Squadron in New Guinea. However, during June 1944 this plan was varied to allow the Squadron to remain in nucleus, consisting of approximately 30 personnel and two aircraft pending reformation. The Squadron was due to move to Macrossan before being reformed.

The Squadron commenced moving to Macrossan on 24 June 1944. This move was finally completed on 11 January 1945, and the Squadron remained at Macrossan until November.

86 Squadron was disbanded on 20 December 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

4 March 1943	—Squadron Leader W.J. Meehan
19 January 1944	—Squadron Leader S.W. Galton
31 July 1944	—Flight Lieutenant A.D. Mackrell

# 92 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

25 May 1945	—raised at Kingaroy, Qld
4 January 1946	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

92 Squadron was formed at Kingaroy, Queensland, on 25 May 1945, but did not receive its first aircraft, an Anson, until 19 June 1945. The delivery of this aircraft was followed by that of a Beaufort next day, and it was not until 4 July 1945 that the Squadron's first Beaufighter was delivered.

During the first few months, the Squadron activity centred around the arrival of personnel and the allotment of motor transport, with very little flying recorded.

The announcement of the Armistice on 15 August was celebrated with a two-day stand down, and visitors from the town inspected the unit. An informal celebration was held in Kingaroy, at which the members of the unit participated wholeheartedly, and the Sergeants' and Airmen's Messes both held a victory dance.

The personnel of the unit were being posted for demobilisation, and on 3 September 1945 Warrant Officer Jorgensen was killed when his Beaufighter crashed at Narrandera. In addition, six personnel based at Narrandera were also killed in the accident.

Disbandment of 92 Squadron commenced on 20 September 1945, and, after the final posting of personnel, was completed on 4 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

25 May 1945	—Squadron Leader H.D. Foot
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# 93 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 22 January 1945  | —formed at Kingaroy, Qld                                  |
| 22 May 1945      | —advance party landed at Morotai                          |
| 13 June 1945     | —echelon 'C' landed at Labuan                             |
| 23 December 1945 | —personnel and ground equipment arrived at Narromine, NSW |
| 22 August 1946   | —Squadron disbanded at Narromine                          |

## NARRATIVE

93 Squadron, the last operational Beaufighter squadron, was formed at Kingaroy, Queensland, on 22 January 1945. Unofficially known as the 'Green Ghost Squadron', its unofficial badge proclaimed 'Spookus Sneakinus'.

The first aircraft arrived at the unit during January, and for the next three months training concentrated on gunnery and rocket exercises. On 16 February an aircraft hit a tree during a gunnery exercise at Evans Head; five days later another was damaged by fragments after pulling out at a low altitude after the release of its rockets. Both aircraft were repaired at Evans Head. On 4 March 1945 six aircraft attacked a replica of a Japanese bunker built on the Wasp Creek artillery range and, much to the delight of the watching Army officers and personnel, demolished it. They were not so successful on the 14th. In full view of General Blamey, the Squadron aircrews missed the target by at least 1000 yards.

On 5 March, three Beaufighters departed from Oakey, Queensland to escort Spitfires of 79 Squadron to Morotai. One of the aircraft, flown by Warrant Officer C.W. Lawton and Sergeant N.A. Duckmanton, swung on take-off and ground looped at Cooktown Mission.

April was quiet. On the 6th, nine aircraft participated in a display over Brisbane in support of the Third Victory Loan. However, crews sought diversions whilst waiting for the move north; on 7 April Flying Officer H.K. Williams barrel rolled his Beaufighter—a forbidden manoeuvre. This escapade earned the pilot three weeks Duty Officer status. In another incident, Flight Lieutenant H. Raynor's aircraft was burnt when it ran off the airstrip at Strathpine on 16 April.

On 11 May 1945, the advance ground party embarked on the US Army Transport *Sea Ray* for the voyage to Morotai, where they arrived 11 days later. Echelon 'C' boarded the SS *Simon Bamberger* on 5 June, bound for Labuan. After landing on the 13th the ground party established itself, although the aircraft were delayed due to the unserviceability of the landing ground at Tarakan.

It was not until July that the first aircraft arrived at Labuan, with the first operational sorties being flown on the 26th. Flying Officers H.K. Williams and K.G. Shirley accompanied a 1 Squadron Mosquito on an armed reconnaissance of the Rjanag, Sibuluan, Mukah and Bintulu areas. At Sibuluan, the Beaufighters fired eight rockets each into the residency building, where it was suspected that the local Japanese commanders were in conference.

The remaining 19 aircraft left Kingaroy on 31 July 1945, and arrived at Labuan on 5 August, where the Squadron came under the command of 86 Wing.

On 7 August eight aircraft were detailed to attack an oil tanker in the mouth of the Tabuan River with rockets, and strafe the barracks at Tromboul and shipping in the South China Sea. The aircraft, flying in two lines of four, made landfall at Cape Sipang, and the target ship was sighted at 0338Z. Squadron Leader D.K.H. Gulliver attacked from a height of 600 feet, at a range of 600 yards. Eighteen hits and nine near misses were counted on the 800-ton ship, which was considered to be destroyed in the attack. Unfortunately, local natives advised Flying Officer R. Lloyd on 29 September that the target was not an oil tanker, but the *Mia Moanai*, the private yacht of the Rajah of Sarawak.

The aircraft of Flight Lieutenant Vernon Sims and Flying Officer Reginald Farrant lost all communications with the rest of the flight and the crew was reported missing. Sims was flying Number Two to the Commanding Officer. After firing his rockets, he pulled out to the left to take position behind his leader. Sims attempted to maintain height, but the starboard engine failed due to a loss of oil pressure, and the Beaufighter was forced into the jungle below. After walking through swamps and small rivers and thick undergrowth, Sims and his observer, Flying Officer Reginald Farrant, were rowed to the coast by friendly natives. After a few alarms, the two airmen were rescued by Anthony Bong and a Filipino, Vincent Usarga, and conveyed to safety aboard a sampan. They arrived at Labuan, after hospitalisation at Miri, on 21 August.

The last 93 Squadron operations occurred on 13 August 1945. Four Beaufighters were detailed to make an armed reconnaissance of Kuching Aerodrome and the other eight attacked Tromboul Airfield with rockets. A twin engine aircraft was sighted near the airfield, and the attack on buildings left a column of smoke which could be seen for 20 miles.

With the cessation of hostilities, 93 Squadron aircraft dropped leaflets over Japanese areas to inform them that the War was over, an activity which continued until 9 September. Two days later, 93 Squadron aircraft made a show of strength over Kuching, but there was little subsequent flying. On 15 September Flying Officer Williams flew movie film of the surrender of the Japanese at Singapore to Laverton, and 10 days later the Squadron was requested to destroy US barges by rocket fire.

On 21 October the Squadron operations room was officially closed, but weather reconnaissance flights continued to be flown. On 19 October nine aircraft escorted 15 Spitfires to Oakey, Queensland, with the remaining aircraft detailed to escort Mustangs to Japan. Nine Spitfires were delivered intact, and two Beaufighters suffered damage, one during take-off at Oakey and another ground looped at Wagga.

The Beaufighter crewed by Warrant Officers Newbury and Goss suffered an engine failure whilst in transit from Morotai to Labuan on 8 November. The aircraft diverted to Tarakan where it damaged the flaps and tail wheel on landing and coming to rest in the edge of a creek. The local Repair and Salvage Unit decided to wait until next morning to salvage the aircraft, but heavy overnight rain caused the bank of the creek to collapse. A cable was looped around the tail of the Beaufighter, and two bulldozers attempted to pull the aircraft out. They only succeeded in pulling the aircraft's tail off; the undercarriage legs were held in the mud.

Squadron Leader D.K.H. Gulliver was killed on 10 December 1945 when his aircraft collided with two Mustangs parked beside the airstrip, and Flight Lieutenant L.H. Kirkman assumed command of 93 Squadron.

On 20 December 1945, First Tactical Air Force advised that the Squadron was to be reduced to an air echelon and nucleus party. Personnel and ground equipment were transported to Narromine, New South Wales, arriving on 23 December 1945.

Squadron Leader C.W. Stark arrived at Labuan on 4 January 1946, to find the Squadron allocated to escort 81 (Fighter) Wing aircraft to Japan. These flights, through Clark Field, Naha and Iwakuni, were completed in the second week of March 1946. The Beaufighters returned to Narromine.

The last flight of 93 Squadron was when two Beaufighters were delivered to Essendon, Victoria, on 14 May, and the Squadron disbanded at Narromine on 22 August 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

22 January 1945	—Squadron Leader D.K.H. Gulliver
10 December 1945	—Flight Lieutenant L.H. Kirkman
4 January 1946	—Squadron Leader C.W. Stark

# 94 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- 30 May 1945 —formed at Castlereagh, NSW  
24 January 1946 —disbanded at Richmond, NSW

## NARRATIVE

94 Squadron, equipped with Mosquito aircraft, was formed at Castlereagh Strip near Richmond, New South Wales, on 30 May 1945. It was planned that the unit would form part of 86 Wing.

On the previous day, Squadron Leader Hunt had flown a Mosquito from Ferry Flight, Richmond, to the Castlereagh Strip to test its suitability for operation of the aircraft.

Personnel were initially accommodated at Richmond until the adjutant and 100 men moved to the camp at Castlereagh on 27 June 1944. The move was completed on 29 June.

During July 1945, the Squadron flew a total of 73.35 hours training in Mosquito aircraft.

The Castlereagh site was waterlogged and required work by a flight of 9 Airfield Construction Squadron to prepare hard standing for the aircraft.

During July Mr Frank Wormald, a Rolls Royce representative, and a representative from de Havilland Propeller Division, lectured the ground staff and aircrew to familiarise them with their various tasks before the Mosquitos were delivered. This activity continued until September 1945. During August, aircrew members inspected the facilities at de Havillands and various sub-contractors.

During 18 September, advice was received from Headquarters Eastern Area that 94 Squadron would cease to function on 20 September 1945.

On 29 October 1945, an airmen's tent was burnt down.

On 7 January 1946 the Squadron vacated the Castlereagh camp site and moved to Richmond, where the unit was disbanded on 24 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

- 30 May 1945 —Squadron Leader V.H. Hunt

# 120 (NEI) SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

10 December 1943	—formed at Canberra, ACT
9 March 1944	—commenced deployment to 'Potshot', WA
28 March 1944	—returned to Canberra
9 May 1944	—operational at Merauke, Dutch New Guinea
14 February 1945	—non-operational at Merauke
12 June 1945	—first operations from Biak
20 June 1946	—came under SEAC control
1 March 1950	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

120 Squadron was formed at Canberra on 10 December 1943. Under the command of Captain H.A. Maurenbrecher, the Squadron was to be equipped and manned on the same basis as 18 Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Squadron, with equipment and aircrew being supplied by the Netherlands East Indies authorities and ground crew from RAAF resources.

During December 1943 NEI pilots who had been previously trained in the United States underwent training at 2 Operational Conversion Unit, Mildura, for familiarisation with RAAF procedures.

By 22 January 1944, the Squadron had received its full complement of P-40N Kittyhawk fighters and was at a strength of 213 RAAF officers and airmen with 28 officers and airmen of the NEI Air Force.

The original plans were for 120 Squadron to operate alongside 18 (NEI) Squadron in the Northern Territory. This did not eventuate, and the decision was made for the unit to operate from Merauke, Dutch New Guinea. However, the deployment to Merauke was delayed due to a perceived Japanese invasion threat in Western Australia during March 1944. On 9 March seven Kittyhawks departed from Canberra, en route for the 'Potshot' base at Exmouth Gulf. Two more Kittyhawks followed on 11 March, and the remaining 15 flew from Canberra on 13 March.

The Squadron remained at 'Potshot' until the invasion scare diminished, returning to Canberra on 28 March 1944. The flight was

made from 'Potshot', through Forrest, Kalgoorlie and Ceduna, with two pilots being forced to bale out of their aircraft 50 miles south of Mildura.

On 31 March the decision was made to move the Squadron from Canberra to Merauke, where it would replace 86 Squadron. The advance party departed from Canberra on 10 April 1944, travelling in three Dakotas and a Mitchell aircraft. The main party arrived by train in Sydney on 27 April, where they embarked on MV *Gorgon* for the passage to Merauke. The main party arrived at Merauke on 7 May 1944. The Squadron Headquarters became operational on 9 May 1944, after the aircraft had been ferried, under the escort of a Ventura bomber, from Canberra.

The Squadron's first casualty occurred on 18 May 1944 when Leading Aircraftman R.C. Glenn was accidentally killed while cleaning the guns in a Kittyhawk.

During May, the Squadron flew orientation flights, combat formation exercises and practice interceptions on the Vultee Vengeance dive bombers of 12 Squadron. In June this training was supplemented by a program of aerial tactics, gunnery and dive bombing. During the month, the Kittyhawks undertook many scrambles to intercept unidentified aircraft, which proved to be friendly.

During 27 June 1944, four aircraft undertook an armed reconnaissance of Cooks Bay, and Major Maurenbrecher led four Kittyhawks on a bombing and strafing attack in support of the Army.

After a bombing and strafing attack on Japero, Lieutenant Verspoor force-landed on a beach 10 miles south of Cooks Bay, and was located by Major Maurenbrecher, who was flying the Squadron's Lockheed Lodestar. A 12 Squadron Vengeance dropped supplies and Verspoor was rescued by a Catalina on 6 July 1944. Sergeant Pilot Observer R. Pelsmarker became the first Squadron aircrew casualty when he died whilst being carried back to base after crashing near Nassam village on 24 July.

A Dutch Dakota, carrying seven NEI Air Force pilots and Squadron Leader Dawson and other RAAF personnel, was reported missing near Cairns on 6 September. It had been contacted in low cloud and redirected to Townsville, but disappeared. In 1989, a party of botanists from the Australian and New Zealand Exploration Society stumbled on the remains of the aircraft in the mountains near Mossman, North Queensland. The aircraft had hit a 1500 metre mountain, only 150 metres from the ridge line. Also in September, the Squadron suffered three

Kittyhawk crashes, and Captain U.H. Mulder was killed whilst on a dive bombing exercise, using live 250-lb bombs, on the 19th.

The Squadron attacked Otakwa village on 16 November 1944, and undertook similar strikes on Timoeka and on shipping during December. Lieutenant Sandberg crash-landed the Squadron's lone Wirraway at Kikori en route to Tanahmerah. Lieutenant P. Dejager was killed in action on 9 December when flying with 80 Squadron during an attack on an enemy steamer off Lantor Island.

The future location of 120 Squadron was in doubt due to the redeployment of RAAF units from Merauke late in 1944. After many plans, which did not bear fruit—that the Squadron move to Jacquinot Bay, New Britain, Horn Island or Higgins Field, Cape York Peninsula—the unit became non-operational on 14 February 1945.

The Squadron remained at a non-operational status until April 1945, although some of the pilots flew with 77 Squadron to maintain operational experience. Finally, a decision was made to deploy 120 Squadron to Jacquinot Bay, and the unit departed from Merauke on the *Bontekoe* on 14 April 1945, bound for Darwin. Seven days later the ship, with other units of 79 Wing, departed for Jacquinot Bay, travelling via Bowen and Townsville. On arrival on 9 May, information was received that the unit would deploy to Biak. The seaborne echelon of the Squadron arrived at Biak on 21 May 1945. However, it was not until 10 June 1945 that the remaining personnel and aircraft were all located on the island and the Squadron was declared operational two days later.

It was planned to operate 120 Squadron to support US troops clearing the Biak area, and it would form part of 11 Group RAAF. The responsibilities of the Group were local air defence and sea/land protection; offensive operations against enemy targets within range and line of communications duties. 11 Group's sphere of influence covered Dutch territory north of latitude 7 degrees South and east of longitude 108 degrees East. Air bases at Hollandia, Biak, Middleburg, Morotai, Labuan and Tarakan were to be utilised. However, the War ended before the organisation could be put in place.

The move to Biak saw 120 Squadron involved in operations. During June 1945 fuel dumps and troop concentrations were attacked near Moemi Airstrip and eight strikes were made in the Vogelkop and Geelvink Bay areas, where the pilots used glide bombing techniques which impressed with their accuracy. Other targets were barges and

any marine craft, and photographic reconnaissance missions were undertaken over Mansin Island.

During July the Squadron was located at Middleburg, co-operating with 15 Squadron Beauforts in bombing and strafing attacks on Sijara, Saborwa and Foemaoe Plantation. Other targets included the strafing of anti-aircraft positions, and huts and buildings at Manokwari, where it was suspected that an enemy homing beacon was housed. Operations against these targets commenced early in the morning of 30 July 1945, with three flights of five Kittyhawks encountering the heaviest opposition yet met by the Squadron. Three Kittyhawks were lost and four hit by enemy ground fire. Despite the losses, operations were continued throughout the afternoon and during the following day.

Attacks on the Manokwari area continued during the first week of August. In 25 sorties, three aircraft were shot down. Two of the pilots, Lieutenant Fokkinga and Sergeant Bakhery were rescued by US Air-Sea Rescue Catalinas. The intense operations continued until the cessation of hostilities on 15 August 1945.

During September and October, 120 Squadron carried out surveillance flights, provided air cover for various purposes, searched for barges and dropped leaflets. However, during October 1945 the possible move of the NEI squadrons to Java put the question of the future of the RAAF members of the Squadron in doubt. Subsequently, the RAAF elements of the NEI squadrons were disbanded in the field on 30 October 1945, but it was not until February 1946 that all the RAAF personnel were posted from the Squadron. On 20 June 1946, 120 (NEI) Squadron came under the operational control of the Netherlands East Indies Army Air Headquarters and South East Asia Command, and the link with the RAAF was broken.

The link with the RAAF had extended into the realm of training. In 1944 the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal George Jones agreed to the request that 50 NEI aircrew trainees be given initial and service flying training, on the proviso that operational flying training be undertaken at the NEI Personnel and Equipment Pool, Canberra. However, it was impossible for NEI authorities to provide sufficient fighter pilots to carry out operational training at Canberra, and the RAAF was asked to undertake the operational training of NEI fighter pilots, particularly those returning from operational tours, at RAAF Operational Training Units. To help meet this requirement, the NEI authorities offered to make fighter aircraft available to RAAF Operational Training Units. In March

1945, four Kittyhawks were loaned to 2 Operational Training Unit at Mildura.

The Squadron saw active service against Indonesian Nationalists and, with the proclamation of Indonesian independence on 29 December 1949, and the transfer of airfields and equipment to the Indonesian Air Force on 1 March 1950, 120 (NEI) Squadron ceased to exist.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

10 December 1943 —Captain H.A. Maurenbrecher

### **RAAF Personnel Senior Administrative Officers**

10 December 1943 —Squadron Leader C.B. Dolphin

1 September 1944 —Squadron Leader K.L. Williams

22 January 1945 —Squadron Leader L.W. Smith

# 450 SQUADRON

*Harass*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 16 February 1941  | —formed at RAAF Williamtown, NSW |
| 9 April 1941      | —departed for Middle East        |
| 29 June 1941      | —moved to Amman, Lebanon         |
| 18 July 1941      | —moved to Haifa                  |
| 19 August 1941    | —moved to Rayak                  |
| 16 February 1942  | —moved to Gambut Main, Egypt     |
| February 1943     | —moved to El Assa, Tunisia       |
| 1 August 1943     | —moved to Agnone, Sicily         |
| 17 September 1943 | —moved to Grottaglie, Italy      |
| 19 May 1945       | —moved to Lavarino               |
| 20 August 1945    | —Squadron disbanded in Italy     |

## NARRATIVE

The first 'Article XV' Squadron to be raised in Australia—450 Squadron—began forming at RAAF Williamtown, New South Wales, on 16 February 1941.

Comprised entirely of ground staff, 450 was designated an 'infiltration squadron', amalgamating later with a host RAF squadron, which would provide the air component, until such time as pilots and planes became available.

Under the temporary command of Flying Officer R.H.M. Gibbes, later posted to 3 Squadron, RAAF, the Squadron embarked for the Middle East in HMT *Queen Elizabeth* on 9 April 1941.

Arriving in Egypt on 3 May, the Squadron proceeded to Abu Suweir where Squadron Leader G.H. Steege, DFC, posted in from 3 Squadron RAAF, took over command from the Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant B.McR. Shepherd, on the 31st. 450 Squadron moved to Aqir, Palestine, on 23 June, where it joined with 260 Squadron RAF (Squadron Leader C.J. Mount, DFC, RAF), forming 260/450 (Hurricane) Squadron.

As the invasion of Syria made headway the Squadron was deployed on 29 June to Amman, Transjordan, from where the Hurricanes, ably supported by Australian ground crews, attacked Vichy French aerodromes, military installations and road and rail transport to good effect. During early July the Squadron moved to Damascus from where further sorties were flown until the Armistice came into effect on the 15th.

On 18 July the Squadron moved to Haifa for local area defence duties, until the arrival of 260 Squadron's ground staff in mid-August when the squadrons separated, 450 Squadron adopting a non-operational role on moving to Rayak on 19 August. In late October the Squadron moved to Burg-el-Arab, Egypt, as an Advanced Repair and Service Unit.

In early December the Squadron, now based at Landing Ground 'Y', Quassasin, began reforming as a fighter squadron. It received its first Kittyhawk Mk I (P-40E) on the 18th.

On 16 February 1942 the Squadron moved to Gambut Main, with a detachment at El Adem, and recorded its first victory on the 22nd, when Sergeant R. Shaw destroyed a Ju88 near Gazala.

Next day, while escorting Bostons in the Tmimi-Martuba area, 450 Squadron was bounced by Messerschmitt Bf109s. Sergeant I.A. Nursey destroyed one and damaged another while Sergeant K.M. McBride, the Squadron's first aircrew casualty, was killed attempting a forced landing.

Six Kittyhawks, in company with 3 Squadron RAAF, intercepted a force of 15 Ju87 dive bombers escorted by nine Macchi C200/2 fighters, on 8 March 1942. In the ensuing fight, the Squadron destroyed three and damaged one of the fighters for no loss, Sergeants F.W. Beste, D.H. McBurnie, R.D. Dyson and Shaw being the scorers.

Local area defence sorties and bomber escorts were flown until the end of the month, while a combat on the 28th resulted in two 109s and an MC202 claimed as probables by Squadron Leader Steege and Sergeants N.H. Shillabeer and Nursey.

April started tragically. Pilot Officers Evatt and MacPherson were killed in a mid-air collision. Patrols and bomber escorts, with little enemy contact, were flown until 29 April when the Squadron—with its score

standing at six confirmed kills, four probables and two damaged—was rested.

Now part of 239 Wing, the Squadron resumed its fighter bomber role without any conclusive enemy contact until 23 May when two Bf109s were destroyed by Flight Sergeants McBurnie and Nursey.

With the launch of Panzerarmee Afrika's offensive against the Gazala-Bir Hacheim line of defences on the night of 27-28 May the Squadron found many targets, strafing and bombing enemy troops, transport and armour as well as providing fighter bomber escorts. During a sortie on 27 May Sergeant Shillabeer destroyed a Bf109, while two confirmed Ju87 kills were made two days later. It was during this period that Squadron Leader Steege relinquished command to Squadron Leader A.D. Ferguson.

After the torrential rains of March, the Squadron now suffered heavy sandstorms which did little to slow the operational pace. Pilots flew three to four sorties a day while the ground crews worked under adverse conditions to maintain a high serviceability rate.

On 3 June, the Wing's aircraft joined the assault on enemy forces attacking the Free French at Bir Hacheim, only to be switched to the northern 'Knightsbridge' area where Panzer Divisions were clashing with British armoured units. During this period 450 Squadron flew 42 escort missions.

As the British Army began to fall back the Squadron, with others of 239 Wing, attempted to slow the enemy advance, flying 15 sorties with its newly arrived 'Kitty-bombers', in addition to 25 escorts on the 16th.

The Squadron withdrew to Sidi Azeiz on the 17th, followed the next day by a move to LG75, Sidi Barrani. During this period the Squadron continued to wreak havoc with bomb and machine gun amongst the advancing enemy, losing 11 pilots to enemy action.

Although the Squadron's main function was ground attack it was quite capable in the fighter role, as demonstrated on 18 June when Flight Lieutenant J.E.A. Williams and Flight Sergeant Dyson each destroyed a Bf109. Further withdrawals took the Squadron, finally, to LG91, near Alexandria.

Tired, but not dispirited, the Squadron joined the first Battle of El Alamein flying 160 sorties between 1 and 6 July for the loss of three aircraft. During this period the Kittyhawks were modified to carry 500 lbs (226 kg) of bombs, doubling the previous load.

While attacking the enemy-held El Daba Aerodrome on 19 July the Squadron shot down, while still carrying their bomb loads, three Ju52s and a Ju87. Squadron Leader Ferguson, Flight Lieutenant F.E. Parker, Flight Sergeant Dyson and Sergeants R.G. Brown and G. Lindsay made claims. By the end of July the Squadron had flown 500 sorties, for the loss of two more aircraft.

During August the Squadron continued to harass the enemy, flying 80 sorties during the last 10 days of the month, and with the arrival during September of Kittyhawk Mk IIIs (P-40 K/M) the attacks continued with renewed vigour.

On 2 October the Squadron moved to LG224 as part of the defence of Cairo and exchanged Commanding Officers. Squadron Leader J.E.A. Williams took over command, until he was forced down and captured on the 31st; his replacement was the South African born Squadron Leader M.C.H. 'Ali' Barber, RAF.

A move to LG175, on 14 October, brought 450 Squadron back into action, 'softening' up the enemy prior to the vital second Battle of El Alamein. Between its arrival at the front and the end of the month the Squadron destroyed two Bf109s, an MC202 and damaged another 109. The victors were Flight Lieutenant F.R. Schaaf, Flying Officer H.F. Marting and Sergeant J.D. Gleeson.

In early November, with the enemy retreating from the El Alamein battle ground, 450 Squadron began long range bombing and strafing of enemy communications. It was during one such sortie, on 9 November, that a memorable act of fortitude began: Sergeant D.W.P. Borthwick, attacked by Bf109s and wounded in both legs, baled out losing his emergency rations. Landing south of the battle area he crawled northwards for five days surviving on insects and dew from desert vegetation. He was in a pitiful state when picked up by a British patrol.

As the 8th Army advanced the Squadron moved forward, reaching Martuba on 19 November where bad weather forced it to rest. The Squadron had flown 600 sorties for the month and destroyed a large quantity of enemy material.

With the enemy once again retreating the Squadron moved on 18 December to Marble Arch airfield where it spent Christmas, moving to Ghel on the 31st. January saw the Squadron supporting the push towards Tripoli. It engaged enemy aircraft on 14 January, when Flight Sergeant V.J. McFarlane shot down a 109, and on 22 January when three Bf109s and an MC202 were destroyed, with a 109 damaged. With the fall of

Tripoli, 450 Squadron moved to Castel Benito on 24 January, having attacked the airfield three days previously, destroying three and damaging seven aircraft on the ground.

The first two weeks of February saw the Squadron move to El Assa from where, on the 26th, 11 Kittyhawks bombed Gabes West Aerodrome. On the return flight, a fight with 12 Bf109s developed; the Squadron claimed one destroyed and one damaged for the loss of two aircraft, while the next day Flying Officer G.H. Norton claimed another 109.

On 10 March the Squadron flew in support of Free French units which were being attacked at Ksar Rhilane, and destroyed a number of enemy vehicles. With the arrival of Squadron Leader J.P. Bartle as Commanding Officer on 16 March, the Squadron began the final battles for Tunisia, which culminated in the surrender of the Axis forces on 11 May.

450 Squadron finished the North African campaign with a score of 39 destroyed, 18 probables and seven enemy aircraft damaged in air combat. Squadron members were awarded three Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFCs), four Distinguished Flying Medals (DFMs) and two Mentioned in Despatches (MIDs). Sadly it had cost the Squadron 33 war dead.

Based at Zuara the Squadron underwent a rigorous training program in preparation for the invasion of Sicily, culminating in an attack on Biscari led by the Commanding Officer on 6 July. Moving on the 13th to Luga, Malta, 450 Squadron began operations against enemy communications behind the beachhead until, on 18 July, it moved to Pachino, Sicily, from where it continued to provide close air support. The Squadron lost four aircraft to the deadly German 'flak-traps'.

A move to Agnone on 1 August saw the Squadron shift its attacks to enemy shipping, evacuating troops and equipment across the Straits of Messina and mainland targets, in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire. Agnone was bombed on the night of 11 August by Ju88s, resulting in 11 aircraft put out of action and the aerodrome cratered.

Following the 8th Army's landing in Italy, 450 Squadron moved to Grottaglie on 17 September, from where it flew 100 close support sorties until, on the 22nd, the Squadron moved to Bari. On the way the Squadron dive bombed shipping in Manfredonia Harbour with good results as a 5000-ton vessel was left burning after receiving eight direct hits. A further move to Foggia in early October was accomplished before bad weather closed roads and inhibited flying.

November found 450 Squadron based at Mileni, still frustrated by bad weather and preparing to receive Kittyhawk Mk IVs(P-40N) capable of

carrying a 2000-lb (907 kg) bomb load. On 6 November Squadron Leader Bartle handed over to Squadron Leader S.G. Welshman, who was killed in action on 1 December. Command passed to Squadron Leader K.R. Sands. Despite bad weather the Squadron flew 90 sorties between 8 and 10 December in support of the Moro River crossing.

January 1944 saw operations extended to the coast of Yugoslavia where an anti-shipping strike on the 15th severely damaged a 3000-ton vessel. An attack on Zara Harbour a week later claimed direct hits on a large naval craft.

During February the Squadron supported efforts to break the Gustav Line but once again the weather frustrated operations against communication targets. From 29 February to 14 March the Squadron flew in support of the Anzio operation.

Attacks on enemy transport and gun emplacements and targets in Yugoslavia began in early March while, on 10 March, Flight Lieutenant G.M. Blumer, severely wounded in the knee by a flak shell and in great pain, bravely led his section back to base after attacking barges near Cavarzere. On 30 March an MC202 was strafed and destroyed on Iesi airfield.

During April Squadron Leader R.T. Hudson took over from Squadron Leader Sands, while the Squadron flew 430 sorties against transport targets for the month. This hectic pace continued with 150 sorties being flown in the first 11 days of May. On 30 April the Squadron, with other Wing aircraft, attacked 200 vehicles on the road south of Subiaco, leaving 123 destroyed or damaged.

In June Squadron Leader J.D. Gleeson became Commanding Officer and the Squadron, having moved to Creti, began attacking the formidable Gothic Line, flying 487 sorties for the month while July's 631 sorties were against a wide range of targets.

On 11 September, with 3 Squadron, 450 Squadron moved to Foiano in support of the United States 5th Army push north of Florence; the Squadron flew 450 sorties during a nine-day period.

In October Squadron Leader J.C. Doyle took over command while the Squadron flew 'cab-rank' sorties. With the Allies advancing, the Squadron moved to Fano on 17 November from where it continued flying interdiction and close support sorties during December, January and February, when weather permitted.

It was during February 1945 that 450 Squadron experienced, with disastrous results, the premature detonation of its British-manufactured

bombs, which claimed three pilots; a change to American weapons stopped these incidents.

On 21 March the Squadron joined 3 Squadron RAAF, 5 Squadron SAAF and 112 Squadron RAF in 'Operation Bowler', an anti-shipping strike on Venice's Grand Harbour. With deadly accuracy the squadrons destroyed a 3500-ton merchantman, a torpedo boat and a small coaster; five storage sheds and wharves suffered severe damage.

The last major offensive was the 8th Army's crossing of the Senio River, during which 450 and 3 Squadrons flew 650 sorties between 9 and 21 April.

With the surrender of all Italian-based Axis forces on 2 May the long, hard battle, which had claimed the lives of 62 Squadron personnel, and which began in the Western Desert, was finally over.

On 19 May the Squadron moved to Lavarino from where it took part, on the 28th, in the Victory Flypast held at Campo Formido.

On 20 August 1945, 450 Squadron was officially disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

31 May 1941	—Squadron Leader G.H. Steege
7 May 1942	—Squadron Leader A.D. Ferguson
18 October 1942	—Squadron Leader J.E.A. Williams
2 November 1942	—Squadron Leader M.C.H. Barber
16 March 1943	—Squadron Leader J.P. Bartle
6 November 1943	—Squadron Leader S.G. Welshman
6 December 1943	—Squadron Leader K.R. Sands
7 April 1944	—Squadron Leader R.T. Hudson
15 June 1944	—Squadron Leader J.D. Gleeson
25 October 1944	—Squadron Leader J.C. Doyle

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# 451 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

12 February 1941	—formed Bankstown, NSW
5 May 1941	—disembarked Egypt
1 July 1941	—first operational sortie from Qasaba
10 December 1941	—relief of Tobruk
January 1942	—Battle for Bardia, Solum and Halfaya
May–June 1942	—Syrian Campaign, defence of Cyprus and Haifa
January–May 1943	—air defence of Nile Delta
May–August 1943	—Poretta, St Catherine, Corsica
December 1944	—Hawkinge, UK anti-V2 patrols
27 September 1945	—Wunstorf, Germany
21 January 1946	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

451 Squadron was formed at Bankstown, New South Wales, on 12 February 1941. Squadron members left Sydney Harbour on the *Queen Mary*, and arrived in Egypt on 5 May 1941.

When the Squadron arrived at Aboukir, it comprised five officers and 267 other ranks. Flight Lieutenant B.R. Pelly assumed temporary command on 13 June 1941, and remained until Squadron Leader V.A. Pope (RAF) was appointed on 25 June 1941. Between 26 and 30 June 1941 the Squadron moved to Qasaba (LG011) and took over from the Hurricanes and equipment of 6 Squadron RAF on 1 July 1941.

On the same day, 451 Squadron became operational in its Army co-operation role, undertaking photographic and tactical reconnaissance and artillery co-operation. Commencing on 13 September 1941, a detachment of two pilots and their aircraft commenced rotation through besieged Tobruk. This detachment remained until the siege was raised in December 1941.

On 23 September, personnel who had been located 200 miles to the rear, at Amiriya, joined the Squadron at Qasaba, in preparation for operation 'Crusader'. On 27 September 'A' Flight flew to the Advance Landing Ground at Bir Mellor for operations with the forward troops of General Auchinleck's army. As the most forward squadron,

451 Squadron was involved in the fluid fighting. On 26 November some of the men were captured by German troops at Sidi Azeiz; Pilot Officers Maslem, Kirkham and Porter evaded capture by flying their aircraft to safety. On the following day, an enemy column attacked the base and Flight Lieutenant Carmichael and 10 airmen, including Sergeant Nill Fisher, Corporal Keith Taylor and Aircraftman Don Bailey, Arthur Baines and 'Tubby' Ward, were captured.

The relief of Tobruk on 10 December freed landing ground at Tobruk, Sidi Rezegh, El Adem and Bu Amud for British fighter units, and enabled unopposed assistance to be given to the assault on Bardia, Solum and Halfaya. 451 Squadron flew continuous tactical reconnaissance missions and directed artillery fire on enemy gun posts, troop concentrations and enemy ships in Bardia Harbour. Bardia fell on 2 January 1942, Solum on 12 January and Halfaya on 17 January 1942.

451 Squadron was withdrawn from the Western Desert to Heliopolis for refitting, before being sent to Syria for operations with the 9th Army. Whilst in Syria, the Squadron was commanded by an Australian for the first time. Squadron Leader A.D. Ferguson was replaced by Wing Commander D.R. Chapman in April 1942. From March 1942 the Squadron worked in co-operation with the Army in operations against the Vichy French in Syria, and on Army co-operation duties in Cyprus. To combat high flying enemy reconnaissance aircraft over the island, the Hurricanes were stripped of half their guns and all armour protection. One modified aircraft was flown by Flight Lieutenant R.T. Hudson, who reputedly flew his Hurricane to a height of 40 000 feet. During this period, Flying Officers Lin Terry and Jack Cox shot down an Italian trimotor Cant 107c reconnaissance aircraft. During June, the Squadron was given the responsibility for the air defence of Haifa.

451 Squadron moved to Mersa Matruh on 8 January 1943, where it was to re-equip with Hurricane IIC fighters. This was the nadir of the Squadron. The pilots and ground crew felt that they had been condemned to protecting areas where little action could be expected. The defence of the Nile Delta and convoy protection duties—infrequent, boring patrols—were not recompensed by the advent of an attachment of three Spitfires to undertake high altitude interceptions. During the first six months of 1943 the Squadron encountered only one enemy aircraft: a Junkers 88 which had the better of a brief fight on 22 February.

The only offensive action in which the Squadron was involved took place on 23 July 1943, when six Hurricanes of the Squadron joined

Beaufighters, Baltimores and Spitfires on a raid on the island of Crete. Five Baltimores were shot down, and three Hurricanes failed to return.

451 Squadron was re-equipped with Spitfires before deploying to Poretta, Corsica. On 23 April 1944, the Squadron undertook its first operation since the transfer from Egypt, escorting 24 Mitchell bombers attacking a railway bridge at Orvieto, Italy. On the return flight the formation was intercepted by 10 Focke Wulf Fw190 and four Messerschmitt Bf109 fighters. Flying Officer Wallis claimed a share in the destruction of one of the latter.

Duties undertaken by 451 Squadron included bomber escort and armed reconnaissance flights, during which ground targets were strafed when no enemy aircraft were found. Most of these tasks were flown without enemy aerial opposition. However, on 25 May Flight Lieutenants House, Bray and Thomas claimed the destruction of an enemy fighter each after a sharp air battle between six Squadron Spitfires and four Fw190s near Roccalbenes, north of Rome. The enemy was still capable of reaction. On the night of 11 May, Junkers 88 bombers dropped a large number of anti-personnel bombs on Poretta, which caused the loss of six ground staff (E. 'Baron' Bulcock, Peter Conrad, Don Haggart, Joe Branch, Don McKay and A. Ewins) and two pilots (D. Ward and B. Sneddon). However, by herculean effort from the ground staff, 451 Squadron was able to muster a full quota of aircraft for operations by the 14th.

During June 623 sorties were flown, with the Squadron claiming the destruction of seven enemy aircraft and damage to one. A highlight of the month was the covering of the occupation of the island of Elba by French commando troops.

On 8 July, 451 Squadron moved to a new base at St Catherine. Although the camp site had to be widely dispersed, it was close to the sea and the availability of good swimming facilities greatly increased the general health and morale of the members.

Squadron Leader W.W.B. Gale assumed command from Squadron Leader E.E. Kirkham during July 1944. His tenure was short. A week after taking up his appointment he was shot down by ground fire while engaged in a special reconnaissance mission over the 24 bridges spanning the Arno River between Florence and Empoli. Squadron Leader G.W. Small, DFC, assumed command, an appointment he held until January 1945, in time to lead the Squadron on operations covering the landing in the south of France. To enable the Squadron to react quickly to the situation within the landing area, it was organised into two parties. One

party would be sent ahead to prepare for operations from within the bridgehead, the other supported operations from St Catherine. As a lead-up to the landing, the Squadron flew fighter sweeps closer to Marseilles and Toulon, and, on 14 August, escorted the invasion convoy on its final approach. The actual landing on 15 August 1944 came as an anti-climax. Flying formations between St Maxine and Cape Benat, over the disembarking troops and the attacking fighters and bombers, did not bring any enemy reaction.

The success of the Allied landing ensured the movement of the 451 advance party to Cuers on 22 August 1944, five days ahead of planning. Two days later the 16 Spitfire VIII and IX arrived, to be followed by the sea-borne maintenance party on the 31st. The base was already out of effective range of the front line, so the Squadron was employed on shipping protection flights, standing patrols, air-sea rescue flights (mainly in the Marseilles/Toulon area) and reconnaissance flights over the Franco-Italian border. For the members of 451 Squadron, a repetition of the role followed in Egypt was being contemplated. But, on 16 October, the Spitfires flew out of Cuers, en route for Foggia in Italy. When the ground crew disembarked at Naples on 23 October, they were met with the news that the future of the Squadron was in some doubt. There was no employment for the Squadron, and it was possible that it would be shipped to Australia.

It was finally decided that 451 Squadron would be transferred to the United Kingdom. After handing its aircraft over to 251 Wing RAF, the members of 451 Squadron embarked at Naples for the trip to the United Kingdom. The Squadron was based at Hawkinge, where it was re-equipped with the Spitfire XVI.

Operations began in early 1945, flying intensively on bomber escort duties for 2 Group and the heavy bombers of Bomber Command, who were undertaking daylight attacks on targets in the occupied countries. In addition, the Squadron flew long range fighter sweeps along the battle lines into northern Europe. To these duties was added that of attacking German V2 rockets on their launching sites. These operations required precision flying and accurate dive bombing. Dive bombing attacks were followed by close strafing of the target. Squadron Leader C.W. Robertson, DFC, the Commanding Officer of 451 Squadron, had a bird's eye view of a V2 launch whilst on patrol over The Hague. He sighted a flash on the ground, and saw a rocket rising at no more than 2-3 mph. It wobbled as though it was about to fall, then gained speed, passing within 500 feet of

Robertson's aircraft, which was buffeted by the exhaust gases of the rocket. The vapour trail was sighted at 50 000 feet, still ascending.

To undertake these strikes, the Spitfires operated from England with long range tanks and two 250-lb bombs underwing. When bases became available, the fighters would carry a 500-lb bomb and two 250-lb bombs, strike at a target, and refuel and re-arm in Belgium. On the return flight, the aircraft would deliver another 1000 lb bomb load on suspected V2 launching sites, before returning to Hawkinge.

The final V2 landed at Orpington, Kent, on 27 March 1945.

451 Squadron moved to Wunstorf, Germany, on 27 September 1945, and on 27–28 December, was rostered for duty at Berlin. On its return to Wunstorf, the Squadron again faced an uncertain future. Although volunteers had been sought in November for service with the British Army of Occupation, sufficient numbers of Australian volunteers could not be found. Accordingly, 451 Squadron was disbanded on 21 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

25 June 1941	—Squadron Leader V.A. Pope
16 October 1941	—Squadron Leader R.D. Williams
25 February 1942	—Squadron Leader A.D. Ferguson
15 April 1942	—Wing Commander D.R. Chapman
21 April 1943	—Squadron Leader J. Paine
9 September 1943	—Squadron Leader R.N.B. Stevens
13 December 1943	—Squadron Leader E.E. Kirkham
7 July 1944	—Squadron Leader W.W.B. Gale
26 July 1944	—Squadron Leader G.W. Small
28 January 1945	—Squadron Leader C.W. Robertson
7 September 1945	—Squadron Leader G. Falconer

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# 452 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

8 April 1941	—formed at Kirton-in-Lindsey
21 July 1941	—joined 11 Group Fighter Command
21 June 1942	—Squadron left Britain
7 September 1942	—reformed at Richmond, NSW
17 January 1943	—Squadron arrived at Darwin
11 December 1944	—moved to Morotai
17 October 1945	—Squadron disbanded at Tarakan

## NARRATIVE

452 Squadron, the first Australian Empire Air Training Scheme squadron to serve in RAF Fighter Command, and the first to be equipped with Spitfires, began forming at Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire, on 8 April 1941 under the command of Squadron Leader R.G. Dutton, DFC and Bar (RAF). Flight Lieutenant B.E. Finucane (RAF) was 'A' Flight leader, with the first ground staff drawn from on base RAF squadrons.

The first Australian pilots, Sergeants A.C. Roberts and E.B. Tainton, posted in from 607 (County of Durham) Squadron. They arrived on 12 April and were followed over the next month by other Australian pilots posted in from various squadrons and operational training units. With the arrival of the first Mk I Spitfires on the 17th, training began in earnest.

By the end of April the Squadron had an establishment of 16 Spitfires, seven officers (four of whom were non-flying), 11 sergeant pilots and 83 other ranks.

Progress was such that the Squadron commenced flying defensive patrols on 22 May, toting up 189 sorties until early July, when declared fully operational.

On 15 June Squadron Leader Dutton handed over to Squadron Leader R.W. Bungey (RAAF) who came to 452 Squadron with a superb service record gained while flying Fairey Battles during the Battle for France and Hawker Hurricanes in the Battle of Britain, and under whose wise, firm leadership the Squadron reached maturity. The arrival of Australian ground staff gave the Squadron a truly Australian identity.

In early July the Squadron mourned its first casualty, Sergeant A.G. Costello, shot down by a German intruder. On 11 July the

Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Bungey, flew its first 'Circus' operation, flying as part of a 12 Group operation. Crossing into France the Squadron was bounced, near St Omer, by eight Bf109s; Flight Lieutenant Finucane gave a warning and attacked the leading 109, destroying it with a short burst of fire. None of the other pilots managed to get into an attacking position and after being split up returned to base. During the engagement Sergeant Roberts was forced to bale out of his damaged aircraft. He landed close to St Omer airfield and was helped by a local farmer to escape to Vichy France where he was subsequently interned. Roberts later made a successful escape, returning to Britain in October.

The Squadron, now equipped with Spitfire Mk IIas, moved to 11 Group in Kenley on 21 July, from where it commenced operations the next day. During escort duties on 24 July two 109s attacked the starboard section; Flying Officer A.H. Humphrey (RAF) destroyed one of the enemy. The remainder of July passed quietly, with only two uneventful sweeps taking place.

In August the Squadron began receiving Spitfire Mk Vbs and on the 3rd, Finucane and Pilot Officer W.D. Eccleton destroyed one each of a force of five Bf109s. Shortly afterwards a further 18 Bf109s were sighted and Finucane, leading the attack, claimed another as a probable. A spell of bad weather forced the cancellation of some operations while others produced negative results. On 9 August, Finucane and Pilot Officers R.E. Thorold-Smith, D.E. Lewis, K.W. Truscott and Sergeant K.B. Chisholm destroyed five Bf109s, for the loss of three aircraft, while escorting Blenheims over France. Three sorties on 16 August were productive: eight Bf109s were claimed—three by Finucane, two by Chisholm, one by Truscott, and one each by Sergeants Tainton and A.R. Stewart, with no Squadron losses.

Finucane scored again on 19 August, claiming a 109F destroyed, and Truscott claimed a probable, while the Squadron lost two pilots shot down and another injured. Combats on 26 and 27 August brought victories for Douglas, Stuart, Thorold-Smith and Finucane. Activity during the remainder of the month produced no further claims and at the close of August, 452 Squadron was the top-scoring squadron with 24 aircraft destroyed and three probables.

On 2 September Willis and Stuart scored two 109Es while escorting a crippled Blenheim back from Belgium. Following uneventful sorties on 4 September, bad weather virtually grounded the Squadron until the 18th

when, led by Squadron Leader Bungey on a Blenheim escort, Douglas, Thorold-Smith, Truscott and Chisholm each destroyed a 109 while Truscott claimed another as a probable and Sergeant C.N. Wawn damaged two 109Fs. The Squadron lost four pilots.

Sorties on 20 and 21 September netted 12 Messerschmitts destroyed and one damaged. The victors were Finucane, Truscott, and Sergeants Chisholm, Wawn and B. Dunstan.

Bad weather once again hampered operations with the month drawing to a quiet close; the Squadron once again the leading scorer with a total of 19 destroyed, one probable and two damaged. During this period Flight Lieutenant Douglas was posted from the Squadron, his 'B' Flight command passing to Truscott.

October opened with Finucane and his wingman, Sergeant R.J. Cowan, destroying a 109 apiece, with Finucane damaging another. A quiet spell followed, until the 12th when Finucane and Truscott scored again, claiming one 109 destroyed, one probable and one damaged between them. The operation was marred by the loss of Sergeant Chisholm who, after being shot down and captured, later escaped and with the help of the Polish Resistance reached Paris, where he fought alongside the French Resistance until the city's liberation.

Another escort on 13 October found the Squadron fighting off numerous attacks which led to a further seven 109s claimed as destroyed and three damaged, by Finucane, Truscott, Thorold-Smith and Sergeants J.M. Emery and E.H. Schrader. The Squadron lost one pilot and Sergeant J.R.H. Elphick was forced to bale out in the Channel, later picked up by an air-sea rescue launch.

On 6 November, while escorting three Army co-operation Tomahawks over Cape Gris-Nez, 452 Squadron was engaged by 109s and the first Focke-Wulf Fw190s, one of which, having shot down Sergeant Schrader, fell to Thorold-Smith, while Squadron Leaders Bungey and Truscott each destroyed a 109. Thorold-Smith and Pilot Officers Lewis and R.H.C. Sly each claimed a damaged 109, for the loss of two pilots. Two days later, during another 'Circus' operation, Truscott downed two 109s but was forced to bale out into the Channel and along with Sergeant B. Dunstan was rescued by an air-sea rescue launch.

A move to Redhill, on 21 November, ushered in bad weather which, during the remainder of the month and throughout December, allowed only 82 operational hours to be flown, to bring the year to a frustrating close.

January's weather proved no better; the few sorties undertaken led to fleeting glimpses of the enemy, and it was to remain so until early February. A change in command took place on 25 January, when Squadron Leader Bungey was posted as Commanding Officer, RAF Shoreham, handing command to Truscott, while Finucane was posted to command 602 Squadron.

On 12 February the Squadron was in action during the German capital ships *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prince Eugen's* so-called 'Channel Dash'. At 13.25 hours 12 Spitfires, led by Truscott, joined up with the Kenley Wing to act as escort for torpedo-carrying Beauforts, which failed to rendezvous. The Wing climbed above the thick cloud hoping to engage the German fighter cover, but as no enemy aircraft were sighted Truscott led 452 Squadron down. Breaking through cloud at 1000 feet (304m), he found they were over the fleet and in an intense 'flak' barrage. Through the 'flak' and mist Truscott led a strafing attack on one of the escorting destroyers, which he and the Squadron raked with cannon and machine gun fire, silencing its deck guns and leaving it damaged, with smoke issuing from the bridge area. The only damage to the Spitfires was a hit on Truscott's canopy. The next day Group Captain F.V. Beamish, RAF, led the Squadron in an attack on a He114 float plane off the French coast.

Once again the weather closed in until early March when the Squadron's hopes were raised with the resumption of 'Circus' operations. On 9 March, while escorting Bostons returning from Mazingarbe, the Squadron was attacked by a mixed force of 109s and 190s. During the melee Truscott and Wawn each destroyed a 109 and a damaged 109 was also claimed by the Commanding Officer. A clash with Fw190s on 13 March saw one fall to Pilot Officer R.H.C. Sly.

On 14 March Truscott and the Squadron claimed their last victory in European skies, when he downed a Fw190, and Sergeant J.McA. Morrison claimed a probable Bf109F.

On 18 March, under orders to return to Australia along with other long-serving, combat-experienced pilots, Truscott handed over command to Thorold-Smith who on 23 March took the Squadron out of the line for a rest at Andreas, Isle of Man.

During its posting in 11 Group the Squadron lost 22 pilots, either killed or missing; and destroyed 62 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed seven, and damaged 17, plus one destroyer. Members were awarded one Distinguished Service Order (DSO), five awards of the Distinguished



*Flight Lieutenant K. Myers and Squadron Leader L. Bird share a joke with Squadron Leader Sommueg RTAF, Ubon, August 1962*



*Flying Officer D. Rogers,  
79 Squadron, Ubon*



*Flying Officer D. Riding,  
79 Squadron, Ubon*



*Sidewinder missile for the Sabre*



*The RAAF's display Sabre*



*A Mirage III lands at Butterworth, Malaysia*



*A 30 Squadron Bloodhound is protected by another of the species*



*75 Squadron armourers prepare practice bombs on an F/A-18 Hornet*



*Fighter combat instructors with a 3 Squadron F/A-18 Hornet and ordnance*



*77 Squadron armourers prepare bombs for an F/A-18 Hornet*



*F/A-18 Hornet*

Flying Cross (DFC), three Bars to Distinguished Flying Cross, one Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) and one Mention in Despatches.

In late May the British Government bowed to demands by Australia for the urgent return of its two Spitfire squadrons. 452 Squadron, along with 457 and 54 (RAF) Squadrons, departed Liverpool on 21 June 1942 and arrived at Melbourne in mid-August, minus their aircraft which had been commandeered by the RAF while in transit.

The Squadron, short of aircraft and with most of its experienced pilots flying Kittyhawks, began reforming at RAAF Richmond in early September as part of 1 'Churchill' Fighter Wing, with Wing Commander C.R. Caldwell, DSO, DFC (RAAF) as wing leader. After receiving its complement of Spitfire Mk Vcs the Squadron left for Darwin, arriving on 17 January 1943, taking up station at Batchelor Airstrip prior to moving to Strauss from where, on 15 March, the Squadron claimed its first Japanese victories during raid No. 53 when Flying Officer A.P. Goldsmith destroyed a Mitsubishi 'Betty' and a Zero. It was during this engagement that Squadron Leader Thorold-Smith was killed; his place was taken by Squadron Leader R.S. MacDonald.

Except for the odd unproductive scramble, April passed quietly until 2 May when, during raid No. 54, Flying Officer Goldsmith, after destroying a Nakajima 'Helen', was forced to bale out joining three other Squadron pilots, all landing safely. Unhappily the Squadron lost Flying Officer A.C. McNab. The 'scrambles' during the remainder of the month and into late June usually proved to be straying USAAF Liberators.

On 20 June Squadron Leader MacDonald and Flight Lieutenants J. Bisley and D. Evans each destroyed a 'Sally' while two others were claimed as damaged by Flying Officer H.R. Whillans and Flight Sergeant K. Cross. Flying Officer G.A. Mawer destroyed a Zero and Pilot Officer A. Ruskin-Rowe downed two more before he, along with Pilot Officer W. Nichterlein, was shot down and killed.

30 June saw 452 Squadron, as part of the Wing, in action against more than 40 enemy aircraft. Squadron Leader MacDonald and Flying Officer C.P. Lloyd claimed a 'Betty' and a Zero respectively, before being forced to bale out, while Pilot Officer P.D. Tully claimed a probable Zero. Flight Sergeant C.R. Duncan, after baling out, spent five days in rough country until rescued and Flying Officer W.J. Lamerton was killed in a crash landing.

The next action took place on 6 July when the Squadron destroyed two Zeros but two pilots were forced to bale out while another crash-landed with a dead engine.

August, although quiet, gave Flight Sergeant P.A. Padula the opportunity to share a 'Dinah' kill with Wing Commander Caldwell, on the 20th.

Action on 7 September saw Goldsmith destroy a 'Tony', while four other enemy aircraft were claimed as either probables or damaged. During the engagement Squadron Leader MacDonald was wounded and, along with Pilot Officer Tully, safely baled out. Tragedy struck on 25 September when Flying Officers Adam and Mawer collided in mid-air; neither survived.

November marked the final Japanese raid and ushered in a quiet period until early March 1944 when the Squadron, led by Squadron Leader L.T. Spence, who had taken over command on 3 February, deployed to Guildford, Western Australia, to meet a phantom threat to the Perth area.

On 17 April 452 Squadron, now back in the Darwin area, joined the first offensive sortie by Australian-based Spitfires, an attack against installations on Babar and Wetan Islands, which also marked the demise of the Mk V Spitfire. The Squadron began conversion to Mk VIIIs.

After the April operation the Squadron endured a quiet period, enlivened by the destruction of a 'Dinah' on 12 June and the arrival of two RAF squadrons which allowed 452 Squadron to move to Morotai in mid-December as part of 1 Tactical Air Force (RAAF).

On 24 December Flying Officer J.A. Pretty shot down one of two intruders.

On 13 January 1945, Group Captain Caldwell led an attack on Miti airfield; during a later attack on the same target, Flight Sergeant E.McL. Stevenson crashed and later died in captivity.

A move to Tarakan, in May, saw 452 Squadron flying in support of the Balikpapan operation, the first sortie being flown on 30 June. From July onwards the Squadron was operating, along with Kittyhawks, at maximum effort in the ground attack role.

During a sortie on 12 July, Squadron Leader K.M. Barclay was forced to bale out of his damaged aircraft, and was picked up by boat. On 15 July he led an attack against Japanese 'pillboxes' after which the attackers returned to their new base at Sepinang.

Attacks on 19, 22 and 24 July netted a mixed bag of barges, motor transport and fixed installations. On the night of 24 July the Squadron scored its last victory, downing a Japanese bomber over Balikpapan.

The dropping of the atomic bombs in August brought the Pacific war to a close and led to the disbanding of 452 Squadron on 17 October 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

13 April 1941	—Squadron Leader R.G. Dutton (RAF)
15 June 1941	—Squadron Leader R.W. Bungey
25 January 1942	—Squadron Leader K.W. Truscott
18 March 1942	—Squadron Leader R.E. Thorold-Smith
30 March 1943	—Squadron Leader R.S. MacDonald
3 February 1944	—Squadron Leader L.T. Spence, DFC
4 June 1945	—Squadron Leader K.M. Barclay, DFC

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# 453 SQUADRON

*Ready to Strike*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| May 1941          | —453 Squadron formed at Bankstown, NSW              |
| 15 August 1941    | —first echelon arrived at Sembawang, Singapore      |
| 13 December 1941  | —deployed to Ipoh, North Malaya                     |
| 23 December 1941  | —retreated to Singapore Island                      |
| 5 February 1942   | —main party withdrawn to Palembang, Sumatra         |
| 15 March 1942     | —disembarked at Adelaide, SA                        |
| 18 June 1942      | —reformed at Drem, East Lothian, Scotland           |
| 2 October 1942    | —first operation over France from Hornchurch        |
| 25 June 1944      | —moved to ALG B11, France                           |
| 21 November 1944  | —first attack on V2 launching sites in Holland      |
| 28 August 1945    | —departed for duty in Germany                       |
| 16 September 1945 | —first British squadron to operate at Gatow, Berlin |
| 18 October 1945   | —moved to Wunstorf, Germany                         |
| 21 January 1946   | —Squadron disbanded                                 |

## NARRATIVE

453 Squadron was formed at Bankstown, New South Wales in May 1941, under the temporary command of Flight Lieutenant W.K. Wells. In mid-July, the men embarked on the SS *Marella* and *Sibajak* for Singapore. The first section arrived at Sembawang on 15 August 1941.

The aircrew strength of 453 Squadron stood at 15 sergeant pilots when the unit arrived in Singapore, and a number of Australians based at Sembawang were posted to the unit to make up the shortfall in pilots. By the end of August the Squadron had been equipped with Brewster Buffalo fighters and commenced training, before being declared operational on 19 November 1941.

With the advent of war with Japan, Singapore was raided by the Japanese Air Force on 8 December 1941. The aircraft of 453 Squadron were not involved, but on 10 December it was ordered to a specific area 50 miles east of Kuantan. When the fighters arrived, two unidentified aircraft were seen flying north; the Buffalos had arrived too late to prevent the sinking of HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales* by Japanese torpedo bombers.

Two days later, the Squadron was ordered north to the airfield at Ipoh to assist 21 Squadron. On 13 December, whilst en route to Ipoh, the Squadron claimed its first blood. After refuelling at Butterworth, Flight Lieutenant Vanderfield and Sergeants Collyer and Read sighted enemy aircraft bombing Penang and attacked, claiming the destruction of five enemy aircraft. Read and Collyer then successfully ground strafed enemy troops north of Alor Star. Shortly after, another group of 453 Squadron aircraft refuelled at Butterworth and were engaged by a large force of enemy aircraft which was raiding the area. In this combat the unit suffered its first battle casualty. Sergeant Oelrich was missing, believed killed, and Flight Lieutenant Grace claimed to have destroyed an enemy fighter.

Buffalos of 453 Squadron were based at Ipoh from 19 December, ground strafing and defending the airstrip against heavy Japanese raids. Lacking in spares, and with its ground crew largely still located at Sembawang, the Squadron's serviceable aircraft declined to three Buffalos. Following a superb effort by the ground crew at Ipoh this number increased to five on 19 December when, due to pressure by Japanese ground forces, the Squadron was ordered to withdraw to Singapore. The aircraft flew to Kuala Lumpur, where they were reinforced by three more Buffalos from Sembawang.

On 22 December the Squadron lost three aircraft and four damaged, and claimed three enemy aircraft destroyed and possibly destroyed another five. Pilot Officer Drury and Sergeant Read were killed and Pilot Officer Livesey and Sergeants Scimgeour, Collyer and Griffith wounded.

Sergeant Board baled out of his burning aircraft and landed near Sungei Besi.

The hard-pressed ground crew restored the crash-landed aircraft and by 23 December the strength of the Squadron had risen to seven. These aircraft were flown back to Sembawang, from where they undertook patrols and reconnaissance flights from Singapore. Singapore was being raided daily by high flying Japanese bombers, which the Buffalos could seldom engage. However, on 15 January 1942, Flight Lieutenants Vanderfield and Kinninmont shot down two enemy bombers and probably destroyed another. On 17 January, Sembawang was raided and Flight Lieutenants Grace and Vanderfield claimed the destruction of three enemy fighters near Malacca. Two days later Kinninmont, Vanderfield and Sergeant Gorrington shared in the destruction of four enemy aircraft.

By the end of January the Japanese controlled the Malay Peninsula, and 453 Squadron remained as the sole fighter defence of Singapore. By 5 February Sembawang was untenable, due to constant shelling from the mainland, so all flyable aircraft were evacuated to Tengah, where they again came under enemy shell fire. The survivors took off for Kallang, from where the four survivors, escorted by a Hudson, flew to Palembang, Sumatra. Here two aircraft were destroyed by high level bombing.

On 6 February 1942 the remaining Squadron members were evacuated to Batavia, Java on HMS *Danae* and on SS *City of Canterbury*. A detachment remained on Singapore Island destroying facilities, before removing the tattered RAAF flag from the flagpole at Sembawang and joining a small Norwegian ship for passage to Java. Now without aircraft, 453 Squadron personnel departed from Java on 22 February 1942, aboard SS *Orcades*, arriving at Adelaide, South Australia, via Columbo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) on 15 March 1942.

The second 'life' of 453 Squadron commenced on 18 June 1942, when the Squadron was reformed at RAF Station Drem, about 35 miles from Edinburgh. It commenced flying its Spitfires on 26 June 1942, and by the end of July readiness sections were provided. However, there was little enemy activity over Scotland at this stage of the War, and 453 Squadron undertook training, convoy patrols and pursuit of the occasional enemy incursion. Flying was not without incident. On 1 August Pilot Officer C.G. Riley was killed when his aircraft crashed into a farm near Crail Kinross.

At the end of September, the Squadron deployed to RAF Station Hornchurch, from where it flew its first operation over occupied territory

on 2 October. This was a sweep over Ostend, Ypres and Dunkirk, and was followed by several more such missions before the Squadron met any enemy opposition.

On 30 October seven Spitfires intercepted a large enemy bomber formation headed for Canterbury. Two more Spitfires were scrambled, and Pilot Officer Galway was shot down in the ensuing dog fight. Landing in the sea, Galway paddled his dinghy until 0500 the following morning, keeping warm by vigorously dancing, when he was rescued by an air-sea rescue launch. Squadron Leader J.R. Ratten took over command of the Squadron on 1 November 1942, and the Squadron moved to Southend in December.

Flight Lieutenant J.W. Yarra and Pilot Officer M.H. de Coster were lost when hit by anti-aircraft fire when attacking enemy shipping near Flushing on 10 December 1942. One of the enemy vessels was left burning.

The German Air Force's assault on England had abated, and the constant patrols over Southern England and over convoys seldom brought contact with the enemy.

After moving back to Hornchurch late in March 1943, the Squadron undertook frequent practice attacks and air fighting training with other RAF squadrons. On 8 April 1943, 12 Spitfires of 453 Squadron were engaged by eight Focke Wulf 190s over Foret de Crecy during a patrol over France. Squadron Leader Ratten, Flight Lieutenant Andrews and Pilot Officers Rickard and Swift all claimed to have damaged enemy aircraft.

Squadron Leader Ratten was promoted to the rank of Wing Commander on 11 May 1943 and appointed to command the Hornchurch Fighter Wing. He was the first Australian to be appointed to command a wing in Fighter Command. Squadron Leader K.M. Barclay succeeded to the command of 453 Squadron, which moved to Ibsley at the end of June before again moving, this time to Perranporth, in August 1943. The Squadron remained at this base until October 1943, when, after being split between Skeabrae and Sumburgh, it was reunited at Detling in January 1944.

The Squadron was being called to escort bombers over France and the Low Countries on an almost daily basis. These operations were made hazardous by anti-aircraft fire and German Air Force fighter interceptions. On 15 August 1943, while escorting Marauder bombers to their target of Woensdrecht airfield, the formation was intercepted by 12 Focke

Wulf 190s. Flight Lieutenant Andrews was seen in a vertical dive, pursued by enemy fighters. By skilful evasion at low level, he avoided his tormentors until, 10 miles off Walcheren, only two remained. Andrews shot one down, before returning to land at Manston, his Spitfire riddled with cannon and bullet holes. On 8 October the Squadron claimed to have shot down five Messerschmitt Bf110s for the loss of Flying Officer H.M. Parker.

In mid-April 1944, 453 Squadron moved again—to Ford—and commenced dive bombing raids using 500-lb bombs; a task added to that of escorting Marauder, Mitchell, Liberator and Fortress bombers over France. Bridges, buildings, railways and road convoys in areas like Le Havre, Cambrai, Berck, Creil, Cap d'Autifer and Arramanenes were the targets, and the intensive operations of April and May were a precursor to the invasion of Normandy.

On 6 June 1944, 453 Squadron flew 43 sorties providing tactical support for the troops landing on the Normandy beachhead. On 11 June, the Squadron operated from the beachhead, sharing the privation with the Royal Engineers who constructed the landing ground. Although enemy aircraft were seldom seen, the Squadron engaged 12 Bf109s over Caen on 16 June and claimed to have destroyed two, possibly destroyed two more and damaged one.

The Squadron had operated from advanced bases in the beachhead, staying overnight, until it moved to ALG B11 in France on 25 June 1944. After flying 36 sorties on their first day of occupancy, 453 Squadron followed with a further 46 during the next day. Activity was hectic. On the 27th, claims were made for the destruction of one, probable destruction of one, and the damaging of four Focke Wulf 190s. At the end of July, the Spitfires were credited with the destruction of an 18-truck German convoy. This operation was the first in which the Squadron Spitfires carried a bomb load of 1000 lbs.

In a spectacular engagement during 9 July, 12 pilots of 453 Squadron attacked 40 Focke Wulf 190s and Bf109s over Lisieux, claiming four destroyed, one possibly destroyed and five damaged. Remarkably, not one of the Spitfires was hit and all returned safely to base, shooting up tanks and trucks on the way.

When the 2nd British Army attacked south-east of Caen on 18 July, the Squadron flew 60 sorties in support. A few days later the Squadron was re-equipped with Spitfire Mk IX aircraft, and celebrated on 24 July

by shooting down two enemy aircraft. During July, 453 Squadron destroyed 12 enemy aircraft and accounted for over 90 enemy vehicles.

The Allied ground forces broke out of the beachhead in August, and 453 Squadron was harassing the retreating German forces. Even though the Squadron was operating from a new base near Douai in September, the rapid advance to the Rhine resulted in the Squadron's patrols becoming longer and less frequent. Armed reconnaissance missions were flown over the Brussels–Antwerp area, but the period proved to be uneventful until, late in September, 453 Squadron again moved forward to a base near the Albert Canal, close to Antwerp. Here they were subject to shelling at night from German guns situated 3000 yards distant.

Before moving back to Coltishall on 30 September, the Squadron had a memorable day on the 27th. The German Air Force made an appearance, and, during the first patrol of the morning Warrant Officer R. Lyall shot down a Bf109. Six Spitfires of the second patrol attacked 50 enemy aircraft near Antwerp, destroying four and damaging two others.

The move back to Coltishall was not popular with the Squadron members. Squadron Leader E. Esau assumed command of 453 Squadron, and the aircraft were employed on patrols over the Low Countries, before moving to Matlask in mid-October.

The landing of the first German V2 rocket on England on 8 September was the beginning of a new phase of operations for 453 Squadron. Squadron Leader Esau was convinced that the Spitfire would be the ideal weapon to strike at the mobile V2 launching sites in Holland. On 21 November 1944, four Spitfires, each carrying two 250-lb bombs, set out to attack a V2 launch site at Rust-en-Vreugd, near The Hague. Despite intense anti-aircraft fire, all the bombs fell on the target, and the area was strafed. Two hours later, another four 453 Squadron Spitfires attacked another rocket launch site at Huis-Te-Werve, and another four dive bombed the rocket storage depot at Waasenaar-Raaphorst.

The 'Rocket War' continued until 27 March 1945, when the last V2 landed on Orpington, Kent. Initially, strikes on rocket launching sites and facilities were made from England, using long range tanks and two 250-lb bombs. As bases became available on the Continent, the Spitfires would carry one 500-lb and two 250-lb bombs from England to The Hague, bomb and strafe the launch sites, and land in Belgium. Here they would re-arm and refuel, and repeat the process during the return flight

to England. Missions were often undertaken in co-operation with 602 and 603 Squadrons RAF and 451 Squadron RAAF.

Pilots of 453 Squadron, on leave in London, saw at first hand the effect of the V2 onslaught. They were blasted out of their beds by a V2 landing 150 yards from their hotel.

During February 1945, 453 Squadron successfully bombed the liquid oxygen factory at Loosduinen, near The Hague, thus limiting the quantity of this fuel available for use by the missiles.

During April the Squadron continued to attack enemy targets in Holland. On 6 April the unit moved to Lymgne, returning to its armed reconnaissance and bomber escort role. On 2 May 1945, 453 Squadron moved to its last wartime base, Hawkinge, from where it escorted Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands to the Continent during the following day. This marked the last wartime operation of 453 Squadron.

At Lasham, Hampshire, where 453 Squadron was based from 14 June 1945, the unit waited re-equipment with Spitfire Mk XIVs and farewelled Squadron Leader Esau. Squadron Leader D.M. Davidson replaced Esau on 27 August 1945, the day before the Squadron flew out from England for duty on the Continent. They arrived at Ostend on 29 August, then moved to Fassberg, where they remained for two weeks. On 16 September, the Spitfires landed at Gatow, Berlin, becoming the first British squadron to be stationed in the German capital. Little flying was undertaken, as Berlin was in the Russian Zone, and 453 Squadron deployed to Wunstorf on 18 October.

During October and November various Squadron members were posted back to England to wait repatriation to Australia. The Squadron still flew over Germany, but on 3 January 1946 Flying Officer G.W. Donnar returned from leave in the United Kingdom with news of the Squadron's disbandment. The last weeks of the Squadron were marked by the death of the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Davidson, who was killed when his aircraft crashed in Kent. The RAAF Liaison Officer in Germany, Wing Commander T. Hilton, DFC, assumed command.

On 20 January 1946 a bronze cross and candlesticks were placed in Wunstorf Station Church of England Chapel, dedicated to the memory of Squadron Leader Davidson and Leading Aircraftmen W. Gibbs and J.W. Murray, who had died in the last fortnight.

453 Squadron RAAF officially disbanded on 21 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

17 August 1941	—Squadron Leader W.F. Allshorn
9 October 1941	—Squadron Leader W.J. Harper (RAF)
18 June 1942	—Squadron Leader F.V. Morello (RAF)
1 November 1942	—Squadron Leader J.R. Ratten
11 May 1943	—Squadron Leader K.M. Barclay
28 September 1943	—Squadron Leader D.G. Andrews
2 May 1944	—Squadron Leader D.H. Smith
28 September 1944	—Squadron Leader E.A.R. Esau
27 August 1945	—Squadron Leader D.M. Davidson
6 January 1946	—Wing Commander T. Hilton

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# 456 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

30 June 1941	—formed at RAF Station Valley, Isle of Anglesea
30 March 1943	—moved to Middle Wallop
5 June 1943	—detachment of 'Ranger Flight' to Predannack
17 August 1943	—moved to Colerne
6 October 1943	—Predannack detachment withdrawn
17 November 1943	—moved to Fairwood Common, South Wales
1 March 1944	—moved to Ford, Sussex
30 December 1944	—moved to Church Fenton
17 March 1945	—moved to Bradwell Bay
2 May 1945	—last operational sorties
15 June 1945	—Squadron disbanded

## NARRATIVE

On 30 June 1941, 456 Squadron was formed as a night fighter squadron. The Squadron was predominantly Australian and was the only Australian squadron of its type during World War II. The unit was established at RAF Station Valley, in the Isle of Anglesea, with Squadron Leader Charles Gordon Challoner Olive, DFC (RAF, later transferred to RAAF) as its first Commanding Officer.

When formed, the Squadron consisted of 28 officers and 155 airmen operating Defiants. The Defiant was the first of six types of aircraft to be operated by the Squadron, the others being Beaufighters, Blenheims, Magisters, Mosquitos, and Oxford IIs (the Blenheim, Magister and Oxford aircraft were not flown operationally). During this early period in the Squadron's history much time was spent training to master night fighting techniques. When the Squadron was officially declared fully operational on 5 September 1941, it was in the process of replacing the Defiants and converting to Beaufighters.

With the arrival of the Beaufighter, equipped with the Mk IV airborne radar, the Squadron was able to perform in the role it was originally designed for—aerial interception against enemy raids. The equipment

fitted to the aircraft meant that they were suitable as a daytime, bad weather fighter, and was used quite extensively in this capacity as part of the Squadron's secondary role to be used 'for any useful purpose for which the type might be operationally suitable and the general situation warranted or demanded'.

On the night of 10 January 1942, the Squadron registered its first kill during enemy raids over Merseyside and the surrounding districts. Squadron Leader Hamilton and his observer Pilot Officer D.L. Norris-Smith sighted, chased and destroyed a Dornier 217. This success proved important for the Squadron in two ways: it meant that the equipment that the Squadron operated did work and that the months of training endured by the Squadron were not wasted. While at Valley the Squadron was very much out of the action, with the bulk of enemy attacks concentrated against cities outside of the 9 Group area, of which the Squadron was a part. Therefore the long period spent at the Valley, mostly under training, proved to be an invaluable apprenticeship for what was to come.

On 27 March 1942, Acting Wing Commander E.C. Wolfe (RAF) took over command of the unit. While contact with the enemy was still limited the Squadron did have a number of successes. On 18 May Pilot Officer Wills (RAF) and Sergeant R.C. Lowther shot down a Ju88 and in July the Commanding Officer shot down a Heinkel III, the only enemy encountered that month. Although the Squadron had little contact with the enemy it was now being used more extensively in air-sea rescue roles. It was in this field that the Squadron received its first decoration, surprisingly not for action in the air. Sergeant J.J. Plunkett of Cairns, Queensland, guided only by an Anson, swam out in seas too rough for rescue launches to operate to rescue a downed pilot. For his gallantry he was awarded the British Empire Medal.

1942 ended with the welcome news that the Squadron was to re-equip with Mosquitos. By mid-January the Squadron had acquired over a dozen of the new Mk II fighter type Mosquitos, armed with four cannon and four machine guns and equipped with the Mk V AI apparatus (code name for radar equipment carried by fighter aircraft used for interception). A new Commanding Officer—Wing Commander M.H. Dwyer—arrived on 1 February 1943. This man had a lasting effect on the Squadron, lifting the esprit de corps to a level unmatched previously. With the new Commanding Officer came a move to Middle Wallop, on 30 March 1943, bringing the Squadron into the front line of the air

defensive system of the United Kingdom. Due to the location of Middle Wallop the Squadron was now able to perform offensive operations against the enemy over northern and western France.

The Squadron was now frequently patrolling the English Channel and enemy-occupied France, and all available aircraft were employed in 'Ranger' and 'Intruder' sorties. The 'Ranger' sorties were offensive sorties conducted by night fighters against enemy transport and special targets. 'Intruder' sorties involved night fighters intruding over enemy airfields waiting to intercept returning enemy bombers. The Squadron had a lot of success in these operations, particularly with 'Ranger' operations against enemy railways.

The first successful attack made by the Squadron against enemy rail occurred on 16 April 1943, when Warrant Officer V.P. Ratcliffe and Flight Sergeant R.C. Lowther immobilised a French rail locomotive. Further success followed but none as impressive as the efforts of Flying Officer I.G. Panitz and his observer, Pilot Officer R.S. Williams who, on 6 May 1943, made a successful raid in daylight hours, shooting up five trains with cannons and a sixth with machine guns, all in a period of six minutes. This feat gained Panitz the reputation of 'Train Buster'. Whilst at 456 Squadron Panitz reached the rank of Squadron Leader and at the time of his departure, 11 December 1943, was the Officer Commanding 'B' Flight. Both Squadron Leader Panitz and his observer Flying Officer R.S. Williams received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) while serving with the Squadron.

It was at this time that 'Operation Instep' was introduced and aircraft from 10 Group were detached to form a composite squadron with night fighter aircraft. This squadron operated out of RAF Station Predannack assisting in long range fighter sweeps over the Bay of Biscay protecting coastal command aircraft. The Squadron sent three 'Ranger' aircraft with crew and ground staff for this duty on 5 June 1943.

On 12 June 1943, a new Commanding Officer, Wing Commander G. Howden, DFC, a man with great night fighting experience, assumed command. June was an exceptionally busy month for the Squadron. It received a letter of commendation from the Group Commander for achieving the most flying hours for the month in the Group, 830.5 hours free of any accidents. The duties the Squadron performed in this period included patrols; attacks on transformers, engines, trains, enemy aircraft and shipping; long range fighter patrols; U-boat hunting; and night fighter work.

On 12 July 1943, the Squadron undertook a new type of 'Ranger' operation, formulated by Squadron Leader R. Frost, MBE. The change in procedure was that two aircraft, as opposed to one, would be despatched to locate and attack a selected ground target and seek out and destroy enemy rolling stock while returning. The success of 'Ranger' operations increased and casualties decreased. To further increase the success of these missions, six new Mosquito Mk VI fighter bombers arrived. They were equipped with bombing gear, long range drop tanks and 'Gee'. They were formed into a specific flight which soon after formation detached as reinforcements to Predannack where they were deployed against enemy long range fighters preying on Coastal Command aircraft. This flight was under the command of Flight Lieutenant Panitz and was known as the 'Offensive Dozen'. This flight served with distinction whilst at Predannack and was withdrawn on 6 October 1943.

The Squadron was moved again on 17 August 1943, to Colerne, and was replaced by 151 Squadron. The reason for the move, which effectively removed the Squadron from the forward area, was that 151 Squadron was being equipped with Mk VIII AI equipment which was considered likely to achieve a higher degree of interception under the more difficult conditions being experienced at Middle Wallop.

The Squadron had been happy at Middle Wallop and the move to Colerne was seen by the Squadron members as a retrograde step. During the five and a half months spent at Colerne absolutely no night fighting was carried out by the Squadron. However the Squadron did have a considerable amount of contact with enemy fighter bombers such as Fw190s, Me210s and 410s. Once again the Squadron was occupied largely with training and occasional raids over occupied France, the training more for the GCI (ground control interception) stations than the Squadron. It was at this time that the enemy introduced two new techniques, a form of pathfinding and the use of 'Window' (the dropping of metal foil or strips) for the purpose of jamming both ground and airborne radar.

On 17 November 1943, the Squadron moved again, further still from the combat zone, to Fairwood Common, South Wales. The Squadron now took part in Fighter Command's new operation in support of Bomber Command, operation 'Mahmoud'.

On 14 December the Squadron received a new Commanding Officer, Wing Commander K.M. Hampshire, DSO. Under his command the Squadron reached a level of efficiency which earned it the reputation of

one of the most successful night fighter squadrons of the War. Wing Commander Hampshire reviewed and rewrote the Squadron's training program and the early months of 1944 were spent under intense training. On 29 January 1944 new Mosquito aircraft, Mk XVIs, arrived, equipped with Mk X AI apparatus.

The enemy continued to attack London with little success. Therefore when the Squadron received news that it was to move to Ford, Sussex, on 1 March the members of the Squadron were elated. This move meant that the Squadron now came under the command of 11 Group. At the time of its arrival at Ford the Squadron, although a night fighting squadron, had had limited opportunities to partake in night fighting and its record stood at six destroyed, one probable and five damaged enemy aircraft, a record which was due to improve dramatically with this new location.

For the three months of operations out of Ford, the Squadron destroyed 11, and claimed one probable and one damaged. With the launch of the D-day offensive, 6 June 1944, a new role was taken by the Squadron—night protection of Allied shipping used in the assault. At the end of June the Squadron added 14 destroyed and two probables to its tally. No 456 Squadron aircraft were destroyed. It was during June that the Germans began their flying bomb assault.

Flight Lieutenant K.A. Roediger, on 9 July, scored the first kill by the Squadron against the German flying bomb. By the end of August, when the Squadron tally stood at 24, Flight Lieutenant Roediger had accounted for nine of these. A lull in flying bomb attacks saw the Squadron perform new roles: anti-diver work and base defence. Meanwhile the Squadron trained for cross-country navigation in preparation for new work. Previously Squadron aircraft were not permitted to penetrate deep into enemy territory because of the highly secret apparatus carried. This was no longer a concern and eight aircraft were deployed to Manston, a forward base, for patrols over the Holland and Belgium fronts.

On 5 November 1944, Wing Commander Hampshire was promoted to Group Captain and succeeded by Squadron Leader Howard (later promoted to Wing Commander). Once more the Squadron's role was changed from Continental patrols to anti-diver work. This new role had the Squadron searching for and destroying HeIIIs which were launching flying bombs from over the North Sea. Satisfactory success was achieved, however Squadron losses were high.

On 30 December 1944, the Squadron re-located to Church Fenton and was re-equipped with Mk XXX Mosquitos. The Squadron trained for its

new role as night fighter bomber-support but by the time the Squadron was ready for operational work there were few opportunities left as the Luftwaffe was palpably failing and the battle fronts were now getting almost beyond the range of home-based fighters.

The Squadron was ordered to move to Bradwell Bay on 3 March 1945; a move which did not eventuate until 17 March. The Squadron had a final operational fling out of Bradwell Bay providing support for Bomber Command raids in South Germany and Czechoslovakia. They also performed low level raids over Germany, which were basically 'Ranger' sorties. During this final period of the War 456 Squadron came under the direction of 100 Group.

The last operational sortie flown by the Squadron occurred on 2 May, when Squadron Leader C.S. Sampson and Flight Lieutenant G.R. Houston took off to fly an 'Intruder' operation over Denmark only to be recalled soon after departure. With the enemy's unconditional surrender on 5 June 1945, and the death of the Squadron's Commanding Officer on 29 May, the plans for the Squadron's dissolution were pushed forward. On 15 June 1945, 456 Squadron was disbanded, a fortnight short of four years in service.

Squadron personnel received no less than 16 awards, including one Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and 10 Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFC). The Squadron flew 6226.5 operational hours during its four years of service and reported 41 destroyed, five probables and eight enemy aircraft confirmed damaged. They also had great success against enemy flying bombs, shipping, road transport, power stations and in particular trains, with 38 damaged.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

30 June 1941	—Wing Commander C.G.C. Olive
27 March 1942	—Wing Commander E.C. Wolfe
1 February 1943	—Wing Commander M.H. Dwyer
12 June 1943	—Wing Commander G. Howden
14 December 1943	—Wing Commander K.M. Hampshire
5 November 1944	—Squadron Leader B. Howard
30 May 1944	—Squadron Leader R.B. Cowper

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# 457 SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- 16 June 1941 —formed Baginton, Coventry, England
- 10 July 1941 —Australian contingent formed RAAF Williamtown, NSW
- 7 August 1941 —Australian contingent departed Australia for England
- 7 August 1941 —English contingent became operational at Jurly, Isle of Man
- 3 October 1941 —moved to Andreas, Isle of Man
- 22 March 1942 —moved to Red Hill Airfield, Surrey
- 6 September 1942 —Squadron assembled Richmond, NSW
- 7 November 1942 —moved to Camden, NSW
- 12 January 1943 —main party moved to Batchelor, NT
- 31 January 1943 —moved to Livingstone, NT
- 9 May 1943 —detachment sent to Millingimbi Island
- 4 November 1943 —detachment to Drysdale River Mission Airfield
- 9 March 1944 —Squadron departed for Perth, WA
- 28 March 1944 —Squadron returned to Livingstone, NT
- 18 January 1945 —left Darwin for Morotai
- 5 June 1945 —moved to Labuan, Borneo
- 7 November 1945 —Squadron disbanded at Labuan

## NARRATIVE

457 Squadron was formed in the United Kingdom on 16 June 1941. It was the second of the RAAF single-engine fighter squadrons to be formed in England under the Empire Air Training Scheme Agreement. The Squadron was located at Baginton in Warwickshire but moved to Jurly, Isle of Man, on 7 August for training purposes. The Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader P.M. Brothers, DFC, and the two flight commanders were British but the majority of the pilots were RAAF, trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme. The ground crew were originally RAF but were replaced by RAAF airmen who formed the ground crew component of the Squadron in Australia on 10 July 1941, and set sail for England from Williamtown on 7 August 1941.

While at Jurly the Squadron was mostly involved in training its own, as well as other squadrons' pilots for operational duties. However the Spitfire pilots were also involved in convoy escorts and ocean patrols during this period. In late September the Squadron's Mk I Spitfires were replaced with Mk IIA aircraft. Soon after, on 3 October, the Squadron moved to Andreas, Isle of Man. Already the Australianisation policy for the Squadron had begun with the only non-Australian aircrew being the Commanding Officer and the two flight commanders.

The Squadron re-equipped again on 11 December 1941, when the Mk VB Spitfires arrived replacing the recently acquired Mk IIA. During this period the Squadron had a number of accidents, reducing the serviceability to a dangerously low state as certain essential spares could not be obtained. This, coupled with the responsibility of training other squadrons' pilots, meant that the efficiency of the Squadron suffered.

The Squadron received orders to re-locate and on 22 March 1942 moved to Red Hill Airfield, Surrey. The Squadron replaced 452 Squadron with this move, taking up its post at the front. The Squadron's roles included convoy escorting, shipping protection, bomber escorts and sweeps over northern France, the Channel and southern England. The first action experienced by the Squadron occurred on 26 March 1942 when, as part of a larger force, a sweep was made over France. Success was immediate, with the Commanding Officer claiming the first kill for the Squadron when he shot down a Bf109. Unfortunately the Squadron also lost a Spitfire. By the end of the first week of operations the Squadron had shot down three aircraft with many other possibles and damaged.

The Squadron's personnel came under the control of 11 Group whilst operating out of Red Hill. They were kept extremely busy, making 32 sweeps over enemy territory in their first month of operations, only eight days of which were non-operational. They continued their protection activities and fighter sweeps and on 29 May were involved in a large air battle over Cape Gris-Nez. The unit was split, eventually landing at various airfields. After being collected and transported back to base by road the pilots were met and congratulated by the King who had followed the battle from Operations Headquarters and was so impressed he requested to meet the Squadron.

At the end of May the Squadron was withdrawn from operations, flying its last operation in Europe on 28 May. The Squadron flew to Church Fenton on 16 June and prepared to leave for Australia. The ship,

*Stirling Castle*, set sail on 20 June 1942, carrying not only 457 Squadron but 452 and 54 (RAF) Squadrons also. During this move 457 Squadron received a new Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader K.E. James (RAAF), who assumed command on 18 June 1942.

The Squadron arrived in Melbourne on 13 August 1942 and assembled at Richmond, New South Wales, on 6 September after 14 days of leave. The Squadron began refresher training on Wirraways and Ryans while waiting for the arrival of the Squadron's Spitfires. By November the Squadron was fully equipped with Spitfires and was undergoing an intensive operational training program when it moved to Camden, New South Wales, on 7 November 1942. The Squadron, along with 452 and 54 (RAF) Squadrons made up the newly formed Number One Fighter Wing, commanded by Wing Commander Clive Caldwell.

In late December the Squadron received word that it was to move north for the protection of the Darwin area against the Japanese. The first of the advance parties left on 31 December 1942, and the main body of Squadron personnel set sail on 12 January 1943, on board the *MV Maetsuyker*. By 20 January 1943, the Squadron was operating out of Batchelor, Northern Territory, against the Japanese. This was only a temporary airfield and on 31 January 1943, the Squadron re-located to Livingstone Airstrip.

Squadron aircraft were scrambled a number of times during February however little success was experienced, the first kill not occurring until 7 March 1943, when a 'Dinah' was shot down by Flight Lieutenant D.H. Maclean and Flight Sergeant J. McDowell. The first large scale raid which the Squadron had to contend with occurred on the morning of 15 March. Approximately 20 Japanese bombers, escorted by 24 'Zekes', were reported approaching Darwin. The Squadron scrambled, along with aircraft from 452 and 54 Squadrons, intercepted the enemy and engaged in dog fights which ranged from overhead Darwin to 90 miles out to sea. All 457 Squadron aircraft returned safely having excelled themselves in their first encounter with the 'Zeke'. Their tally was two 'Zekes' destroyed, one damaged, three probables and one 'Betty' damaged. The next month and a half was without any enemy activity, meaning the Squadron was able to practise tactics and training co-ordination with the Army and RAAF units.

May 1943 saw the return of Japanese raids on the Darwin area. Millingimbi was attacked on 9 May by six Japanese 'Sallys'. This enemy action resulted in a detachment of six Spitfires to the island that day. The

following day the Japanese returned, only to be greeted by the 457 Squadron Spitfires; two 'Zekes' were shot down and two were damaged. Raids continued on the island, the Spitfires having mixed success.

The Squadron continued to operate out of Livingstone engaging the enemy on numerous occasions. By 1 July the living and working conditions at the airstrip had been upgraded and considerably improved. The Squadron now had a pilots' dispersal hut which contained a dining area, a readiness area equipped with telephones, maps, charts and intelligence information, as well as a gramophone, radio, books and games.

On 4 November 1943, a section of six Spitfires was deployed to the Drysdale River Mission Airfield. Two days later they were scrambled to intercept an enemy reconnaissance aircraft which they damaged but failed to destroy. On 12 November 1943, Flying Officer Smithson, operating out of Livingstone, became the first fighter pilot in the North Western Area to shoot down two enemy aircraft during the one sortie. This exploit earned the 457 Squadron pilot the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). In December the Drysdale River detachment was relieved by 54 Squadron and returned to Livingstone.

Squadron Leader James, an original member of the Squadron from its formation in England, was posted south and replaced by Squadron Leader T.H. Trimble on 2 February 1944. The new Commanding Officer was extremely experienced, having served in the Middle East and having the impressive record of two enemy aircraft destroyed and four damaged.

In March 1944, a Japanese task force was detected moving through the Indian Ocean. This movement was seen as a possible threat to Western Australia and 457 Squadron, along with 452 Squadron, received orders to deploy to Perth. The Squadron Spitfires departed Livingstone on 9 March 1944, led by the Commanding Officer. The trip took over two days and was made quite difficult by the poor weather conditions the pilots had to contend with.

On the first leg of the journey to Derby, via Wyndham, the Squadron had to contend with low cloud and rain showers often reducing visibility to less than half a mile. The plan was for the Squadron to reach Port Headland by nightfall. However, after departing Derby the Squadron had to fly through a fierce dust storm. The storm was so severe that all pilots were operating solely on instruments making navigation near impossible. The Spitfires were forced to land at Pardoo Station and spend

the night there before proceeding to Port Headland the following day. The Spitfires were met at Port Headland by four C-47s which had left Livingstone loaded with the Squadron equipment and personnel. The Squadron departed for Carnarvon leaving one damaged Spitfire behind and having another force-land en route due to fuel line problems. The Squadron finally arrived at Guildford, Western Australia, on 11 March 1944.

The Squadron, along with 452 Squadron, was immediately placed on alert duty. As the Japanese threat on Western Australia passed, the Squadron flew mostly training missions and public relations/war-bond exhibition flights. The stay in Perth was brief and on 23 March the Squadron was ordered back to Livingstone. By 28 March all Squadron aircraft, equipment and personnel had returned to Livingstone.

On 18 April 1944, two Spitfires, with others from 54 and 452 Squadrons, escorted by Beaufighters from 31 Squadron, combined to take part in an attack on a Japanese radio station on Babar Island. The strike was assessed as being extremely successful, and all aircraft returned home safely.

The Squadron was ordered out to take part in Operation 'Boarshead'. The Squadron aircraft left Livingstone on 10 May for the secret destination from which the operation was to be launched. Once again Squadron equipment and personnel were transported by Douglas C-47s. By 24 May, all members of the Squadron had returned to Sattler, their new base, and resumed their normal duties.

The Squadron resumed its protection duties at Drysdale on 1 June 1944 and received the first of its new Mk VIII Spitfires, replacing the Mk V, on 2 July. On 18 December Squadron Leader Trimble handed over command of the Squadron to Squadron Leader B.D. Watson. Two days prior to Squadron Leader Watson taking command, the first of 457 Squadron's pilots left for Morotai, where the Squadron, along with the rest of 80 Wing, were to operate.

It was not until 6 February 1945 that the Spitfires of 457 Squadron left Sattler for Morotai. An advance party had departed Darwin on board the *SS Mexico* on 18 January, arriving at Morotai on 1 February. Seven C-47 transports were also involved in the transfer of equipment and personnel, departing on 4 February.

The Squadron became operational again on 10 February 1945 when five Spitfires attacked enemy aircraft on Galela strip, scoring many hits. At the end of February the Squadron had completed 113 operational

sorties, destroying three barges and one fuel dump, and making numerous strafing runs on parked aircraft and anti-aircraft sites. While operating out of Morotai the Squadron provided top cover in support of other squadrons performing bombing raids; and attacked enemy camps, supply barges, motor transports and Japanese supply depots throughout the Halmaheras and adjoining areas.

The Squadron continued this heavy operational workload during the following months. March and April saw the Squadron total over 180 operational sorties. In May the Squadron performed its first dive bombing raids and continued to use this method of attack extensively in conjunction with the usual strafing runs. Orders were issued on 27 May 1945 to prepare the Squadron for another move.

On 5 June 1945, the Squadron equipment and personnel sailed from Morotai for Labuan, Borneo. By 19 June, the Squadron was operational again, attacking enemy targets over Borneo. The Squadron's primary roles now were air support of advancing Allied ground troops and fighter defence of the island. Some of the Squadron's targets were enemy buildings, shipping, fuel supplies and grounded aircraft. On 20 June Flight Lieutenant G. Campbell and Flight Lieutenant S.G. Scrimgeour were involved in an attack on a Japanese 'Dinah' which resulted in the Squadron's first air combat, and kill, since 12 November 1943, at Darwin.

The Squadron was still applying full pressure on the Japanese when word was received of the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945. Squadron Leader Watson departed as Commanding Officer of the Squadron on 31 August, handing over to Flight Lieutenant D.H. Maclean. The Squadron continued to operate in September, performing security patrols, air tests and general flying exercises. On 9 October the Squadron aircraft departed Labuan for Oakey, Queensland, arriving on 31 October. The Squadron was officially disbanded at Labuan on 7 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

16 June 1941	—Squadron Leader P.M. Brother (RAF)
18 June 1942	—Squadron Leader K.E. James
2 February 1944	—Squadron Leader T.H. Trimble
18 December 1944	—Squadron Leader B.D. Watson
31 August 1945	—Flight Lieutenant D.H. Maclean

# 4 FORWARD AIR CONTROL FLIGHT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 1 April 1970   | —formed at RAAF Base Williamtown, NSW  |
| 6 April 1970   | —first Forward Air Control (FAC) mission flown at Singleton in conjunction with the Army |
| 1 January 1989 | —disbanded to become 'C' Flight 76 Squadron  |

## NARRATIVE

4 Forward Air Control Flight was formed as an independent unit at RAAF Base Williamtown, New South Wales on 1 April 1970. It was to be non-self-accounting under the command of the Officer Commanding RAAF Williamtown. The unit commenced with four Winjeel aircraft and an establishment of two. The first Commanding Officer was Squadron Leader A.C. Sibthorpe. The function of the unit was the training of RAAF, RAN and Army pilots in all facets of Forward Air Control (FAC). The unit attended most exercises throughout Australia and members also carried out night flying. The planned flying hours were 936 per year.

The first FAC mission was held at Singleton in conjunction with the Army on 6 April 1970. The aircraft involved was A85-413. On 15 May 1974 the four Winjeels were repainted in new camouflage livery in preparation for Exercise 'Kangaroo 1' which was held between the United States and Australia.

In June 1978 the then Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader R.A. Wilson with his co-pilot Flight Lieutenant D. Halloran, flew to New Guinea and presented a Winjeel (A85-449) to the students of Port Moresby Technical College as a technical training aid from the Australian Government. The remaining aircraft at Williamtown were fitted with tubes for launching smoke grenades.

During the 35 Forward Air Control course in April 1984, the sole student was killed in a 77 Squadron accident in Townsville.

On the reformation of 76 Squadron in January 1989, 4 Forward Air Control Flight was disbanded and became 'C' Flight 76 Squadron. The functions continued as before.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 April 1970	—Squadron Leader A.C. Sibthorpe
1 March 1974	—Squadron Leader K.J. Mitchell
30 November 1975	—Squadron Leader R.B. Gregory
1 January 1978	—Squadron Leader R.A. Wilson
1 December 1980	—Squadron Leader C.J. Patching
1 December 1982	—Squadron Leader C.R. Ryan
1 December 1984	—Squadron Leader J.R. Sampson
1 January 1987	—Squadron Leader M.C. Plenty

# FIGHTER SQUADRON

## CHRONOLOGY

- 12 February 1934 —first entry in Fighter Squadron, 1 Flying Training School, Unit History Record
- 19 December 1935 —last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

The records of Fighter Squadron, 1 Flying Training School, commenced on 12 February 1934. The Squadron was commanded by Squadron Leader J.H. Summers, and equipped with Bulldog fighters.

The Squadron was directly involved with many displays and training exercises. The first recorded display took place on 12 February 1934, when Summers led Flight Lieutenants F.R. Scherger and F.N. Wright on a demonstration of night flying and fighting tactics during the Combined Services Defence Week display at the Exhibition Ground, Melbourne. Searchlights were part of the demonstration, which included the simulated bombing of the wireless telephony ground station. For realism, it was arranged for one aircraft 'to descend in flames after being subjected to anti-aircraft fire'.

Display flying was an important role for the Squadron. Scherger, Flying Officer P.G. Heffernan and Sergeant F.H. Cooper participated in a Back-to-Queenscliff celebration on 2 April 1934, and three Moth aircraft gave an exhibition of formation flying and aerobatics over Flemington Showground on 27 April. These were followed by a formation of three Bulldog aircraft over Melbourne in connection with the Victorian Centenary on 11 May and a display of night flying and aerobatics for the Metropolitan Police Charity Carnival on 13 October. Five days later, five Bulldogs were part of a formation which flew from St Kilda and then over the city to mark the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester. Kadina Park, Geelong, was the venue for another display on 3 November and, on 5–12 and 14 November, four Bulldog aircraft gave night flying demonstrations and simulated attacks on targets at Flemington Showground as part of the 'Services Tattoo' program. This activity was interrupted by the first air display at Laverton on 10 November 1934, which featured some of the aircraft which had participated in the MacRobertson London–Melbourne Air Race.

The Bulldog program was flown by Summers, Squadron Leader D.E. Wilson, Flight Lieutenants N.B. Tamblin and Heffernan, and Sergeants Shepherd and V.H. Byrnes. The Bulldogs were involved in aerobatics, air combat (with a Wapiti), simultaneous aerobatics, converging bombing demonstrations and tied aerobatics. The last recorded displays were over Melbourne and Geelong, and a 'night bombing raid' over West Footscray Football Field during December 1935.

Fighter Squadron did undertake serious training. From 22 February 1934 to 5 March 1934, three aircraft flew to Tasmania on their annual training flight. The pilots who participated were Flight Lieutenant F.N. Wright, Flying Officer Heffernan and Sergeant R.A. Sheppard. Displays were flown at aero clubs at Smithton, Launceston, Wynyard, Latrobe and Hobart.

Five Bulldog fighters deployed to Cootamundra on 18 November 1934, and returned to Point Cook on 16 December. The aircraft gave displays at Cootamundra, Richmond and Newcastle, en route to Brisbane to escort the Duke of Gloucester on board HMAS *Australia* during his visit to that city.

Between 9 and 22 August 1935, Wing Commander Hepburn and Flight Lieutenant Hancock flew by Moth aircraft to inspect the RAAF site at Bullsbrook, Western Australia—later to be developed as RAAF Pearce.

Between 27 September and 11 October 1935, three Bulldog aircraft flew to Perth on their annual training flight. The aircraft flew Nhill-Parafield-Bute-Ceduna-Cook-Forrest-Rawlinna-Kalgoorlie-Tammin-Perth.

One of the aircraft, flown by Flight Lieutenant Heffernan, force-landed 10 miles east of Fisher when its engine seized. The reserve aircraft was flown to the nearby airfield at Cook by Pilot Officer Cooper, who supervised the salvage of Heffernan's aircraft, A12-7, before flying it back to Point Cook. On the return flight, Summers had engine problems with A12-6, and was forced to return to Cook. Leading Aircraftmen Kennedy and Rasmussen were despatched to Cook to change the engine. This task was completed to enable Summers to depart on 17 October, arriving back at Point Cook during the following day.

The final entry in the Fighter Squadron Unit History Record is dated 19 December 1935.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

12 February 1934 —Squadron Leader J.H. Summers





In November 1992 it was proposed that, as part of the RAAF 75th Anniversary celebrations to be held in 1996, a history of each unit of the RAAF should be prepared. Each history was to be based on the relevant Unit History Record and information up to November 1994 included. The concept was to produce a concise history of each unit which would also serve as a basic reference for further research, and the realisation of that concept has resulted in this unique work.

Volume 1: Introduction, Bases, Supporting Organisations

Volume 2: Fighter Units

Volume 3: Bomber Units

Volume 4: Maritime and Transport Units

Volume 5: Radar Units

Volume 6: Logistics Units

Volume 7: Maintenance Units

Volume 8: Training Units

Volume 9: Ancillary Units

Volume 10: Chiefs of the Air Staff, Aircraft, Bibliography



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