



# UNITS OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

A CONCISE HISTORY



VOLUME 1

INTRODUCTION, BASES,  
SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

This book is one of a series of publications produced for the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Australian Air Force. Principal sponsors of Anniversary activities are Ansett Australia, British Aerospace Australia Limited, McDonnell Douglas and Lockheed Martin Aeronautical Systems.



**ANSETT AUSTRALIA**

*One of the world's great airlines.*



*BRITISH AEROSPACE*  
**AUSTRALIA**

**LOCKHEED MARTIN**  
**Aeronautical Systems**

**MCDONNELL**  
**DOUGLAS**

UNITS OF THE ROYAL  
AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE  
A CONCISE HISTORY

VOLUME 1  
INTRODUCTION, BASES,  
SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Compiled by the RAAF Historical Section

An AGPS Press publication  
Australian Government Publishing Service  
Canberra

© Commonwealth of Australia 1995

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Australian Government Publishing Service. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Manager, Commonwealth Information Services, Australian Government Publishing Service, GPO Box 84, Canberra ACT 2601.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Units of the Royal Australian Air Force: a concise history.  
Volume 1. Introduction, bases, supporting organisations.

ISBN 0 644 42792 2.

ISBN 0 644 42793 0 (set)

1. Australia. Royal Australian Air Force - History.  
I. Australia. Royal Australian Air Force. Historical  
Section.

358.400994

Cover photograph: *Boxkite over Point Cook 1914*, painted by Norman Clifford, 1990 (61 cm x 41 cm)

Text and cover design for the 10-volume set by The AGPS Design Studio  
Produced by the Australian Government Publishing Service



# FOREWORD

When planning the RAAF's 75th Anniversary celebrations, the significance of the RAAF's heritage could not be overlooked.

*Units of the Royal Australian Air Force: A Concise History* is the result of three years of research and writing by RAAF Historical Section and approximately 110 volunteer authors, ranging from serving members, ex-servicemen and interested civilians. No other air force has attempted to publish a history of every unit which existed in its organisation, and its realisation is a unique insight into the organisation and development of the RAAF over a period of 75 years. The multi-faceted activities undertaken by the RAAF in peace and war, as depicted in the records of the units, show courage, diligence and professionalism of which all Australians should be proud.

This set of volumes is designed as a basic, yet authoritative, ready reference of Air Force history. It will be a lasting tribute to those who served; a guide to everyone with an interest, be it casual or academic, in the fascinating heritage of the Service; and a foundation for future study.



L.B. Fisher  
Air Marshal  
Chief of the Air Staff



# CONTENTS

Foreword	<i>v</i>		
Introduction	<i>x</i>		
Acknowledgments	<i>xi</i>		
1 Operational Base Unit	<i>1</i>	53 Operational Base Unit	<i>44</i>
11 Operational Base Unit	<i>2</i>	54 Operational Base Unit	<i>46</i>
12 Operational Base Unit	<i>3</i>	55 Operational Base Unit	<i>47</i>
13 Operational Base Unit	<i>4</i>	56 Operational Base Unit	<i>48</i>
14 Operational Base Unit	<i>5</i>	57 Operational Base Unit	<i>50</i>
15 Operational Base Unit	<i>6</i>	58 Operational Base Unit	<i>51</i>
16 Operational Base Unit	<i>7</i>	59 Operational Base Unit	<i>53</i>
21 Operational Base Unit	<i>8</i>	60 Operational Base Unit	<i>55</i>
22 Operational Base Unit	<i>10</i>	61 Operational Base Unit	<i>57</i>
23 Operational Base Unit	<i>11</i>	71 Operational Base Unit	<i>59</i>
24 Operational Base Unit	<i>12</i>	72 Operational Base Unit	<i>60</i>
25 Operational Base Unit	<i>13</i>	73 Operational Base Unit	<i>62</i>
26 Operational Base Unit	<i>14</i>	74 Operational Base Unit	<i>64</i>
27 Operational Base Unit	<i>16</i>	75 Operational Base Unit	<i>66</i>
28 Operational Base Unit	<i>18</i>	76 Operational Base Unit	<i>68</i>
29 Operational Base Unit	<i>20</i>	77 Operational Base Unit	<i>71</i>
30 Operational Base Unit	<i>21</i>	78 Operational Base Unit	<i>73</i>
33 Operational Base Unit	<i>23</i>	79 Operational Base Unit	<i>75</i>
34 Operational Base Unit	<i>25</i>	80 Operational Base Unit	<i>77</i>
37 Operational Base Unit	<i>26</i>	82 Operational Base Unit	<i>78</i>
38 Operational Base Unit	<i>27</i>	83 Operational Base Unit	<i>79</i>
39 Operational Base Unit	<i>28</i>	84 Operational Base Unit	<i>80</i>
40 Operational Base Unit	<i>29</i>	85 Operational Base Unit	<i>81</i>
41 Operational Base Unit	<i>31</i>	86 Operational Base Unit	<i>82</i>
42 Operational Base Unit	<i>32</i>	87 Operational Base Unit	<i>84</i>
43 Operational Base Unit	<i>33</i>	88 Operational Base Unit	<i>85</i>
44 Operational Base Unit	<i>34</i>	89 Operational Base Unit	<i>87</i>
45 Operational Base Unit	<i>36</i>	90 Operational Base Unit	<i>89</i>
46 Operational Base Unit	<i>37</i>	3 Telecommunication Unit	<i>90</i>
47 Operational Base Unit	<i>38</i>	11 Telecommunication Unit	<i>93</i>
48 Operational Base Unit	<i>40</i>	14 Wireless Transmitting Station	<i>94</i>
49 Operational Base Unit	<i>41</i>	Air Training Corps	<i>96</i>
51 Operational Base Unit	<i>42</i>	Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit	<i>101</i>
52 Operational Base Unit	<i>43</i>	Birdum Telecommunication Unit	<i>104</i>

- Brisbane Telecommunication Unit 105
- First Tactical Air Force Telecommunication Unit 106
- Gawler Telecommunication Unit 107
- Melbourne Telecommunication Unit 109
- North-Eastern Area Headquarters Telecommunication Unit 111
- North-Western Area Telecommunication Unit 112
- Northern Command Headquarters Telecommunication Unit 114
- Operational Research Section (ORS) 116
- RAAF Base Amberley 119
- RAAF Base Butterworth 124
- RAAF Base Darwin 128
- RAAF Base East Sale 132
- RAAF Base Edinburgh 135
- RAAF Base Fairbairn 138
- RAAF Base Laverton 141
- RAAF Base Pearce 146
- RAAF Base Point Cook 149
- RAAF Base Richmond 154
- RAAF Base Tindal 158
- RAAF Base Townsville 160
- RAAF Base Wagga 164
- RAAF Base Williamtown 168
- RAAF Canteen Services 173
- RAAF Kiriwina Wireless Transmitting Station 177
- RAAF Maritime Section 178
- RAAF Meteorological Services 181
- RAAF Milne Bay Wireless Transmitting Station 183
- RAAF Nursing Service—Active Service With USAF 902nd Aero Medical Evacuation Squadron 1966–1969 184
- RAAF Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Operations 187
- RAAF Port Moresby Wireless Transmitting Station 193
- RAAF Telecommunications Unit Sydney 194
- RAAF Wireless Transmitting Station Charters Towers 197
- RAAF Wireless Transmitting Station Goodenough Island 198
- RAAF Wireless Units 1–7 199
- Signals Units 204
  - 10 Signals Unit 204
  - 11 Signals Unit 204
  - 12 Signals Unit 205
  - 13 Signals Unit 206
  - 20 Signals Unit 207
- Volunteer Air Observers Corps 208
- Women's Royal Australian Air Force 212

# ILLUSTRATIONS

All photographs appearing in this volume are RAAF official photographs unless otherwise identified.

*Between pages 52 and 53*

F-111C hangar at Amberley  
RAAF Butterworth, 1985  
RAAF Butterworth radio station  
The RAAF School, Penang  
Hon. J.V. Fairbairn  
Lord Mountbatten arrives at RAAF  
Fairbairn  
Station Headquarters Darwin  
under construction, 1940  
Corporal C. Vawser checks Air  
Transportable  
Telecommunications Unit  
radio equipment  
RAAF Base Laverton hard  
standing, 1987  
RAAF Base Pearce, 1942  
RAAF Base Pearce, 1976  
RAAF Base Point Cook, 1927  
Training at Point Cook,  
circa 1914  
RAAF Base Richmond, 1937  
RAAF Base Williamtown, circa  
1941

*Between pages 148 and 149*

Wing Commander A.R. Tindal  
Permanent tented accommodation,  
Tindal, 1968

3 Squadron Mirage aircraft at  
Tindal, 1968  
Air Training Corps graduation  
parade at Edinburgh, 1974  
An Iroquois from Williamtown  
flies over crash launch 016-100  
RAAF ketch 06-11 off Townsville,  
1944  
Launching a RAAF weather  
balloon  
Meteorology class, circa 1943  
First crew for the United Nations  
Observers Group in Pakistan  
Caribou aircraft in United Nations  
colours, 1975  
Corporal Cindy Hyder at  
Sihanoukville, 1993  
Director, WAAAF, Group Officer  
Claire Stevenson  
Group Officer L.K. Pittman,  
Director, WRAAF  
Aircraftwomen Warner and  
Heitsch work on an aircraft  
engine, 1943  
WAAAF armourers of World  
War II  
WAAAF instrument mechanic  
of World War II

# 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.

Volume 1 contains detail on the current operational bases of the RAAF and the World War II Operational Base Units which undertook a vital role in maintaining Allied aircraft operating from remote localities. It describes the activities of organisations which have not previously been recognised, including the Volunteer Air Observers Corps and RAAF Maritime Sections, Wireless Units and Signals Units. Operations in support of United Nations peacekeeping tasks are also included.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would not have been possible to complete a project of this size in the time allowed without the dedication of many people. In particular the RAAF Historical Section wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the volunteers who prepared the individual histories.

Allen, J.	Ferguson, G.	Lamble, B.	Pinder, C.
Angel, M.	Firkins, P.	Lawson, S.	Pinder, G.
Antonakus, A.	Fisher, K.	Lax, M.	Piper, R.
Ashworth, N.	Fitzgerald, T.	Layton, A.	Robinson, G.
Bain, R.	Flynn, K.	Maconachie, B.	Roddy, R.
Barden, A.	Forno, I.	Magraith, J.	Rolland, D.
Barnes, N.	Freeman, B.	Marshall, G.	Rose, I.
Bartram, G.	Fulton, D.	Maslin, D.	Schofield, J.
Beck, J.	Funch, C.	McConnell, M.	Scott, D.
Bennett, J.	Givern, S.	McCormack, N.	Sexton, P.
Betts, T.	Gordon, I.	McLean, D.	Sherman, E.
Boydell, R.	Green, I.	Meertens, H.	Simmonds, E.
Brassil, J.	Grey, A.	Menso, K.	Siviour, J.
Brownlee, M.	Grey, G.	Mitchell, A.	Smith, F.
Buchanan, M.	Griggs, P.	Moore, M.	Smith, P.
Burton, J.	Hall, R.	Moore, W.	Stevens, G.
Cathcart, E.	Harding, J.	Morrissey, M.	Sullivan, L.
Charles, A.	Harvey, M.	Muir, P.	Telfer, J.
Christianson, R.	Haynes, A.	Naughton, D.	Thiel, O.
Clark, J.	Haywood, P.	Newton, D.	Tilley, G.
Connell, P.	Hind, C.	Nicholson, J.	Toohey, J.
Culbert, J.	Hocking, G.	Nicholson, K.	Walton, G.
Davis, P.	Holden, R.	O'Donnell, M.	Waud, C.
Diamond, M.	Holder, D.	Owen, S.	Weller, E.
Durant, M.	Jorgenson, M.	Parker, J.	Williams, N.
Dyne, G.	Kenyon, C.	Paterson, R.	Wills, R.
Eldridge, M.	Kerr, M.	Phillips, N.	Wilson, D.
Faigniez, M.	Knight, M.	Phillips, P.	

The RAAF Historical Section also wishes to thank the staff of RAAF Museum, Point Cook, the Central Photographic Establishment, Laverton, and AGPS Press.





# 1 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 December 1942 | —first entry in Unit History Record |
| 12 April 1946   | —last entry in Unit History Record  |

## NARRATIVE

The first entry in 1 Operational Base Unit's Unit History Record was made at Mallacoota, Victoria, on 2 December 1942.

The prime function of the Unit was to refuel and effect minor repairs on aircraft in transit. The Unit serviced many aircraft types, such as Hudson, Beaufort, Miles Hawk, Vega Gull, Anson, Oxford, Kittyhawk and Tiger Moth, many of which were flying maritime reconnaissance and surveillance missions. The last entry in the Unit History Record was made on 12 April 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| December 1942    | —Pilot Officer T.J. Ryan        |
| 9 December 1942  | —Flight Lieutenant C.S. Eckert  |
| 22 November 1943 | —Flight Lieutenant C.C. Wheeler |
| February 1944    | —Flight Lieutenant H.R. Gibbs   |
| February 1945    | —Flight Lieutenant S.A. Symons  |
| January 1946     | —Flight Lieutenant T.W. Powling |
| 22 February 1946 | —Flying Officer I. Burnley      |
| 12 April 1946    | —Flying Officer D.C. Johnston   |

# 11 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 21 May 1942     | —first entry in Unit History Record |
| 15 October 1944 | —Unit disbanded                     |

## NARRATIVE

The first entry in the 11 Operational Base Unit History Record was made on 21 May 1942, when Pilot Officer Houghton was posted from Richmond, New South Wales, to Moruya, New South Wales, to assume command.

On 28 September 1942, Eastern Area was informed that the Unit was operational.

On 8 February 1943, an Anson from 73 Squadron flew a square search for an enemy submarine that attacked and sank the *Iron Knight*. The result was negative and over the following days more searches were carried out.

During the month of October 1944, relatively few aircraft landed at the base. The airstrip was maintained in first class order until, on 30 October 1944, the refuelling facilities, flare paths, fire extinguishers and tools were removed and the airfield assumed the status of an emergency landing ground.

11 Operational Base Unit ceased to function on 15 October 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 23 May 1942       | —Pilot Officer E.A. Houghton   |
| August 1942       | —Pilot Officer A.H. Young      |
| 19 September 1942 | —Pilot Officer E. Ranking      |
| 2 November 1942   | —Flying Officer R. Brighton    |
| 11 March 1943     | —Flight Lieutenant W.G. Ahearn |
| 21 December 1943  | —Flying Officer A.H. Young     |
| August 1944       | —Flying Officer B.M. Miller    |

# 12 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 22 May 1942    | —raised at Coffs Harbour, NSW |
| 8 January 1945 | —Unit disbanded               |

## NARRATIVE

12 Operational Base Unit was established at Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, on 22 May 1942, under the temporary command of Pilot Officer G.G. Faithfull, with a strength of one officer and 48 other ranks.

The men were initially housed in a single hut but by the end of September 1942 all were dwelling in tents. At this time, the construction of dispersal hangars and other facilities was under way.

Leading Aircraftman E.L.G. Collins fired two shots at an 'undesirable character' on 11 March 1943.

On two occasions, facilities at the base were threatened by fire. On 31 July 1944, a fire was extinguished within 65 yards of the bomb dump, and swift action by the base fire fighting party saved the transmitting station from possible damage on 20 November 1944.

The first operational aircraft to be based at Coffs Harbour were three 71 Squadron Anson aircraft, which arrived on 31 October 1942. Other squadrons which operated detachments from Coffs Harbour were 13 (Ventura); 23, 24 (Vengeance); 32 (Beaufort); and 73 (Anson). On 28 November 1943, 71 Squadron, less 'A' Flight, arrived for operations and the squadron was disbanded at Coffs Harbour on 28 August 1944.

The units flew anti-submarine patrols from Coffs Harbour, and an Anson flown by Flying Officer N.S. Orr, Pilot Officer K. Valentine and Sergeant R.L. Brook, was reported missing whilst undertaking this duty on 27 November 1943. During December 1944, 54 aircraft landed at Coffs Harbour for refuelling or service.

12 Operational Base Unit disbanded on 8 January 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 June 1942      | —Flying Officer E.T.G. Loh     |
| 22 May 1943      | —Flying Officer F.W. Davis     |
| 2 September 1943 | —Flight Lieutenant F.L. Bragg  |
| May 1944         | —Flight Lieutenant W.W. Turner |

# 13 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 13 November 1942 —formed at Camden, NSW  
8 December 1944 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

13 Operational Base Unit was formed at Camden, New South Wales, on 13 November 1942, to maintain facilities and installations at Camden, including barracks, ammunition and explosives, aviation fuels and oils, operations and meteorological sections.

On 12 October 1944 a signal was received from Headquarters Eastern Area instructing the Unit to disband on 8 December 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 25 November 1942 —Flying Officer E.H. Wray  
6 June 1944 —Flying Officer C.H. Middleton

# 14 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 10 November 1942 —formed at Lowood, Qld
- 14 December 1944 —15OBU disbanded and reformed as 14OBU  
Detachment 'A', Charleville
- 14 October 1946 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

Flying Officer E.H.E. Wray arrived on posting from 1 Bombing and Gunnery School, Evans Head, as the Commanding Officer of 14 Operational Base Unit, on 10 November 1942. The Unit was formed at Lowood, Queensland, and was established to maintain a domestic organisation and assist the staff of any operational unit located at the station. The Commanding Officer was responsible to Eastern Area to maintain an efficient domestic organisation, including care and maintenance of existing buildings, barracks, plant and equipment, permanent messing arrangements and the provision of canteen facilities.

On 12 June 1944, a RAAF Command Operational Instruction ordered that the base become a staging camp for transient fighter, medium bomber and other aircraft. On 14 December 1944, 15 Operational Base Unit, Charleville, was disbanded and reformed as 14 Operational Base Unit Detachment 'A', Charleville.

On 15 August 1945, at the end of World War II, approximately 100 RAAF and 18 WAAAF personnel marched in Lowood at the request of the townspeople. At the station cinema entertainment was held to celebrate the victory announcements.

The Unit was disbanded on 14 October 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 10 November 1942 —Flying Officer E.H.E. Wray
- 23 November 1942 —Flying Officer C. Griffin
- 22 October 1945 —Squadron Leader B.C.W. Fogg
- 17 November 1945 —Flight Lieutenant N.A. Burton
- 5 December 1945 —Flight Lieutenant W.A. Franklin
- 6 February 1946 —Flight Lieutenant L.A. Hughes

# 15 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4 March 1943     | —formed at Charleville, Qld |
| 14 December 1944 | —Unit disbanded             |

## NARRATIVE

15 Operational Base Unit was established at Charleville, Queensland, to secure the aerodrome and bulk installation petrol supplies, and to service transient aircraft and personnel. Flight Lieutenant V.J. Bahr commanded the Unit and its 17 personnel.

Meteorological reporting was an important role played by the Unit, and Flying Officer A.A. Tweedale was posted to undertake these duties on 25 April 1943.

On 1 August 1943, United States Army personnel commenced the dismantling of four hangars at the Unit, and this task was completed on 21 September 1943. On 26 August, the filling points at the underground storage tanks at Glenroy were completed and the double electric flare path on the aerodrome was completed on 1 June 1944.

At the end of December 1943, the strength of the Unit stood at 50 personnel.

On 29 January 1944, Flying Officer A.E. Brook (RAF) was killed when Boomerang A46-170 crashed, and a search was initiated on 22 May 1944 to discover a Beaufighter which had been lost in the Betoota area. The aircraft and crew were found at Dorrie Station next day.

Headquarters Eastern Area advised that the Unit would cease to operate from 15 October 1944, and disband. The meteorological and caretaking party were to remain as a detachment of 14 Operational Base Unit. 15 Operational Base Unit was disbanded on 14 December 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |              |                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 4 March 1943 | —Flight Lieutenant V.J. Bahr  |
| 18 June 1943 | —Flying Officer H.W. Wheatley |

# 16 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 7 August 1945 | —formed at St Georges Basin, NSW |
| 2 April 1946  | —Unit disbanded                  |

## NARRATIVE

16 Operational Base Unit was formed at St Georges Basin, New South Wales, on 7 August 1945 with Flight Lieutenant W.T. Smith as Commanding Officer.

On 14 November 1945, an instruction was received from Headquarters Eastern Area that the Unit be reduced to a care and maintenance unit, with five personnel, prior to disbandment.

On 2 April 1946, the Unit was disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 7 August 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant W.T. Smith |
| January 1946  | —Sergeant W. Davoren          |

# 21 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |              |                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 May 1942   | —formed at Rockhampton, Qld |
| 1 April 1946 | —Unit disbanded             |

## NARRATIVE

Pilot Officer B. Chirlian and a party of 47 airmen arrived at Rockhampton, Queensland, on 2 May 1942, to establish Operational Base, Rockhampton, which later became 21 Operational Base Unit. No prior provision had been made for accommodation or messing and thus meals were obtained from the Volunteer Defence Corps detachment on garrison duty at the aerodrome. The total party was temporarily accommodated in a vacant weatherboard cottage.

At the outset the Unit had no equipment. For instance, there was no transport available at the base so a utility truck had to be hired locally. A typewriter and office equipment were hired or obtained on loan in Rockhampton. By the end of May 1942, personnel were housed in tents and on 28 May 1942 General Blamey landed by aircraft and inspected personnel.

Work continued on the base and the following tasks were carried out—the erection of tents, digging of slit trenches, digging of petrol dispersal pits, construction of bomb dispersal pits, construction of 25 yards practice rifle range, camouflage of petrol and bomb dumps and preparation of a vegetable garden.

On 23 June 1942, a Tiger Moth crash-landed at the base and damaged its undercarriage and lower wing. The most spectacular accident occurred on 7 October 1942. A Lockheed 14 (VH-CXK) from 22 Troop Carrier Squadron, USAAF, crashed on landing and was completely destroyed by fire. The crew of four, and six passengers, jumped through the windows to escape. All sustained burns, two were serious enough to warrant admission to the Rockhampton General Hospital.

On 6 August 1942, United States Army crews with eight 0.5-inch machine guns took up position on the aerodrome as anti-aircraft defence. On 2 March 1943, General Krueger, Commander of the United States 6th Army, arrived to inspect these personnel.



The major role of the Unit was the messing of transient personnel, refuelling and servicing visiting aircraft.

During October 1945, the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, visited Rockhampton and spent some time with the Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant B.A. Langsford, and Flying Officer Bishop, discussing 21 Operational Base Unit. During the same month the Superfortress *Waltzing Matilda* visited to publicise the Fourth Victory Loan.

With the end of World War II, the Unit saw a gradual decrease in aircraft traffic, and the Unit was disbanded on 1 April 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

2 May 1942	—Pilot Officer B. Chirlian
15 April 1943	—Flying Officer W.T. Barnard
28 February 1944	—Flying Officer E.J. Collings
15 February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant F.J. Lucas
2 August 1945	—Flight Lieutenant A. Hurwood
12 September 1945	—Flight Lieutenant B.A. Langsford
1 February 1946	—Flight Lieutenant C.W. Rodd

# 22 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 31 October 1942 | —RAAF Station Bowen became<br>22 Operational Base Unit |
| 10 October 1944 | —Unit disbanded  |

## NARRATIVE

22 Operational Base Unit was established at Bowen, Queensland, and accommodation and facilities were purchased at Herbert, Dalrymple and George Streets. The Grand View and North Australian Hotels were also utilised by members of the Unit for administrative purposes.

When Squadron Leader G.I. Winter-Irving assumed command of RAAF Station Bowen at the end of May 1942, the strength of the Unit stood at six officers and 97 airmen. He later assumed command of 22 Operational Base Unit on its formation.

Until early 1943, the members of the Unit serviced visiting aircraft, which included Tiger Moth, Dragon and visiting United States Mitchell types. On 31 October 1942, an Anson aircraft en route from Cairns to Mackay force-landed on the Bowen beach. This aircraft was salvaged from two feet of water during the same day.

Kittyhawk fighters from 75 Squadron flew patrols to seaward from the airfield at Bowen during December 1942. On 13 December, Sergeant R. Riddell crashed on landing after a patrol, and was hospitalised.

In March 1943, the first Catalina aircraft was allotted to 22 Operational Base Unit from 20 Squadron, for maintenance. Catalina aircraft from 11 Squadron were also maintained, and another Catalina squadron, 43, was raised at Bowen during May 1943.

22 Operational Base Unit was disbanded on 10 October 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 November 1942 | —Squadron Leader G.I. Winter-Irving |
| 18 August 1943  | —Squadron Leader E.G. Forrest       |

# 23 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1 December 1942 —established at Townsville, Qld  
30 November 1944 —final entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

23 Operational Base Unit was established at Townsville, Queensland, with a strength of 22 officers and 349 airmen on 1 December 1942. The Unit was responsible for meteorological services and the provision of signals, teleprinter, radio ranges and high frequency direction finding facilities. To undertake the former duty, Flight Lieutenant B. Mason was posted to the Unit on 7 December as the first meteorological officer, and the Unit broadcasted coded meteorological information to the Navy twice daily. This task was assumed by Headquarters North-Eastern Area, Sydney Street, on 6 January 1943.

Leading Aircraftman R.E. Marshall, a member of the Unit, died in the Townsville General Hospital on 19 December 1942, as a result of a motor vehicle accident in the town.

The base was an important centre for Allied air traffic to and from northern ports, as well as a base through which most units staged; and 42 Radar, and 75 Wing were both raised at Townsville during 1943.

The importance of 23 Operational Base Unit can be seen from statistics regarding aircraft landings at the base between 30 October 1943 and 31 November 1944. During that period, 19 103 United States service, 3749 RAAF and 2271 civilian aircraft landed at Townsville. This figure does not include those operated by New Zealand and Dutch forces.

The final entry in the 23 Operational Base Unit History Record was made on 30 November 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 24 December 1942 —Wing Commander J.E. Graham  
9 March 1943 —Wing Commander T.I. Baillieu  
27 November 1943 —Wing Commander G.S. Matthews

# 24 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 June 1942      | —first entry in Unit History Record |
| 31 December 1945 | —last entry in Unit History Record  |

## NARRATIVE

The first entry in the 24 Operational Base Unit History Record was made on 2 June 1942, and at the end of the month the Unit comprised three officers and 33 airmen, all under the command of Flight Lieutenant W.C. Gates. As at 31 December 1943, the strength of the Unit was two officers and 48 other ranks.

During May 1944, the Governor of Queensland visited the Unit. Flight Lieutenant J. Chute of 1 Mobile Parachute Maintenance Unit inspected a site at Mareeba on 18 May and by 27 May, 1 Mobile Parachute Maintenance Unit was settled as a lodger unit at Mareeba.

During October 1944, 1 Australian Parachute Battalion undertook a series of practice parachute jumps in the area. Two Dakota aircraft were utilised, with 750 jumps being made from an average height of 700 feet. On 28 October, three Vengeance aircraft from 5 Communications Unit arrived to carry out target towing for 1 Australian Corps for a period of six weeks. Co-operation with the Army continued on 29 November 1944, when six Anson aircraft from 8 Service Flying Training School arrived to undertake training exercises with the same Army formation. Kittyhawk fighters and aircraft from 16 Air Observation Post Flight also operated from Mareeba during April 1945.

The final entry in the Unit History Record was made on 31 December 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 16 June 1943     | —Flight Lieutenant W.C. Gates    |
| 9 September 1943 | —Flying Officer G. Moir          |
| 14 January 1944  | —Flying Officer F.R. Wilkeson    |
| August 1944      | —Flight Lieutenant L.E. Sinclair |
| 28 May 1945      | —Flight Lieutenant F.M. Lehane   |
| 22 October 1945  | —Flight Lieutenant A.G. Porter   |

# 25 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 25 May 1942 —formed at Cairns, Qld  
25 February 1946 —last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

25 Operational Base Unit was formed at Cairns airfield on 25 May 1942, with Pilot Officer F.J. Bromley as the Commanding Officer. The Unit's strength at formation was 30 personnel.

On 5 November 1942, the refuelling operations were taken over by the United States Army (27th Engineers Mobile Unit). The gravel runways needed more compaction, as heavy aircraft were unable to use them. On 3 January 1945, the strip was temporarily closed down due to bad weather. On the following day a mustard gas bomb was inadvertently dropped from an aircraft on the strip by Chemical Research Unit. A decontamination squad disposed of the bomb, which caused no damage. On the same day a C-47 aircraft flown by Lieutenant Grantz (USAAF) crashed whilst landing, due to brake failure. No personnel were injured but the undercarriage was badly damaged.

In February 1945 the 'wet' continued to affect services—24 inches of rain were recorded for the month—and on 2 February 1945, 26 aircraft and 46 transient personnel at the Unit were unable to proceed south.

In the month of November 1945, an all time Unit record for traffic was set, with 305 landings and take-offs, 94 500 gallons of fuel pumped into aircraft and 4251 transient personnel passing through the Unit.

The Unit was ordered to commence disbanding on 1 February 1946. The final entry in the Unit History Record was on 25 February 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 25 May 1942 —Pilot Officer F.J. Bromley  
1 November 1942 —Pilot Officer F. Bortfield  
1 April 1943 —Flight Lieutenant R.H. Dixon  
1 September 1943 —Squadron Leader A.G. Collins  
12 January 1944 —Squadron Leader W.J. Ahearn  
12 September 1945 —Squadron Leader A.D. Callow

# 26 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 10 June 1942    | —signal staff disembarked at Portland Roads, Qld, for move to Iron Range, Qld |
| November 1942   | —first mention of '26 Operational Base Unit'                                  |
| 12 March 1943   | —five officers and 66 airmen arrived at Portland Roads                        |
| 9 December 1944 | —Unit disbanded   |

## NARRATIVE

On 7 June 1942, Pilot Officer V.A. Purser and an installation party under command of Flight Lieutenant Edwards, departed from Townsville, Queensland, aboard the SS *Wandana* for Portland Roads. The ship arrived on 10 June 1942, and the men disembarked. On 22 June, the party moved to the base at Iron Range, 23 miles from Portland Roads.

The Unit's task was to maintain wireless communications between the 46th Engineers, United States Army, and Townsville. On 8 July the landing ground had developed to the stage where a Rapide aircraft could land. The airstrip, known as 'Gordon', was completed on 18 August 1942; the first aircraft to use the airstrip, a B-18, landed on the same day.

At that time the signalling facility belonged to the United States Army Air Force, and RAAF signallers were dependent on it. In November, the installation of a powerful transmitter was completed, and the men commenced a 24-hour listening watch. However, the United States services at the base used their own facilities, and the RAAF facility was under-used.

In September, Marauder aircraft from 22 Bombardment Group arrived, and flew their first operation on 13 September. One Marauder crashed on return, and the Australian co-pilot, Pilot Officer Robinson, was killed. In November, the majority of the American units departed for New Guinea, leaving a company of engineers to undertake heavy work at Iron Range. As a result, the second airstrip, 'Claudie', was sealed and covered by the end of December 1942.

In January 1943, the engineers departed for Port Moresby. By the end of February, the American operational units, which included 22 and 90 Bombardment Groups, had moved to other sites. The RAAF assumed

responsibility for the airfields, and moved into a camp site between the airfields which had been vacated by the 28th Service Squadron, United States Army.

On 1 March 1943 the strength of 26 Operational Base Unit, as it was then known, was seven officers and 108 men. On 12 March 1943, Flight Lieutenant E.H. Edge arrived with 71 officers and men at Portland Roads aboard SS *Wandana*.

The Unit maintained a signals function in addition to the normal activities of an operational base unit. To facilitate the former, Airadio Station—callsign VZIR—became operational on 15 July 1944.

A fatal accident occurred on 14 June 1943, when Flying Officer N.P. Randell of 76 Squadron was killed when he force-landed his Kittyhawk on the beach two miles from Portland Roads. Another tragedy took place on 15 February 1944, when a P-40 and a P-47 collided on landing, resulting in the death of First Lieutenant Hawke.

Not all incidents involved fatal aircraft crashes. On 17 April 1943, 10 guards accompanied a party from 13 Garrison Battalion to patrol Tozer Gap. The patrol returned on 19 April, without sighting anything suspicious.

On 17 July 1944, two airmen from the Unit travelled by boat to Lloyds Bay, 12 miles north of the Lockhart River Mission, to salvage wireless, armament and engine parts from a Vengeance aircraft which had force-landed. The two men, and their booty, returned to Iron Range on 26 July.

A warning order was received on 10 November 1944 to the effect that the Unit would disband. A small party—a detachment of 27 Operational Base Unit—would remain to maintain the airfield, and 26 Operational Base Unit was disbanded on 9 December 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

7 June 1942	—Pilot Officer V.A. Purser
2 October 1942	—Flying Officer F.H. Doyle
9 March 1943	—Flight Lieutenant E.H. Edge
June 1943	—Squadron Leader A.J. Collins
8 September 1943	—Flight Lieutenant E.S. Edwards

# 27 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

24 April 1942	—formed at Cooktown, Qld
30 April 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

27 Operational Base Unit, originally known as Cooktown Operational Base Unit, was formed on 24 April 1942, at the civil aerodrome, Cooktown. The base was managed by a detachment of 13 men consisting of wireless/telegraph operators and guards, who also attended to the refuelling of aircraft. On 22 and 23 April 1942, 50 additional personnel arrived on posting to take up specific duties, under the command of Flying Officer E.R. Cavanagh.

Difficulty was experienced at this time in obtaining suitable accommodation for both station and transient personnel. A combination of the equipment store, portions of the radio building, mess huts and local facilities in Cooktown were used to meet the accommodation needs of the Unit.

During May 1942, aircraft were serviced and crews accommodated who were participating in the Coral Sea Battle.

Every effort was made to rescue the crews of crashed aircraft within the base's sphere of operations. While attempting to land supplies to the pilot of a beached aircraft at Red Point, Flying Officer Ellerton lost his life and his burial was arranged by the base.

Early in October 1942 instructions were received to transfer the base from the civil aerodrome to the new airstrip at the Mission Strip, approximately 8 miles from Cooktown. Flight Lieutenant R.M. McKenzie was the Commanding Officer at the time.

One of the Unit's functions was to record weather details. The following is a typical extract, written in March 1946, from the Unit History Record:

Meteorological—Rainfall for this month was well below average, the total fall being 414 points. Highest daily fall was between 0900 on 1/3/46 and 0900 on 2/3/46. Visibility was below 5 miles on 5 occasions and below 2 miles on 3 occasions due to early morning mist and dust haze. The wind velocity was recorded as exceeding 20mph on two occasions although gusts were estimated



to have reached 30mph at times. Only twice was the cloud base lower than 2,000 feet.

The Unit was disbanded on 30 April 1946. Corporal J.A. Hales was appointed caretaker of the Mission Strip, to oversee the correct forwarding of equipment into store.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

24 April 1942	—Flying Officer E.R. Cavanagh
19 November 1942	—Flight Lieutenant R.M. McKenzie
11 August 1943	—Flying Officer D. Birch

# 28 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 16 May 1942      | —raised at Horn Island, Qld |
| 15 December 1944 | —ceased to function         |

## NARRATIVE

28 Operational Base Unit was formed at Horn Island on 16 May 1942 and Pilot Officer Corrigan assumed command on 31 May 1942.

The Unit was established at a time of high drama. There were seven air raids on Horn Island between May 1942 and June 1943. On 11 May 1942, Horn Island was raided by six Japanese bombers and five 'Zeke' fighters. Two Wirraway aircraft were destroyed during this raid. On 7 July, tents and buildings were damaged and the ammunition hut totally destroyed when 16 bombers raided the island. Four Hudson aircraft were damaged when a lone Japanese bomber raided Horn Island on 29 July. Next day, bombs fell in the sea during another raid. On 18 June 1943, a night raider was caught in searchlights and bombs jettisoned into the sea near Prince of Wales Island, and there was another air raid warning on 21 June 1943.

Horn Island was one of the most important staging points for aircraft and units bound for New Guinea. Aircraft such as B-17, B-25, P-38, P-39, P-40, Beaufort and Catalina passed through Horn Island, as individual aircraft or as formed squadrons. To enable these aircraft to be serviced, the facilities at the base were slowly improved. By July 1943 new buildings were being erected for the barracks store and signals section, and the cypher office and operations rooms were extended by Unit labour. Another improvement was the water supply; on 21 July 1943 drinkable water was found at a depth of 64 feet at a new bore, and another source of drinkable water was found on 23 September.

Due to the number and nature of aircraft movements, it was inevitable that there were fatal incidents. On 23 December 1943, a Dakota crashed 30 miles south of Horn Island, and the Unit's rescue launch joined a naval launch to recover the survivors. On 23 February 1944, Flight Sergeant T.B. Griffiths was killed when his Kittyhawk crashed on take-off, and Wing Commander Lambert collided with three 80 Squadron Kittyhawk aircraft which were on standby on 19 March 1944. The P-47 he was flying

and a Kittyhawk were destroyed by fire but Lambert was not injured. A B-17 crash-landed on 24 March 1944, and two crew members were killed.

On 18 September 1944, a fire broke out at 1900 hours and threatened Unit buildings. Personnel were watching a movie, but were pulled away from the flickering images to control the fire; the movie recommenced at 2130.

The Unit ceased to function on 15 December 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

31 May 1942	—Pilot Officer Corrigan
14 July 1942	—Flight Lieutenant H.D. Young
14 December 1942	—Flight Lieutenant J.F. Cramer-Roberts
19 December 1943	—Squadron Leader K.L. Williams
1 September 1944	—Squadron Leader C.B. Dolphin
18 September 1944	—Flight Lieutenant F.J. Lucas

# 29 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 22 June 1942     | —formed at Augustus Downs, Qld |
| 5 July 1943      | —moved to Inverleigh, Qld      |
| 11 December 1944 | —Unit disbanded                |

## NARRATIVE

29 Operational Base Unit was formed at Augustus Downs, Queensland, on 22 June 1942 under the command of Pilot Officer J.N.S. Wallens.

Augustus Downs cattle station was situated 200 miles north of Cloncurry. A temporary runway had been cleared while the main runway was still under construction. The site chosen for the runway was a red clay-pan, which created a huge catchment area in the rainy season. Within miles of the camp there were three sandy ridges which were used for the dispersal of bombs, pyrotechnics, ammunition, petrol and oil.

On 3 August 1942, Pilot Officer Wallens was flown to Cloncurry Base by a Flying Doctor aircraft—the first plane to land on the temporary strip. On 6 August, the main runway became operational.

On 5 July 1943, the Unit moved to a new site at Inverleigh, leaving 11 airmen at Augustus Downs. Prior to the Unit's move, the Civil Construction Corps had been engaged in constructing a main and cross-strip, dispersal bays, splinter-proof pens, gun posts, roadways and necessary buildings at Inverleigh. On arrival the Unit was able to function immediately due to this construction.

On 3 December 1944, a signal arrived posting all personnel out of the Unit except the Commanding Officer, and the Unit was disbanded on 11 December 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 22 June 1942     | —Pilot Officer J.N.S. Wallens     |
| 16 December 1942 | —Flying Officer E.R. Cavanagh     |
| 22 May 1943      | —Flight Lieutenant C.O.R. Fenner  |
| 2 September 1943 | —Flight Lieutenant R.M. McKenzie  |
| 13 October 1943  | —Flight Lieutenant B.R. Cooper    |
| 6 February 1944  | —Flight Lieutenant B.A. Langsford |
| September 1944   | —Flight Lieutenant A.D. Mackrell  |

# 30 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 31 December 1942 —formed at Cloncurry, Qld  
30 September 1945 —last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

30 Operational Base Unit was formed at Cloncurry, Queensland, on 31 December 1942. Flying Officer H.W. Wheatley assumed command of the Unit on 22 January 1943, at which stage the strength of the Unit was four officers and 24 other ranks.

On 31 January 1943, 17 aircraft of 77 Squadron, the first of many squadrons to stage through Cloncurry, arrived. On 29 June 1943, 12 Squadron arrived and departed next day, after the personnel had been housed in the local hotel. 23 Squadron staged through Cloncurry on 18 July 1943. 1, 548 and 549 Squadrons staged through Cloncurry in February 1945. After the cessation of hostilities, 69 Spitfire aircraft staged through the base, heading south.

During March 1943, two underground tanks were filled to their capacity of 20 000 gallons. During April a civilian was fined \$30 for pilfering fuel.

Convoys passed through Cloncurry, en route to Inverleigh and Augustus Downs, during March–April 1943.

The Commanding Officer also filled the Defence Officer role. On 31 May 1943, a new system of infantry training was instituted. The Officer Commanding formed non-commissioned officer classes and became responsible for their training. Non-commissioned officers from the Garrison Battalion and the Volunteer Defence Force were invited to attend. Arrangements were also made with the Commanding Officer of 15 Garrison Battalion to supply guards for the hangars, tarmacs, aircraft, airadio and meteorological sections.

A United States services C-47 crashed in flames 8 miles from Boomera Station, 70 miles north of Cloncurry, with the loss of all passengers and crew. A more intimate fatality occurred when Corporal J.W. Sutherland, from 1 Aircraft Repair Depot, was killed when a weapons carrier overturned after a Sergeants' Mess social function on 14 April 1945. Sutherland was buried, with full military honours, on 16 April.

An outbreak of cerebral spinal meningitis, which killed four and hospitalised 21, forced the town of Cloncurry to be placed 'off limits' from 12 to 26 January 1945.

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

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

22 January 1943	—Flying Officer H.W. Wheatley
8 April 1943	—Flying Officer J.C. O'Connell
6 June 1943	—Flying Officer E. Sinclair
19 June 1944	—Flight Lieutenant J.H. Cape
26 February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant H.A. Atkins
14 May 1945	—Flight Lieutenant J.H. Cape

# 33 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

28 April 1943	—formed at Townsville, Qld
15 May 1943	—moved to Aitkenvale, Qld
16 October 1943	—move to Higgins Field, Qld, completed
28 March 1946	—last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

33 Operational Base Unit was formed, under the temporary command of Flying Officer J. Benson, at Townsville, Queensland, on 28 April 1943. The Unit moved to Aitkenvale on 15 May, before an advance party of 26 personnel, led by Sergeant M.R. Stanfield, proceeded to 28 Operational Base Unit, Horn Island, on 31 May 1943.

Flying Officer J.C. O'Connell arrived as Defence Officer on 12 June, and training in infantry tactics, weapons and small arms commenced.

Sergeant Stanfield and his party departed from Horn Island for Higgins Field on 31 September 1943, and the Unit was wholly located at that site by 16 October 1943.

The Unit assumed the responsibility for aircraft refuelling on 23 November, and the facilities at the base were expanded during the same month. Telephone lines and temporary buildings were erected for the transport and medical sections, and a carpenter's shop, administrative office, orderly room, barracks and equipment sections were completed. In addition, waterproofing and camouflaging of huts was undertaken. A rest camp was established at the mouth of the Larradeenya River in July 1944. Fishing, tennis, badminton and basketball courts were constructed.

Units which staged through Higgins Field included 7 Squadron, which arrived on 3 March 1944; 23 Squadron, which had been based at Higgins Field since 31 March 1944; and 21 Squadron, bound for Tadj, New Guinea, on 21 October 1944. In addition, 36 Squadron based two crews at Higgins Field, to undertake a courier run to Hollandia, on 3 July 1944. To accommodate transient people, the erection of 20 prefabricated huts, capable of housing 160 transient personnel, was commenced.

In November 1944, 33 Operational Base Unit commenced the take-over of 1 Repair and Salvage Unit assets, and, on 29 December 1944, took

over a detachment of 28 Operational Base Unit, Horn Island, on the disbandment of that unit. At the end of December, the Unit strength was 16 officers and 219 other ranks, and they were not idle. In September 1944 there were 253 aircraft movements through the base, in October 457 and December 454.

Duty was not without cost. On 3 January 1944, Aircraftman Class I H.K. Woods died of burns received in an accident on 28 December 1943. A Norseman aircraft crashed on take-off, resulting in the death of three persons, on 22 August 1944. Dakota VH-CXD crashed on landing on 5 May 1945; the Australian National Airlines Captain, Clark, Warrant Officers Hornbrook and Gidley and Flight Sergeant Browne and the passengers in the aircraft, were all killed.

On 12 January 1944, the operations room was closed, and the last entry in the Unit History Record is dated 28 March 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

28 April 1943	—Flying Officer J. Benson
14 July 1943	—Flight Lieutenant F.J. Horwood
27 February 1944	—Flight Lieutenant F.J. Lucas
18 September 1944	—Squadron Leader C.B. Dolphin
22 April 1945	—Squadron Leader E. Gooch
12 November 1945	—Squadron Leader W.J. Hoddinott



# 34 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 15 December 1943 —formed at Karumba, Qld  
27 August 1945 —last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

34 Operational Base Unit was formed at Karumba, Queensland, on 15 December 1943. Construction of hangars and a slipway was undertaken. Flying boats, landplanes and Flying Doctor aircraft visited the Unit.

During the wet season the Unit was often cut off by flood waters. Cyclonic weather, and subsequent unsuitable flying conditions, also affected air operations.

Although the Unit was isolated, morale was maintained by playing sport, including cricket, swimming and fishing. Fishing was so successful that the catch was eaten in the mess on a regular basis and any excess was exported to RAAF bases at Cairns.

The last entry in the Unit History Record was made on 27 August 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 30 December 1943 —Squadron Leader R.L. Kerdel  
April 1943 —Squadron Leader R.J. Packer  
25 May 1944 —Flight Lieutenant J.P. Blackhouse  
23 August 1945 —Flight Lieutenant N.A. Burton

# 37 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 31 October 1944 | —formed at Tadj |
| 20 March 1946   | —Unit disbanded |

## NARRATIVE

37 Operational Base Unit was formed at Tadj on 31 October 1944, under the command of Flight Lieutenant O.C. Lind. On 1 December 1944, the Unit became operational for transit personnel only, while construction of the camp continued.

On 17 February 1945, a 36 Squadron C-47 with two members of the Unit—Corporal A.E. Guy and Corporal K. Hardham—as passengers, crashed whilst engaged on supply droppings to forward area troops. Both airmen were killed.

On 20 March 1946, an order from Northern Headquarters was received to the effect that all personnel were to evacuate the Tadj area, and the Unit was disbanded on this date.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 31 October 1944   | —Flight Lieutenant O.C. Lind     |
| 26 April 1945     | —Flight Lieutenant H.W. Jackson  |
| 12 September 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant A.A. Willis   |
| 7 December 1945   | —Flight Lieutenant A.W. Peterson |
| 3 January 1946    | —Flying Officer W.E.S. Holtham   |

# 38 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                                    |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 20 October 1944  | —formed at Nadzab, New Guinea      |
| 9 November 1944  | —moved to Lae, New Guinea          |
| 2 April 1945     | —moved to Morotai                  |
| 24 June 1945     | —moved to Balikpapan               |
| 30 November 1945 | —last entry in Unit History Record |

## NARRATIVE

38 Operational Base Unit was formed at Nadzab on 20 October 1944. The Commanding Officers of 38 Wing and 38 Operational Base Unit inspected and chose a suitable camp site. By arrangement with the Base Area Commander USAAF, the existing buildings and quarters, vacated by 93 Aerodrome Company USAAF at Lae airstrip, were taken over. On 9 September 1944 the Unit moved to the Lae strip.

On 2 April 1945, the Unit moved by aircraft to Morotai and proceeded to establish a camp for 83 Wing Headquarters, 4 Squadron, 16 Air Observation Post Flight and 9 Local Area Supply Unit. The site selected was in a good position on high ground in a coconut plantation about 200 yards from the sea. The camp was divided into camp 'A' and camp 'B' where camp 'A' consisted of 4 Squadron and 38 Operational Base Unit and camp 'B' was occupied by the remaining units.

On 24 June 1945, the Unit moved to Balikpapan.

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

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 20 October 1944 | —Flying Officer M.G. Heath      |
| 15 January 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant C.R. Morgan  |
| 31 March 1945   | —Flight Lieutenant W.E. Timmony |

# 39 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 12 October 1944  | —formed at Cairns, Qld           |
| 17 November 1944 | —moved to Torokina, Bougainville |
| 28 February 1946 | —Unit disbanded                  |

## NARRATIVE

Personnel from 1 Reserve Personnel Pool at Townsville were posted to 39 Operational Base Unit and attached to a pool pending formation of the Unit. The Unit moved to Cairns, Queensland, where, on 12 October 1944, Flying Officer F.W. Cahill arrived as temporary Commanding Officer. On 14 October 1944, Flight Lieutenant W.W. Turner took over as Commanding Officer of the Unit.

Pending the move to Bougainville, the personnel participated in a 'hardening course', including a 5.5-mile route march and lectures on aerodrome defence. Small arms were issued to personnel and practice given in their use. On 17 November 1944, the Unit moved to Torokina, Bougainville. While on Bougainville the Unit received instructions to take precautions against possible infiltration by Japanese troops.

On 31 January 1946 the Unit ceased to function and commenced to disband in the field.

On 27 February 1946, the Army requested that the air-sea rescue boat *Air Foam* proceed to Fauro Island to pick up a soldier who had been badly burned. The *Air Foam*, with an Army pilot on board, covered the 100 miles, on a very dark night, in seven hours and at 0800 hours next day departed for Torokina with the patient soldier. At 1200 an RAAF Air Evacuation C-47, with a nursing sister and medical officer aboard, flew the soldier to the base hospital at Rabaul. The Commanding Officer commented that this action was a very good example of Navy, Army and Air Force co-operation to save the soldier's life.

The Unit finally disbanded on 28 February 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 14 October 1944 | —Flight Lieutenant W.W. Turner    |
| 10 October 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant W.H.S. Clemens |
| December 1946   | —Flight Lieutenant M.O. Carr      |

# 40 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 15 July 1944 —formed at Milne Bay, New Guinea
- 9 January 1945 —detachment sent to Nadzab
- January 1945 —moved to Lae
- 30 April 1946 —last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

Flying Officer F.B. Lynch of 48 Operational Base Unit, Finschhafen, arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea, to form 40 Operational Base Unit on 15 July 1944. On 18 July 1944, he departed for Northern Command at Nadzab to obtain information regarding the strength, role and destination of the Unit, with no success.

The Unit's destination was to be Biak, and 40 Operational Base Unit was to be formed at Milne Bay since there was no stores depot at Finschhafen to obtain the necessary equipment.

On 20 November 1944, the Commanding Officer prepared to visit Biak to select a camp site, but Northern Command cancelled the visit at the last moment. The Commanding Officer departed for Northern Command on 4 December 1944, where he was informed that the Unit's destination had been altered and that a detachment was to be sent to Nadzab to relieve a 48 Operational Base Unit detachment. On 9 January 1945 the detachment at Nadzab was fully operational.

During January 1945 the Unit moved to Lae with additional personnel being posted in from Northern Command. On 26 February 1945, 75 per cent of personnel arrived from Milne Bay for duty to take over from 38 Operational Base Unit at Lae.

On 7 February 1945, the Commanding Officer was informed that the Unit would maintain signals detachments at Jacquinet Bay, Nadzab, Salamaua and Headquarters 1st Australian Army at Lae. A Unit headquarters, operations room and the meteorological section were also located at Lae. The operations room would control, refuel, service and maintain all aircraft on Lae strip. Weather forecasts would be provided and transient personnel catered for.

By March 1945, the Unit was 80 per cent operational and, on 24 November 1945, the Commanding Officer took over 10 Repair and Salvage Unit, which was in the process of disbanding.

The last entry in the Unit History Record was made on 30 April 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

15 July 1944	—Flying Officer F.B. Lynch
24 July 1945	—Flight Lieutenant N.L. Taylor
24 October 1945	—Flight Lieutenant C.H. Middleton
3 January 1946	—Flight Lieutenant H.F. Littlewood

# 41 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 28 March 1943   | —formed on Goodenough Island       |
| February 1945   | —moved to Dobodura                 |
| 31 October 1945 | —last entry in Unit History Record |

## NARRATIVE

41 Operational Base Unit was formed on 28 March 1943 with the arrival by aircraft of Flying Officer R.A. Kent, and five airmen, at Goodenough Island. On 28 March 1943, the party hitch-hiked to Wai-Wai, where materials and transport were on board the *George Peat*.

After considerable effort the party arrived at the camp site adjacent to 5 Mobile Works Squadron. The camp was set up and started to function when the first consignment of 100 drums of aero fuel arrived at Vivigani.

Japanese survivors from the Bismark Sea Battle were brought in as prisoners by the AIF. Two members of the Unit located two Japanese soldiers, who were subsequently taken prisoner, at Beli-Beli village. On 13 April 1943, approximately 60 Japanese aircraft flew over after returning from the biggest raid on Milne Bay.

On 14 December 1943, a Japanese aircraft followed a RAAF aircraft in from night operations and dropped one anti-personnel bomb 100 yards from a 100 Squadron Beaufort. Flying Officer Jackson, an observer, was killed and Flying Officer Walsh, air gunner, badly injured and the plane rendered unserviceable.

In February 1945 the Unit moved to Dobodura. With the end of the war in August 1945, the RAAF service to Dobodura was diverted, the Americans were evacuated and 41 Operational Base Unit was left in sole occupancy of the airstrip.

The last entry in the Unit History Record was on 31 October 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 28 March 1943   | —Flying Officer R.A. Kent      |
| December 1943   | —Flying Officer R.S. Leydin    |
| 1 January 1945  | —Flying Officer C.H. Middleton |
| 15 October 1945 | —Flying Officer L.H. Flood     |

# 42 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

23 September 1942	—formed at Ward's Strip, New Guinea
5 July 1944	—moved to camp near Jackson's Strip
10 January 1945	—moved to Madang
March 1946	—moved to Port Moresby
31 August 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

Pilot Officer W.L. Von Doussa arrived at Ward's Strip on 23 September 1942, to act as aerodrome controller and to command an operational base unit to be formed under the verbal instruction of Wing Commander H. Birch. On 22 November 1942 the Unit became known as 42 Operational Base Unit.

On 27 January 1943, an early morning air raid occurred and one Beaufighter was destroyed. On 5 July 1944 the Unit moved to a new camp site near Jackson's Strip. On 6 December 1944, Northern Command issued instructions to 42 Operational Base Unit that 12 personnel should proceed to Madang to prepare a new camp site. On 10 January 1945 the Unit moved to Madang.

In March 1946 the Unit moved back to Port Moresby, and, on 15 April 1946, the Madang Strip was closed except for emergency purposes. On 30 August 1946, all personnel were posted to RAAF Station Port Moresby and the Unit was disbanded on the following day.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

23 September 1942	—Pilot Officer W.L. Von Doussa
November 1942	—Flying Officer F.M. Lehane
24 January 1944	—Flying Officer R.T. Bruce
8 November 1944	—Flight Lieutenant W.D.U. Tink
16 December 1944	—Flight Lieutenant G. Moir
9 March 1946	—Squadron Leader D.J. Richie
15 June 1946	—Squadron Leader G.H. Tournay



# 43 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 January 1943  | —first entry in Unit History Record at Gurney Strip, Milne Bay |
| 14 October 1944 | —detachment took over control of Moronda Strip                 |
| 25 January 1946 | —Unit disbanded  |

## NARRATIVE

The first entry in the Unit History Record was made at Gurney Strip, Milne Bay, by Pilot Officer R.A. Ken, as the temporary Commanding Officer, on 1 January 1943. 43 Operational Base Unit, for the next seven months, had only temporary commanding officers. On 7 April 1943, Flying Officer W.L. Von Doussa took over as the temporary Commanding Officer followed on 5 August 1943 by Flight Lieutenant A.deB. Blockey who subsequently assumed permanent command on 9 August 1943.

On 23 August 1944, Gurney Strip was closed for major repairs, and the operational aspects were transferred to the Turnbull Strip. The repairs to Gurney were carried out by the 867th Engineer (Aviation) Battalion, United States Army, and completed by the 869th Engineer (Aviation) Battalion, United States Army. On 30 November 1944, the strip was completed and operational.

On 14 October 1944, a detachment of 43 Operational Base Unit took over responsibility for control of Moronda Strip, Dobodura, with Flying Officer C. Harris as commander of the detachment.

On 10 and 12 April 1945, the Moronda Strip was closed for surface repairs and, on 25 January 1946, the Unit was disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 9 August 1943   | —Flight Lieutenant A.deB. Blockey  |
| 11 May 1944     | —Flight Lieutenant A.F.E. Wilson   |
| 16 June 1945    | —Squadron Leader F. Jolly          |
| 22 October 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant H.F. Littlewood |
| 1 January 1946  | —Flight Lieutenant J.W. Cornish    |

# 44 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 11 December 1942 —formed at Garbutt, Qld  
15 May 1943 —arrived at Merauke, Dutch New Guinea  
31 October 1945 —final entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

44 Operational Base Unit was formed at Garbutt, Townsville, in accordance with an Air Board signal of 11 December 1942. The establishment was six officers and 150 airmen. Flying Officer Wallens was appointed Commanding Officer on 21 December 1942, and was succeeded by Flight Lieutenant Chirlian on 21 April 1943.

The Unit arrived at Merauke on 15 May 1943, after transiting through Horn Island, which was bombed on 11 May 1943, but without casualties to members of the Unit.

The landing strip at Merauke was approximately 2 miles from the Unit headquarters, which controlled aerodrome control personnel and the permanent duty crew of fitters, firemen and medical orderlies. The first aircraft to land on the strip was an Avro Anson flown by Wing Commander Curnow. 86 Squadron Kittyhawks operated at this time and were used in defence during Japanese air raids. One raid on 27 July 1943 was carried out by two 'Zekes', and one 'Dinah', and did little damage. A subsequent raid on 9 September 1943 saw approximately 75 bombs dropped on the area and four on the strip. The tower, ambulance and fire tender were holed.

On 10 September 1943, Flight Lieutenant Fenner was appointed Commanding Officer, and five 12 Squadron Vengeance aircraft arrived to carry out patrol duties. During this time, the strip was lengthened to 4290 feet.

A new control tower was erected in June 1944, and a radio telephony communications system was installed by the United States Army Air Force. Beauforts and Venturas of the RAAF carried out bombing and strafing attacks in the area surrounding Timoeeka village on 22 July 1944.

As the Japanese were being pushed further back, 44 Operational Base Unit became more a staging camp for personnel moving on to postings further north. Buildings of a semi-permanent nature were erected for

cookhouses, messes, transport section garages, an outdoor theatre and accommodation for transient personnel.

Toward the end of 1944 the urgency of the War was not noticeable in Merauke as it continued with its work of refuelling visiting aircraft, accommodating visitors and general maintenance and administrative duties connected with the organisation of the Unit. Entertainment of the troops became important during this time. Football competitions of all codes were organised and in October 1944 a RAAF Catalina arrived with a troupe of boxers, wrestlers and musicians.

On 14 January 1945, Squadron Leader Upward arrived as Commanding Officer, and aircraft, including Spitfires, staged through the base during February 1945, en route for Morotai.

The final entry in the Unit History Record was made on 31 October 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

21 December 1942	—Flying Officer J.M.S. Wallens
21 April 1943	—Flight Lieutenant B. Chirlian
10 September 1943	—Flight Lieutenant C.O.B. Fenner
14 January 1945	—Squadron Leader C.R. Upward

# 45 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 7 March 1943     | —formed at Port Moresby |
| 7 September 1945 | —Unit disbanded         |

## NARRATIVE

45 Operational Base Unit was formed at Port Moresby on 7 March 1943, with Flying Officer G.W. Young in command. The Unit was to control barracks, messing, dental, medical, area bomb disposal and the administration of 7 Postal Unit at Port Moresby.

On 5 April 1943 there was a daylight air raid at Port Moresby and on 15 April 1943 the Unit took control of the meteorological section.

On 30 March 1945, two P-47s collided on landing at Jackson's Strip with slight damage to the aircraft and no personnel injured.

In August 1945 the Unit began to disband in accordance with a Northern Command directive. All personnel were posted to RAAF Station Port Moresby, with final disbandment taking place on 7 September 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 7 March 1943    | —Flying Officer G.W. Young       |
| 19 January 1944 | —Flight Lieutenant S. Bishop     |
| 12 July 1944    | —Flight Lieutenant C.J. Nicholls |

# 46 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

26 July 1943	—formed at Milne Bay
4 August 1943	—moved to Kiriwina
25 June 1945	—moved to Middleburg Island
31 July 1945	—last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

46 Operational Base Unit was formed on 26 July 1943 at Milne Bay, under the command of Flight Lieutenant L.R. Bray. On 4 August 1943, the Unit moved to Kiriwina.

On 6 October 1943, a Spitfire ran off the strip and bent two propeller blades; the pilot was not injured. A P-40 of 75 Squadron ran off the strip on 21 October 1944, resulting in the plane turning over, damaging the engine and fuselage. Although the pilot was not seriously injured, he was taken to hospital. On the same day, a P-40 landed on the back of another, resulting in both planes being totally destroyed by fire. The pilot of the second P-40 was killed and the other pilot slightly injured.

Between 5 and 9 November 1943, there was an influx of aircraft and personnel—detachments of the RAAF and the American 498th, 499th, 500th and 501st Bomber Squadrons and 423rd, 431st and 432nd Fighter Squadrons, totalling 905 personnel, were quartered and rationed at the Unit. The Unit's refuelling tankers were manned continually with duty crews available 24 hours a day.

On 15 June 1944 Kiriwina wireless/telegraph station was disbanded with 50 officers and 58 other ranks posted to 46 Operational Base Unit.

On 25 June 1945, the Unit moved to Middleburg Island with the last entry in the Unit History Record being made on 31 July 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

26 July 1943	—Flight Lieutenant L.R. Bray
4 December 1943	—Flight Lieutenant W.A. Wadey
12 December 1943	—Flight Lieutenant W.H. Franklin

# 47 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

23 November 1943	—formed at Camden, NSW
6 December 1943	—moved to Lowood, Qld
17 January 1944	—moved to Milne Bay, New Guinea
11 March 1944	—moved to Cape Gloucester, New Britain
June 1944	—moved to Noemfoor Island
28 April 1945	—moved to Morotai
1 June 1945	—moved to Labuan Island
17 November 1945	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

47 Operational Base Unit was formed at Camden, New South Wales, on 23 November 1943. Its function was to provide quarters and messing for visiting aircrews, control aircraft movements, maintain and service visiting aircraft, and provide a fire crew.

On 6 December 1943, the Unit's equipment and personnel were loaded onto a train at Campbelltown, New South Wales, en route to Lowood, Queensland. The Unit's headquarters opened at Lowood on 9 December 1943.

On 11 January 1944, the Unit's equipment was sent by goods train to Pinkenba Wharf, Brisbane. On 16 January 1944, the personnel were airlifted to Amberley and then by service transport to Pinkenba.

On 17 January 1944, members of the Unit boarded the SS *Edward D. Baker*, a 9000-ton Liberty ship, en route to Townsville, Queensland. On 24 January 1944, the convoy arrived at Milne Bay and, on 28 January 1944, arrived at Lae. Personnel were conveyed by road transport to Nadzab.

On 11 March 1944, the Unit moved to Cape Gloucester, New Britain. During June 1944, it moved again, to Noemfoor Island travelling via Finschhafen, Humboldt Bay and Maffin Bay.

On 26 August 1944 members not required for operations attended a Bob Hope concert party. Earlier that day a native from a nearby village approached the Unit's camp and indicated by sign language that a Japanese soldier was in the village. An armed party, consisting of a corporal and two aircraftmen returned with the native and, in an

unoccupied section of the village, the Japanese soldier was confronted. Leading Aircraftman Drew shot the Japanese soldier, who had a hand grenade in his tunic pocket.

On 28 April 1945, Unit personnel sailed on the *Charles M. Russell* for Morotai, where the Unit remained until moving to Labuan on 1 June 1945. The Unit was disbanded at Labuan Island on 17 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

26 November 1943	—Flight Lieutenant C.S. Eckert
September 1944	—Squadron Leader J. Greenbough
5 December 1944	—Squadron Leader A.S. Rossell

# 48 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

19 November 1943	—formed at Camden, NSW
6 December 1943	—moved to Townsville, Qld
31 December 1943	—moved to Lae
25 April 1944	—moved to Finschhafen
4 October 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

48 Operational Base Unit was formed on 19 November 1943 at Camden, New South Wales, with Flight Lieutenant H.D. Gillett commanding.

On 6 December 1943 the Unit moved by train from Campbelltown, New South Wales, to Garbutt, Queensland. On 31 December 1943, the Unit moved from Garbutt to Lae, Papua New Guinea, by air. On 25 April 1944 the Unit moved to Finschhafen.

At Finschhafen, the Unit's camp site was located at Dreger Harbour, approximately one mile south of the airstrip. It took nine days to clear the jungle to allow the camp site to be established. At the end of August 1944, essential camp buildings were completed, replacing the tented accommodation.

The Unit was disbanded on 4 October 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

19 November 1943	—Flight Lieutenant H.D. Gillett
28 March 1944	—Flying Officer E.H. Corwell
4 July 1945	—Flying Officer S.H. Duthie
November 1945	—Flight Lieutenant L.N. Taylor
25 February 1946	—Squadron Leader G.K.K. Buscombe
15 April 1946	—Flight Lieutenant I.G. Lewitzka
September 1946	—Flight Lieutenant J.C. Murray



# 49 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

2 March 1944	—formed at Milne Bay
10 March 1944	—moved to Los Negros
21 July 1944	—moved to Hollandia
1 March 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

49 Operational Base Unit was formed on 2 March 1944 at Milne Bay.

On 10 March 1944 Unit personnel embarked upon the MV *Marcus Daly* from Lyall Wharf, Milne Bay, en route to Los Negros. On 16 March 1944, personnel disembarked at Hyane Harbour, Los Negros, and commenced the establishment of a camp. The Unit became fully operational on 27 March 1944 with seven officers and 66 airmen.

While at Los Negros the Unit was responsible for aircraft refuelling, fire services and catering for transient personnel.

On 21 July 1944 the Unit moved by air to Hollandia, where it became operational on 28 July 1944.

The Unit was disbanded at Hollandia on 1 March 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

2 March 1944	—Flying Officer P.F.A. Conroy
17 July 1944	—Flight Lieutenant R. Brighton
10 December 1944	—Flight Lieutenant F.F. Daniels
23 February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant C.D. Kerr
8 November 1945	—Flight Lieutenant G. Moir
17 December 1945	—Flight Lieutenant J. Hodges

# 51 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 2 May 1942   | —formed at Groote Eylandt, NT   |
| 24 June 1945 | —Unit ceased to function, command transferred to 56 Operational Base Unit |

## NARRATIVE

On 2 May 1942, Corporal A.S. Long and Leading Aircraftman J.F.J. Walters, of the newly formed 51 Operational Base Unit, arrived at Groote Eylandt, Northern Territory. A party of officers and airmen arrived by flying boat at the civil base 40 miles away, and travelled by mission lugger to the Unit camp site on 11 May 1942. On 14 June 1942, Flight Lieutenant E.C. Rutter was appointed as Commanding Officer.

The Unit's role was the refuelling of aircraft. During the first months of activity, in addition to many unidentified aircraft, mysterious signals, signal rockets and flares were observed and reported. In response, the Unit sent out search parties and patrols to investigate, but with negative results.

On 21 June 1945, Headquarters North-Western Area advised the Unit that it was to cease to function on 23 June to become a detachment of 56 Operational Base Unit. 51 Operational Base Unit ceased to function on 24 June 1945, and command was transferred to Flying Officer A.R. Weir, the commander of 56 Operational Base Unit Detachment.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 14 June 1942     | —Flight Lieutenant E.C. Rutter |
| 30 November 1942 | —Flying Officer P.S. Lyell     |
| 13 February 1943 | —Pilot Officer L.J. Normann    |
| May 1943         | —Flying Officer S.F.H. Cox     |
| 18 August 1943   | —Flight Lieutenant E.C. Jorden |
| 28 March 1945    | —Flight Lieutenant K. McNamara |

# 52 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 2 May 1943    | —first entry in Unit History Record                 |
| 1 August 1944 | —Unit disbanded and reformed as RAAF Station Darwin |

## NARRATIVE

The first entry in the 52 Operational Base Unit History Record was made on 2 May 1943. At 0945 hours, a yellow air raid warning was received at Darwin, which was followed by a red warning at 1009 hours. Just as all personnel had reached their trenches, 20 Japanese bombers raided the aerodrome. Little damage was caused and the runways and vicinity were serviceable by 1230 hours.

On 20 June 1943 an air raid alert was given at 1031 hours and the all-clear given at 1110 hours—28 bombs were dropped on RAAF Base Darwin, causing little damage to buildings and no personnel casualties. Seven unexploded bombs were discovered and deloused by the bomb disposal squad. A direct hit was made on one building, which was almost completely demolished—one case of beer survived undamaged.

The Unit's personnel had an enjoyable social life with plenty of sport including boxing, cricket, bingo, billiards and fishing. On one occasion an 8-foot carpet snake was found in the Commanding Officer's office. The snake was killed and skinned by Sergeant James, who made a belt.

The Unit's fishing adventures were the most outstanding—96 lbs of fish were caught on 20 July 1943—and 'commercial' operations eventuated. On 19 August 1943, the first haul of 400 lbs of fish was caught, followed by catches of 700, 1500 and 1100 lbs. The fish were distributed among other units.

On 1 August 1944 the Unit was disbanded and was reformed as RAAF Station Darwin.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1943             | —Squadron Leader W.R. Armstrong |
| 11 May 1943      | —Squadron Leader S.S. Evans     |
| 25 February 1944 | —Squadron Leader W.H. Shehan    |
| 15 June 1944     | —Wing Commander J.P. Ryan       |

# 53 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 7 April 1942     | —first entry in Unit History Record at Batchelor, NT |
| 19 November 1943 | —Unit disbanded                                      |
| 17 January 1944  | —Unit reformed                                       |
| 20 January 1946  | —Unit disbanded                                      |

## NARRATIVE

The first entry in the Unit History Record of 53 Operational Base Unit was made on 7 April 1942 with Squadron Leader J.A. Power as Commanding Officer. The Unit was formed at Batchelor, Northern Territory, to support RAAF and USAAF B-24 and B-25 bombers.

On 29 April 1942, two P-40s took off together. One of the aircraft was caught in the slipstream of the lead aircraft, and crashed into a jeep. General H.H. George USAAF, Mr Jacoby, an American war correspondent, and 2nd Lieutenant R.D. Jasper were killed. The bodies of General George and Mr Jacoby were later flown to Laverton, Victoria.

On 24 October 1942, Japanese bombers raided the aerodrome and three Army personnel were injured.

On 19 November 1943, 53 Operational Base Unit was disbanded. 79 Wing Headquarters formed to control operations, and administer the medium bomber and general reconnaissance squadrons in the area. All personnel of 53 Operational Base Unit were absorbed into 79 Wing Headquarters.

On 17 January 1944, 53 Operational Base Unit was reformed under 79 Wing Headquarters. On 24 January 1944, Flight Lieutenant A.L.F. Smelcher was posted from 79 Wing Headquarters to temporarily command the Unit.

After the War, the number of operations from Batchelor declined, resulting in the removal of equipment and buildings. All personnel had left the base by 19 January 1946. Only four RAAF personnel from Darwin remained, while the Commanding Officer handed the responsibility for Batchelor over to Wing Commander K.H. Springbett, Commanding Officer of RAAF Base Darwin.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

16 March 1942	—Squadron Leader J.A. Power
27 April 1942	—Squadron Leader E.G. Fyfe
1 June 1942	—Flight Lieutenant W.R. Armstrong
14 January 1943	—Flight Lieutenant E.C. Rutter
29 July 1943	—Squadron Leader C.H. MacKinnon
17 September 1943	—Squadron Leader A.R. Gorrie
7 October 1943	—Flight Lieutenant P.H.N. Opas
20 October 1943	—Squadron Leader C.H. MacKinnon
10 February 1944	—Squadron Leader G.M. Pennefather
20 September 1944	—Flight Lieutenant N.C. Vickers
1 May 1945	—Flight Lieutenant N.W. Ward
13 October 1945	—Flight Lieutenant G.T. Dick

# 54 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

June 1942	—formed at Hughes, NT
23 October 1942	—moved to Batchelor, NT
4 November 1942	—moved to Coomalie Creek, NT
24 November 1942	—moved to MacDonald airstrip, NT
15 February 1943	—moved to Venn, NT
26 March 1943	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

54 Operational Base Unit was formed at Hughes, Northern Territory, in June 1942 under the command of Flying Officer N.A. McDonald.

On 23 October 1942 the Unit moved to Batchelor, Northern Territory, to prepare the camp site for 31 Squadron. On 4 November 1942, 54 Operational Base Unit moved to Coomalie Creek to prepare the camp site for 31 Squadron, in conjunction with 1 Mobile Works Squadron. On 24 November 1942 the Unit departed for MacDonald airstrip to prepare the camp site for 18 (NEI) Squadron, before moving to the nearby Venn airstrip to undertake more camp construction on 15 February 1943.

The Unit carried out camp construction work, including the cartage of gravel for roads and tent sites, poles for buildings, the excavation of latrines, the erection of buildings and showers and the sinking of bores.

On 26 March 1943, all personnel were posted to other units and the Unit disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

14 June 1942	—Flying Officer N.A. McDonald
--------------	-------------------------------

# 55 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

20 May 1942	—formed at Birdum, NT
16 January 1944	—moved to Gorrie, NT
31 March 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

55 Operational Base Unit was formed on 20 May 1942, at Birdum, Northern Territory, 306 miles south-east of Darwin. Flight Lieutenant D. Matheson was appointed to command the Unit, but his aircraft crashed shortly after take-off at Alice Springs and all aboard were killed.

Squadron Leader E.G. McMurtrie was appointed to command, and it was not until his arrival on 4 June 1942 that any Unit functions were carried out. 55 Operational Base Unit was to administer and maintain a camp area for accommodating the various sections of a base and to provide accommodation for No. 2 Base Personnel Staff Office. The activities of the operational base were: headquarters—general administration; signals—a central set-up maintaining point-to-point communication between Darwin, Adelaide, Perth, Townsville, Melbourne and any operational landing grounds; all movements of personnel and stores moving north or south through Larrimah; maintenance of a bomb and fuel dump; maintenance of a servicing staff for the control and operation of aircraft using the local landing facilities.

On 16 January 1944 the Unit moved to Gorrie, Northern Territory, and was disbanded on 31 March 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

4 June 1942	—Squadron Leader E.G. McMurtrie
20 October 1942	—Flight Lieutenant J.H. Starr
19 July 1943	—Squadron Leader W.H. Shehan
7 March 1944	—Squadron Leader S.S. Evans
5 August 1944	—Flight Lieutenant E.H. Wray
29 October 1944	—Flight Lieutenant W.W. Thomson
1 December 1944	—Flight Lieutenant G.E. Bogue
1 May 1945	—Flight Lieutenant S.F.H. Cox
22 November 1945	—Flight Lieutenant E.H. Baker

# 56 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

18 March 1942	—raised as RAAF Station Daly Waters
15 May 1942	—re-named Operational Base Daly Waters
1 September 1942	—re-named 56 Operational Base Unit
30 July 1943	—ceased to function
2 December 1943	—advance party arrived at Gove, NT
1 March 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

On 18 March 1942, RAAF Station Daly Waters was raised under the command of Squadron Leader I.S. Williams, with a strength of 20 officers and 206 airmen.

The base was re-named Operational Base Daly Waters on 15 May 1942, when B-17 bombers of the 45th Air Base Group, USAAF, arrived. The Unit was re-named 56 Operational Base Unit on 1 September 1942 and, as at June 1943, had a strength of 15 officers and 110 airmen. However, the site was isolated from the war zone, and the Unit ceased to function on 30 July 1943, with all personnel posted to other units.

An advance party of 20 airmen, under the command of Squadron Leader Shehan, arrived by air at Gove, Northern Territory, on 2 December 1943, to establish 56 Operational Base Unit at that base. It was a busy time for all concerned. MV *Wanaka* arrived at the Melville Bay anchorage on 10 December 1943 and four days were spent in landing stores and personnel.

During 1944 squadrons and detachments were deployed to Gove, including aircraft from 83, 42 and 13 Squadrons and also 105 Fighter Control Unit and 39 Zone Filter Control Centre. Radar, radio and telephone services were established.

The requirements for these groups differed and created logistic problems which had to be overcome. For example, on 16 December 1944, 452 Squadron arrived with 24 Spitfires, three B-25s, two Dakotas and one Catalina—all of which required refuelling in two hours.

The seaplane base at Melville Bay was under the control of 56 Operational Base Unit, but was 15 kilometres from headquarters, and there was a detachment deployed to Groote Eylandt also.



The supply of fresh water was a problem, and ships supplied foodstuff, petrol, oil and lubricants. Vessels were unloaded by barge, as there were no docking facilities at Melville Bay.

North-Western Area ordered that the base be closed on 28 February 1946, and a Catalina departed from Melville Bay on 1 March 1946 with the personnel of the now defunct 56 Operational Base Unit aboard.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

March 1944	—Squadron Leader M.G. Murchinson
November 1944	—Squadron Leader E.H. Wray
29 June 1945	—Flight Lieutenant G.L. Martin
9 October 1945	—Flight Lieutenant E.W. Fletcher
19 December 1945	—Flight Lieutenant B.W. McLaws

# 57 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 20 December 1941 | —detachment formed at Alice Springs, NT     |
| 1 June 1942      | —detachment became 57 Operational Base Unit |
| 21 April 1946    | —Unit disbanded                             |

## NARRATIVE

The RAAF presence at Alice Springs on 20 December 1941 comprised a liaison officer, Flying Officer A.M.J. McEwan, who was responsible for checking all RAAF stores and equipment in transit to northern units, arranging transport for the same and forwarding advice to the RAAF Stations of Daly Waters and Darwin. He was also responsible for the handling of all aircraft fuel and oil both at Alice Springs and in transit to the North-Western Area, control of all RAAF aircraft and crews passing through Alice Springs and arranging accommodation and meals for them. On 30 March 1942, four airmen arrived to assist the liaison officer. Several more airmen arrived in April and May and in June 1942 the detachment officially became 57 Operational Base Unit. The guiding principle for the Unit's existence was the comfort of crews and staging personnel. The Unit was required to cater for all service aircraft proceeding to and from aerodromes north.

On 5 December 1942 two cyclonic storms, accompanied by rain and hail, caused extensive damage to buildings. Repairs were undertaken with little disruption to the daily routine of the Unit.

With the end of the war in the Pacific the Unit was disbanded on 21 April 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 20 December 1941 | —Flying Officer A.M. McEwan      |
| 22 January 1943  | —Flight Lieutenant E.C. Jorden   |
| 1 August 1943    | —Flight Lieutenant A.J. Champion |
| 1 July 1944      | —Flight Lieutenant D.M. Henry    |
| 22 October 1944  | —Flying Officer L.E. James       |
| 28 February 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant A.W. Davison  |

# 58 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 5 March 1943  | —formed in Darwin, NT   |
| 6 March 1943  | —personnel embarked for new camp site at Drysdale River Mission, WA |
| 11 July 1944  | —moved to Truscott at Exmouth Gulf, WA                              |
| 24 March 1946 | —Unit disbanded   |

## NARRATIVE

58 Operational Base Unit was formed in Darwin in the Northern Territory on 5 March 1943, with a strength of 20 officers and 28 airmen. The first Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant F.L. Bragg.

On 6 March 1943, all personnel of the Unit embarked on the HMAS *Castlemaine* and the MV *Rabina* for Drysdale River Mission, 26 miles south-west of the Anjo Peninsula on the coast of Western Australia. The Unit's supplies were stored at the old mission station building. The nearby aerodrome road was impassable due to heavy rain and flooding so that personnel could not start to establish a proper camp site until 27 March.

The Unit was responsible for the refuelling of aircraft employed on operations in their area and the supply of spare parts.

On 27 September 1943, Drysdale River Mission was attacked by a force of Japanese bombers causing great damage.

A sealed airstrip was built on the Anjo Peninsula by joint American and Australian forces and named Truscott Airfield, in memory of Squadron Leader Keith 'Bluey' Truscott.

On 11 July 1944, the Unit moved to Truscott where it helped refuel B-24, B-25 and Beaufighter aircraft involved in bombing raids against the Japanese in the Netherlands East Indies and East Timor. Various Spitfire squadrons were also based there to guard against attacks by the Japanese. On 20 July 1944, a Japanese reconnaissance plane was intercepted and shot down by three 54 Squadron Spitfires.

A vegetable garden was established and bores had to be sunk for a proper water supply. There was little social life, but the odd cricket match was played against other units lodged at the airfield.

On 5 August the Liberty ship *James Pheelan* arrived, and the 54th Anti-aircraft Battery—some 600 Army personnel—disembarked. Later that month 200 combined service personnel attended the first concert held at the Unit. In September 300 Australian Army personnel arrived on the SS *Dundular*.

In December, fire broke out in the Sergeants' Mess, completely destroying the building and contents.

In May 1945 a Liberator crashed on take-off and exploded—the aircraft was a total loss with no survivors. On the same day a Spitfire crashed on landing and burst into flames, with the pilot receiving first degree burns.

A winding down of operations began after the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945 and on 19 December that year representatives of the Ministry for Post War Reconstruction addressed personnel on re-establishment.

In January 1946 there was decline in morale when movies and fresh meat did not arrive. There were also delays in mail deliveries. When the plane finally arrived on 11 January carrying these items it was greeted with cheers.

Official confirmation was received on 26 February 1946 of the disbanding of the Unit. The final entry in the Unit History Record is dated 24 March 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

5 March 1943	—Flight Lieutenant F.L. Bragg
14 August 1943	—Flight Lieutenant A. Kahn
10 December 1943	—Flight Lieutenant D.S. Askew
17 June 1944	—Squadron Leader S.S. Evans
31 October 1944	—Squadron Leader Murchinson
7 December 1944	—Squadron Leader S. Barry
23 June 1945	—Squadron Leader R.C. Rayson



*F-111C hangar at Amberley, 31 June 1968*



*An aerial view of RAAF Butterworth, May 1985*



*RAAF Butterworth radio station—a volunteer on duty*



*The RAAF School, Penang, July 1962*



*RAAF Fairbairn was named to commemorate the Hon. J.V. Fairbairn, who was killed in an air accident at the base on 13 August 1940*

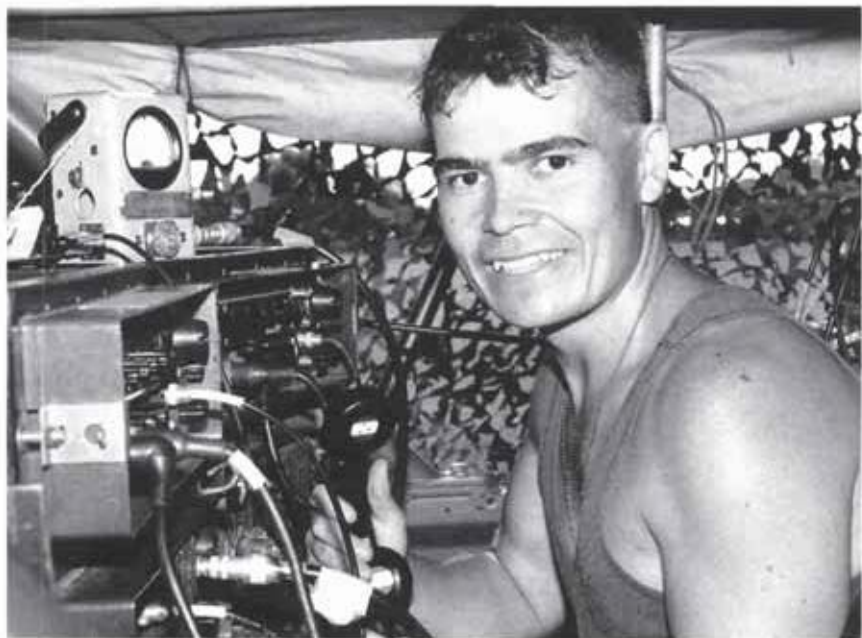


*VIP arrivals are commonplace at RAAF Fairbairn. Lord Mountbatten arrives on 24 February 1961*





*Station Headquarters Darwin under construction, December 1940*



*Corporal C. Vawser checks Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit radio equipment during Exercise 'Kangaroo 92'*





*RAAF Base Laverton hard standing, June 1987*



*RAAF Base Pearce, November 1942*



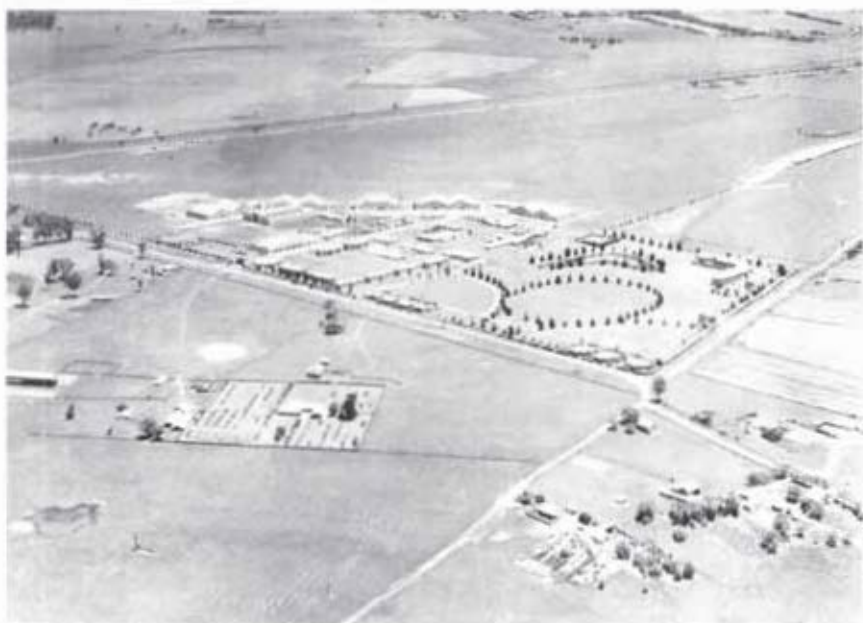
*RAAF Base Pearce, August 1976*



*The home of the Royal Australian Air Force—RAAF Base Point Cook, April 1927*



*Training at Point Cook, circa 1914*



*RAAF Base Richmond, November 1937*



*RAAF Base Williamtown, circa 1941*

# 59 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 10 April 1943 —formed at Millingimbi, NT  
31 August 1944 —last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

On 1 April 1943, Flight Lieutenant C. MacKinnon, another officer and 38 other ranks, departed by air from Batchelor, bound for Millingimbi, Northern Territory, where 59 Operational Base Unit was raised on 10 April 1943.

The Unit was the centre of operations. Hudsons from 2 Squadron staged through, to operate over Timoeka. The airfield at Millingimbi was used by Beaufighter, Spitfire, Boomerang, Beaufort and Mitchell aircraft, flying convoy escorts and strikes on enemy targets at localities such as Taberfane.

Japanese air activity in the area was at a relatively high level. On 9 May 1943, the airstrip was raided by nine 'Zekes', and MV *Marouba*, 30 tons of stores and a Beaufighter were destroyed. One Spitfire from 54 Squadron (RAF) crash-landed, and the pilot was slightly injured. On the 13th a force of 'Zekes' flew a reconnaissance over the base and, two days later, an unidentified enemy aircraft evaded intercepting fighters by diving into cloud.

The base was raided again by light bombers and five 'Zekes' on 28 May 1943. The defending Spitfires claimed the destruction of three enemy bombers and damage to another for the loss of two of their number. It was not until August that Spitfires were again in action, when two enemy float planes were destroyed on the 10th. Four days earlier, Japanese float planes had attacked a convoy 47 miles north of Millingimbi.

To enable operations to be undertaken from the base, 1 Mobile Works Squadron commenced the construction of necessary messes and facilities on 22 April 1943. These were completed by August, and the installation of a signals section, recreation room and canteen were also completed. Supplies were forwarded to the Unit by sea, ships such as the MV *Islander* and SS *Maliama* becoming welcome sights for the men at Millingimbi.

There were fatal accidents and incidents which were beyond human control. On 19 April 1943 two Hudson aircraft collided and crashed on Habarmur Island, without survivors. During 17 September 1943, three of seven Beaufighter aircraft which had attacked Taberfane became lost in fog whilst inbound for Millingimbi, and force-landed, out of fuel. They were recovered after extensive search and salvage operations. Flying Officer Taylor, his observer and two fitters were not so lucky on 25 April 1943, when the Beaufighter in which they were flying crashed and burnt; all the crew and passengers were killed.

The last entry in the Unit History Record was made on 31 August 1944. At that stage the Unit and associated lodger units (308 Radar Station, 52 Operational Base Unit Marine Section and Security Guard Unit) totalled 100 officers and airmen.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

10 April 1943	—Flight Lieutenant C. MacKinnon
29 July 1943	—Squadron Leader J.H. Starr
January 1944	—Squadron Leader R.A. Barwell
22 June 1944	—Squadron Leader W.H. Shehan



# 60 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 12 April 1944    | —formed at Ransford, Vic.           |
| 12 May 1944      | —advance party moved to Sattler, NT |
| 9 December 1944  | —move to Morotai commenced          |
| 28 December 1947 | —last entry in Unit History Record  |

## NARRATIVE

60 Operational Base Unit, with a strength of one officer and 75 other ranks, was formed at Ransford, Victoria, on 12 April 1944. It was planned that the Unit should provide two signals task sections and, to enable this plan to be met, these sections were trained at 1 Signals Task Unit, Fanning, Queensland.

On 13 April 1944, Sergeant J.G. Smith led an advance party to Sattler, Northern Territory. The party arrived at Sattler on 24 April, three days before their equipment, and moved into the Unit camp site on 12 May 1944. The main body of the Unit departed on 3 May.

The Unit commenced defence training on 19 May 1944, and participated in a 'mock occupation of Sattler and defence against infiltration' exercise on 1 June. Air defence courses, the first of 20 officers, commenced at 60 Operational Base Unit on 16 August. Landing barge training was undertaken by 50 airmen from the Unit on 3 November. On this occasion, members stormed Mica Beach—before partaking in a beach picnic.

Whilst based at Sattler, the Unit hosted detachments from 28 Air Stores Park (20 May–13 June 1944) and 5 Radio Installation and Maintenance Unit. 302 and 352 Radar Units also used Unit facilities.

The structure of the Unit was in a state of flux. On 14 June 1944, 14 cypher officers and 48 other ranks arrived from Fanning. These troops were posted from the Unit on 12 November, and the signals and cypher offices ceased to function. However, on 25 November, three cypher officers and 10 cypher assistants were posted in to the Unit, and a signals task section was scheduled to move to Morotai with the rest of 60 Operational Base Unit. The marine section was re-established on 16 December 1944, with 25 men and six boats.

The first element of the Unit deployed to Morotai by air on 9 December 1944. On the 17th, 70 personnel boarded SS *Mexico* for Morotai, where they arrived on 31 January 1945. One of the first tasks undertaken was the establishment of a transit camp before taking over the refuelling pool at Wama airfield on 9 April 1945. The Unit assumed the responsibility from 61 Operational Base Unit for refuelling RAAF aircraft at Pitoe airfield on the 15th, and then for flying control on 25 April.

The first launch (06-13), under the command of Flight Lieutenant Cassell, arrived on 8 May 1945. Marine craft were deployed on duty as far afield as Tawitawi and Lae. The air-sea rescue commitment of the Unit was dropped, and 02-2 was used as a crash launch. Two launches were transferred to 47 Operational Base Unit during July 1945.

60 Operational Base Unit moved to a new camp site at Pitoe on 12 September 1945. The main responsibility of the Unit was the refuelling of aircraft at Wama and Pitoe, servicing of transient aircraft and flying boats, maintaining motor transport and generators and providing accommodation for 600 transient personnel. In October, the Unit assumed the technical recovery function from 5 Repair and Salvage Unit and commanded the high frequency direction finding facility. Responsibilities extended to supplying non-technical items to all RAAF units at Morotai.

When 11 Communications Unit disbanded on 6 March 1946, 60 Operational Base Unit was allotted Beaufort A9-487.

The Unit was a major link in the courier chain to Japan, where the Australian element of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force was being established. Between February and June 1946, 3686 personnel used the transit accommodation and 777 aircraft landed at Morotai.

The final entry in the Unit History Record was made on 28 December 1947.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

17 April 1944	—Squadron Leader H.D. Gillett
24 August 1944	—Squadron Leader S.R. Harpham
7 September 1945	—Squadron Leader B.C. Daymond
8 November 1945	—Wing Commander I.F. Rose
18 December 1946	—Squadron Leader D.C. Pfeiffer
9 January 1947	—Squadron Leader J.R. Lavers
12 November 1947	—Squadron Leader K.S. Brown



# 61 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

6 April 1944	—raised at Ballarat, Vic.
11 April 1944	—advance party departed for Townsville, Qld
12 January 1945	—move to Morotai commenced
1 May 1945	—landed at Tarakan
31 October 1945	—last entry in Unit History Record

## NARRATIVE

61 Operational Base Unit was established at Ballarat, Victoria, on 6 April 1944. Flying Officer A.L. McKeown, the adjutant, arrived on the same day, to supervise the departure of the advance party of 36 for Townsville on 11 April. This party arrived at Townsville, where they were located with 1 Wireless Unit detachment, on 1 May 1944.

The rear party departed from Ballarat by rail on 5 May, arriving at Townsville on the 13th. Two-thirds of the Unit completed defence training by the end of May, becoming competent with the Vickers machine gun, Bren gun, Thompson sub-machine gun and .303 rifle. In addition, the men were given lessons in bayonet fighting, field craft and camouflage and concealment. On 14 November 1944, 60 members of the Unit participated as 'enemy' in a ground attack exercise.

In August 1944, the two signals task sections which had joined the Unit on 31 May 1944 were deleted from the Unit's establishment, and replaced by a signals section. Additional tasks were reflected in other changes to the establishment at this time—50 freight handlers, a 170-man servicing echelon and a nine-man flying control section—added. While the Unit was being re-organised, technical personnel were detached to obtain experience with units of the United States 5th Air Force and 6 Transport and Movements Office, 5 Squadron, and 103 Fighter Control Unit.

The first of 25 aircraft, allotted to transport the Unit and equipment to Morotai, departed from Townsville on 12 January 1945. The advance party, led by Flying Officer J.E.C. Forster, prepared a camp site and the Unit assumed responsibility for Wama airstrip. The rear detachment of 177 men arrived in the *Carlos Carrillo* on 23 March 1945.

By 9 April the maintenance section at Wama was ready to undertake daily inspections of aircraft. However, this function was to be assumed by 60 Operational Base Unit, and the men of 61 Operational Base Unit were allocated for the 'Oboe 1' operation—the landing at Tarakan. The Unit members embarked on three landing craft and the *Titania* on 23 April, before landing at North Wharf, Tarakan, on 1 May 1945.

Operations at Tarakan were restricted by the inability of the invaders to complete the airstrip. A detachment of 60 personnel was deployed to Tawitawi in the Philippines to assist with the servicing of aircraft operating from the airstrip there. This detachment departed in two convoys, on 23 and 30 May and returned during the week commencing 19 June.

Four air raid alerts occurred before the airstrip at 'Croydon' was opened on 28 June 1945. The first aircraft to land was a Beaufighter, A8-196, which was followed by Kittyhawk fighters of 75 Squadron.

Enemy aircraft were not the only danger. There was the constant threat of Japanese infiltration into the camp site. Flying Officer McKeown was badly wounded on 10 June 1945 when a 'friendly' booby trap accidentally exploded. Leading Aircraftmen K.E.V. Jones and R.C. Yates captured four Japanese servicemen who were searching for food near the motor transport refuelling point on the night of 10 July 1945.

After the Armistice the Unit serviced transient aircraft, which included fighters from 78 Squadron, Hudson and Liberator aircraft. A Catalina courier service between Morotai and Tarakan was instituted. On 30 October 1945, fighter aircraft from 75, 78, 80 and 452 Squadrons were ferried south in batches of 10 per day.

The final entry in the Unit History Record is dated 31 October 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 May 1944	—Squadron Leader C.E. Tobin
30 August 1945	—Flight Lieutenant R.T. Bruce

# 71 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 June 1942     | —formed as Operational Base Carnarvon,<br>WA |
| 1 December 1942 | —re-named 71 Operational Base Unit           |
| 31 January 1946 | —Unit disbanded                              |

## NARRATIVE

Operational Base Carnarvon was formed on 1 June 1942 at Carnarvon, Western Australia, and became 71 Operational Base Unit on 1 December 1942. The first Commanding Officer was Flying Officer G.C. Gillott and establishment strength was set at two officers and 48 airmen. The Unit refuelled and serviced aeroplanes that were operating in the area, including Anson, Tiger Moth, Kingfisher, Beaufort, Dakota, Hudson and Boomerang.

On 1 October 1942, a plane crashed a few miles from the Unit. A guard was left at the crash site and two injured members of the crew were taken back for medical treatment.

On 28 June two Fisheries Department representatives arrived from Perth to investigate how effective shark repellent was in case of air crashes and crew members having to bale out over water.

To combat the threat of Japanese attack, a 0.50-inch machine gun was installed and instructions were given in its use.

After the end of hostilities in August 1945 the Unit started to wind down and there was more time for leisure and entertainment.

The Unit disbanded on 31 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 June 1942       | —Flying Officer G.C. Gillott     |
| 29 June 1943      | —Flight Lieutenant A.F. Marchant |
| 16 July 1944      | —Flight Lieutenant J.E. Sproule  |
| 12 November 1944  | —Flight Lieutenant C.M. Coote    |
| 6 January 1945    | —Flight Lieutenant F.A. Riley    |
| 27 September 1945 | —Flying Officer A.J. Browne      |

# 72 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 10 June 1942    | —formed at Albany, WA |
| 15 October 1944 | —Unit disbanded       |

## NARRATIVE

72 Operational Base Unit was formed at Albany, Western Australia, with 44 personnel from 5 Embarkation Depot in Perth. The first Commanding Officer was Pilot Officer C.M. Coote.

After arriving at Albany by train, amid heavy rain, the Unit members found that no one had been advised of their pending arrival. The one living hut at the aerodrome was occupied by a detachment of United States Navy Air Service and wireless operators, guards and others belonging to the RAAF. Accommodation, rations and messing facilities there were totally inadequate. Temporary quarters were found with 'C' Company, 19th Garrison Battalion, and arrangements made with Albany Fixed Defence Forces for the supply of rations pending the receipt of relevant instructions from Headquarters. The position was reported immediately by phone to Headquarters Pearce and blankets, kitchen utensils and messing gear were despatched by motor transport, arriving next day. Two kitchen stoves were bought locally.

As the aerodrome area and surrounds were flooded tents could only be pitched on small isolated sites above water level at the side of the main road. After a survey of the stores and equipment, all personnel returned to 'C' Company for the night, as the tents were too wet for occupation.

When the rain stopped, personnel and kits were moved back to the aerodrome and work began on a temporary mess. The Unit set up ammunition and bomb dumps as well as a fuel supply depot for passing aircraft. Aircraft serviced were Beaufort, Wirraway, Anson, Oxford and Tiger Moth.

In November 1942 a decision was made that the Unit would participate in swimming, tennis, cricket, rifle shooting and athletics. A shield was presented each year to the top sportsman.

Accommodation was still a problem and the tent sites were moved every few weeks. Some American huts were demolished but in January

1943 an official from Department of Air arrived to inspect the site. He decided that demolition of the huts was to cease and that the RAAF should make use of them to overcome the accommodation crisis. This decision was overruled—the huts were pulled down and personnel were transferred into tents. Gravel foundations were built up in an endeavour to keep floors dry.

A vegetable patch and a tennis court were established by December 1943.

In March 1944 the local group of Air Training Corps and Women's Air Training Corps were taken for drill training, and short flights in Tiger Moths.

On 15 October 1944, 72 Operational Base Unit disbanded to become Operational Base Unit Albany.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

9 June 1942	—Pilot Officer C.M. Coote
7 April 1943	—Flying Officer F. Jolly
1 September 1943	—Flight Lieutenant T. Scott

# 73 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 11 November 1942 —formed at Corunna Downs, WA  
14 January 1946 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

73 Operational Base Unit was formed at Corunna Downs, Western Australia, on 18 November 1942. Flight Lieutenant L.U. Sutton was the first Commanding Officer of an establishment of five officers and 57 airmen. The Unit was set up to service and provide fuel for the RAAF, United States Air Force and the Royal Netherlands Navy operations.

On arrival, tents were erected and fly proofing of the kitchen and the setting up of an orderly room and store undertaken. Sites were also checked for fuel dumps. Fresh meat was obtained from the Corunna Downs cattle station homestead and bread and ice were received twice a week from the nearby Comet Mine.

The Department of Civil Aviation commenced grading the strip on 16 December 1942, with work being carried out by civilian labour and Roads Board plant. Approximately 300 feet of temporary strip were completed on 20 December and final rolling of the strip was carried out using service tractors. Early in January 1943 an engineer of the Main Roads Board arrived to spend six days testing the subsoil on the runways, locating suitable top-dressing material for the runways and inspecting the area in general. Owing to the lack of gravel in the natural surface it was decided to use decomposed granite, as this material was readily available in unlimited quantities. The first runway was 7000 feet by 250 feet and the other measured 5000 feet by 250 feet. In September 1943, both strips were completed; 18 000 feet of taxiway were ready at the end of June 1944.

Operations commenced over Japanese-occupied Netherlands East Indies by aircraft from Corunna Downs. Some of the aircraft types using the airstrip were Hudson, Anson, Liberator, Flying Fortress, Douglas C-47, Gannet, Lockheed Lodestar, Vultee Vengeance, Tiger Moth, Spitfire and Beaufort. On 20 December 1944, a strike force of 30 Liberators carried out a successful mission from Corunna Downs.

With a view to safeguarding civilians in the area, arrangements were made with the constable of the Marble Bar Police and the manager of the Comet Mine to promulgate an air raid warning system.

Training in the use of the Bren gun, hand grenades, bayonet fighting and general aerodrome defence was commenced.

With the end of the War, 73 Operational Base Unit was disbanded on 14 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

6 December 1942	—Flight Lieutenant L.U. Sutton
15 October 1943	—Flight Lieutenant F. Jolly
9 February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant H.E. Creagh
10 November 1945	—Flight Lieutenant L.E. Solmon

# 74 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |                                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 8 January 1943  | —formed at RAAF Pearce, WA       |
| 17 January 1943 | —departed for Yanrey Station, WA |
| 23 January 1946 | —Unit disbanded                  |

## NARRATIVE

74 Operational Base Unit was formed at RAAF Station Pearce on 8 January 1943. The first Commanding Officer was Flying Officer Ward. The purpose of the Unit was to provide refuelling and service for passing aircraft.

On 17 January 1943, a convoy of 34 vehicles and personnel (including those of 4 Medical Receiving Station) departed for Geraldton en route to Yanrey Station, arriving on 23 January, and commenced to set up camp. At the end of the month a reserve storage of 5000 gallons of fuel had been obtained.

Two runways were being built at Yanrey at the time of the Unit's arrival. One was suitable for operations in good weather, and work was still to be carried out on the other. In early February heavy rain rendered the aerodrome unserviceable, but the weather had one advantage—all the water tanks were filled.

On 20 February 1943 the Unit held a concert to celebrate the completion of the canteen and supper was provided by the cooks.

On 24 February 1943 violent winds, followed by a dust storm and torrential rain, blew the stores and airmens' mess tents down. Personnel quickly re-erected both once the storm had passed. Vehicular traffic between the Unit site and Yanrey homestead was impossible owing to the flooded conditions.

Once the wet season ended, the Unit was kept busy refuelling visiting Anson, Kingfisher, Beaufort and Tiger Moth aircraft. In May 1944 the first air raid warning was received and all guns were manned.

Also in May 1944, Leading Aircraftman Reynolds was badly burnt whilst working in the transport section. An American doctor flew from Learmonth in a Kingfisher aircraft and gave him a blood transfusion. A signal was sent to Corunna asking for an air ambulance but at the end of the day no reply had been received. The American doctor was called



again and stayed at the hospital all night. The next day the air ambulance arrived and Reynolds was flown to the hospital at Guildford.

In October 1944 the excessive heat was starting to affect the tar sealed strips which started to show signs of deterioration. When aircraft alighted on hot days they tended to tear sections of the surface away.

With the end of the war in the Pacific in August 1945 the Unit commenced winding down and was disbanded on 23 January 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

8 January 1943	—Flying Officer Ward
14 July 1943	—Flight Lieutenant Nicholls
1 April 1944	—Flight Lieutenant C. Turner
14 June 1944	—Flight Lieutenant A.L. Shannon
8 February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant H.G. Gibbs
6 November 1945	—Flight Lieutenant E.C. Smith

# 75 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1 March 1943 —formed at Noonkanbah, NT  
24 December 1945 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

75 Operational Base Unit was formed on 1 March 1943 at Noonkanbah, Northern Territory. The Unit was located at the homestead at 'Fossil Downs', where there was a civil airstrip, and was formed to maintain petrol and bomb dumps. The airfield was used as a staging point for Netherlands East Indies (NEI) forces. Regular supply flights were made to and from Broome and refuelling links were made with Derby, Guildford, Learmonth, Corunna, Cunderdin and Coomalie Creek. RAAF squadrons using Noonkanbah were numbers 24, 25 and 31 and aircraft based at the Unit were Anson and Tiger Moth. The strip was suitable for heavier aircraft such as Liberators, Beauforts and C-47s.

The first Commanding Officer was Flying Officer Backhouse. The Unit was established with one officer and six other ranks. The men were quartered in the station wool shed, until the arrival of 24 more personnel when they all moved to adjacent sheds and tents. The water supply was obtained from the nearby Fitzroy River which was subject to flooding in the wet season.

On 5 April 1943 the Commander of North-Western Area, Colonel J. James, arrived and offered to assist with canteen supplies, as well as training in guerilla warfare. The lack of fresh food supplies was often a problem for the Unit and personnel often had to rely on tinned meat and vegetables. An outbreak of food poisoning occurred early in 1945 because of rusted tins. The lack of fresh supplies was felt acutely near Christmas 1944 but on 23 December an Anson arrived from Broome carrying mail and Christmas hams and fresh vegetables.

Social life was very limited but a tennis court was built and in August 1944 a race meeting and dinner dance were held in conjunction with the Army, with the station owners as guests of honour. The RAAF horse 'Cooks-Tour' by Air Chief out of Season won the Noonkanbah Cup.

On 30 September 1944 all surplus fuel was transported to Derby and the base became non-operational.

With the end of hostilities in the Pacific, personnel started to be posted out for discharge. On Christmas Eve 1945, a Liberator arrived to uplift the remaining personnel to Guildford and the Unit was then disbanded. All equipment was returned to RAAF North-Western Area Headquarters and buildings were left for a disposal team to sell locally.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 March 1943	—Flying Officer Backhouse
4 December 1943	—Pilot Officer E.S. Sproule
31 May 1944	—Squadron Leader A.F. Marchant
14 January 1945	—Flight Lieutenant C.M. Coote

# 76 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 7 May 1943 —formed at Exmouth Gulf, WA  
21 September 1946 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

76 Operational Base Unit was raised at Exmouth Gulf, Western Australia, on 7 May 1943. Squadron Leader G.M. Pennefather assumed command of the Unit on 10 May 1943, before 32 airmen arrived on the MV *Koolinda* on 17 May. Work commenced on the establishment of tents and a kitchen next day.

Air raid alerts sounded on 20 and 21 May, 13 July, 16 September 1943 and 31 May 1944. On 21 May nine bombs were dropped in the sea. The alert of 13 July was a trial to test the dispersal of personnel and aircraft. Enemy aircraft were sighted flying overhead on 16 September and unidentified aircraft were tracked on radar, flying up and down the coast, on 31 May 1944.

The Unit serviced a multitude of aircraft, including Dakota, Beaufort, Anson, DH-86, Mitchell, Gannet, Vengeance, Kingfisher, Hudson, Lodestar, Liberator and Catalina. This operation was not without difficulty. Heavy rain closed the airstrip for the first time on 22 June 1943, and it was not until 9 August that the strip was fully sealed. The Unit's refuelling launch and dinghy were unloaded and commissioned on 4 June 1943, thus enabling flying boats to be refuelled, and the Unit accepted the transfer of the signals section of 111 Fighter Sector Headquarters on 31 October 1943.

Boomerangs from 85 Squadron were based at 'Potshot' to give aerial cover over the United States Navy submarine base at Exmouth Gulf. This important facility was the operational base for submarines including USS *Flasher*, *Aspro*, *Sandlance*, *Angler*, *Robalo*, *Bluefin* and *Bonefish*, during June 1944.

On 8 May 1944, advance parties from 14, 54 (RAF) and 457 Squadrons arrived at 'Potshot', along with a Western Area Headquarters detachment, on operations of 'extreme secrecy'. 161 Fighter Control Unit arrived by Dakota next day, and was fully operational within eight hours of landing. Nineteen Spitfires from 54 and 457 Squadrons landed on

the 10th; 12 Beauforts from 14 Squadron and 17 more Spitfires arrived on 11 May. The strength of the Unit rose to 743 personnel during this period, to maintain the Spitfire fighter patrols and the anti-submarine efforts of the Beauforts.

During June 1944, Shell Company representatives arrived to discuss the siting of fuel supplies to be used by Qantas Liberator aircraft, which would stage through Exmouth, either arriving from, or departing for, Ceylon. The first flight of this tri-weekly service to land at Exmouth did so on 2 June, before departing for Guildford during the following day. The arrival and departure of Liberator aircraft on this schedule became part of Exmouth routine. There is only one incident which caused some disquiet. On 27 January 1945 an incoming Royal Air Force Catalina was forced to land short of fuel near North West Cape. The aircraft was discovered by a Dakota which had been diverted from a northern courier flight when it arrived at 'Potshot', towed to the United States naval base and refuelled, before proceeding to Crawley Bay, near Perth, on 28 January.

Squadron Leader Sangster, Flying Officer Dix and Sergeant Catton were all killed when a Gannet ambulance crashed on take-off on 25 August 1944.

During 2 February 1945, the facilities of 76 Operational Base Unit were virtually razed to the ground by a cyclone. Low ground surrounding the Unit was flooded, and a 21-ton landing barge blown from its mooring offshore, to be deposited near the 005 degree runway. One member was evacuated south on 4 February, suffering from a back injury, having been hit by a sheet of iron during the cyclone. Three members of the Marine Section were not so lucky, and drowned; the body of Corporal B.J. Carr was recovered and buried. Another violent thunderstorm on 8 February 1945 blew down the newly erected tents.

Four Qantas Lancastrian aircraft landed at Exmouth on 2 June 1945, direct from Sydney, to mark the commencement of civilian overseas air services. The base was still used for military operations. On 22 July, nine Liberators from 25 Squadron used Exmouth as the base for strikes on Semarang, Java. During October, repatriated prisoners of war staged through Exmouth. One of the aircraft used for this task was the Avro York allocated for the use of the Governor-General.

MacRobertson Miller Airlines aircraft movements commenced through Exmouth during July 1946. An eight vehicle convoy departed for

RAAF Base Pearce on 15 September 1946, marking the demise of 76 Operational Base Unit.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

10 May 1943	—Squadron Leader G.M. Pennefather
6 November 1943	—Flight Lieutenant G.W. Fletcher
17 September 1944	—Flight Lieutenant F.J. Horwood
6 August 1945	—Squadron Leader D. Vincent
12 February 1946	—Flight Lieutenant J.E.B. Parsons

# 77 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 7 June 1943 | —raised at Guildford, WA |
| 28 May 1946 | —Unit disbanded          |

## NARRATIVE

Sergeant Lowe, Corporal Hoy and 10 airmen arrived at Guildford on 1 June 1943 to form the basis of 77 Operational Base Unit. On 5 June 1943 Flight Lieutenant N.O. Barry assumed command of the Unit which was officially formed on 7 June 1943.

The main body moved to sleeping quarters at Henderson Avenue on 9 June, with the headquarters occupying premises on Faulteroy Avenue on 24 June. In the meantime, members of the Unit had supervised the removal of civilian personnel from the vicinity of the aerodrome, and were to assume responsibility for the security of the base. On 28 June guard duties at the main gate commenced.

A bicycle had been issued to the Unit to enable patrols to be made of the four and a half mile perimeter of the airfield. The issue of the bicycle was an interim measure—the Unit was issued with three horses, to be used by the mobile patrols, on 15 July 1943. Initially the horses were only used in daylight, as the Unit members were not proficient enough horsemen to control the animals at night. The three horses, for whom stables had been provided, remained on strength until 24 May 1945, when they were returned to the Army.

Members of 151 Anti-Aircraft Battery arrived at Guildford on 29 July 1943, remaining there until 13 September 1943.

During August, guards instructional courses were commenced at Guildford. Students were trained in the use of small arms, undertook gas drills and lectures, field formations and physical training.

The site at Guildford was improved by the installation of bulk petrol tanks to the south of 77 Operational Base Unit Headquarters, roads were blue metalled and post and rail and boundary fences were replaced.

Lodger units at Guildford included 7 Communication Unit, 106 Fighter Control Unit, 35 Squadron and 85 Squadron. During its period of operations, the Unit was used by dignitaries including Admiral Sir Bruce Frazer, Lord Reith, Lieutenant General Wedemeyer, Major

General Hurley, Lady Mountbatten and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Some of the more interesting aircraft to land at Guildford were York, Skymaster, Superfortress and Winston Churchill's personal Liberator, 'Commando'. Some of these aircraft had unusual cargoes. On 11 December 1944, a Royal Air Force Lancaster departed for the United Kingdom. Aboard was a walking stick destined for Winston Churchill and a box of gardenias for Her Majesty the Queen.

Aircraft movements were not without casualties. On 22 September 1943, Sergeant Wolf was killed when his Boomerang crashed. On 19 April 1945 a USAAF Dakota, attempting to take off in a heavy mist, crashed into Gooseberry Hill and all 13 passengers and crew were killed.

Forty members of Qantas arrived at the base, now known as 'Dunreath', in February 1946, where they remained for a period of three months.

77 Operational Base Unit was disbanded on 28 May 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

5 June 1943

—Flight Lieutenant N.O. Barry

May 1945

—Flight Lieutenant E.J. Colling



# 78 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1 February 1944 —Operational Base Unit Port Hedland, WA,  
re-named 78 Operational Base Unit
- 18 February 1946 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

On 1 February 1944 Operational Base Unit Port Hedland was re-named 78 Operational Base Unit, commanded by Flying Officer J.B. Henry. The Unit undertook the maintenance of transient Anson, Lodestar, Beaufort, Tiger Moth, Fox Moth, Norseman, Electra, Cessna and Dakota aircraft.

The period from 3 to 22 May was an exceptionally busy period. On 3 May two squadrons of Spitfire aircraft passed through, bound for Exmouth Gulf. On the 12th, 10 Boomerangs staged through, en route from Carnarvon to Broome, and 40 Spitfires passed through the Unit on 22 May bound from Drysdale Mission to Exmouth Gulf.

One of the regular visitors to the Unit was a Gannet ambulance aircraft. On 2 July 1944, this aircraft departed from Exmouth Gulf, but force-landed at North West Cape. As a result, it was reported overdue, and a search was made for it and the crew — Squadron Leader Sangster, the Senior Medical Officer of 4 Medical Receiving Station and the pilot, Flying Officer Dix.

Beaufort aircraft operated from Port Hedland on at least two occasions. During August 1944, five convoy patrols were undertaken by 14 Squadron Beauforts, and two aircraft from 4 Service Flying Training School used Port Hedland as a terminal for a seaward reconnaissance flight on 19 February 1945. This flight was to search for a seaman who was purported to be adrift in a lifeboat; no sightings were made.

Two Anson aircraft from 4 Communication Unit were based at Port Hedland for the period 1 April to 6 December 1945. The aircraft were used to deliver perishables to units in the area, and a regular schedule was instigated on 9 April. The schedule was to fly to 73 Operational Base Unit on Sunday and Wednesday, 328 and 329 Radar Stations on Tuesday and Saturday, and 76 Operational Base Unit daily. These duties were not without incident. Pilot Officer B.R. Wilson damaged the undercarriage and propeller of one of the Ansons on 9 June 1945, when the aircraft

crashed at 328 Radar Station, and repeated the performance at 74 Operational Base Unit on 10 July 1945.

The Anson was also used to locate a Tiger Moth, flown by Salvation Army Captain V. Pederson, with Mrs Heggie and her five-year-old son as passengers, on 23 October 1945. The Tiger Moth was found on the bank of the Prince Regent River, and supplies were dropped.

Unit members participated in 'sing songs', darts, billiards and table tennis competitions in the recreation huts, and played football and cricket when off duty. The weather and nature were challenges. On 3 March 1945, a cyclone warning was given, and all tents were struck and moveable equipment lashed down. Winds of up to 80 mph lashed the area until 7 March. Another hardship was the flies and spiders. Sergeant D.M. Doyle suffered considerable pain for two days after being bitten by a red back spider on 20 March, emphasising the need to check bedding before retiring at night.

On 19 September 1945, the Air Defence Headquarters at Broome was disbanded, and many of the units previously under its command were lodged at Port Hedland waiting movement south. During December 1945, a care and maintenance party of nine meteorologists, five signallers, one DMT fitter and a general hand, remained. Next month, the demolition of the stock of bombs held by the Unit was commenced, and 78 Operational Base Unit disbanded on 18 February 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 February 1944	—Flying Officer J.B. Henry
April 1944	—Flying Officer J.B. West
6 June 1944	—Flying Officer J.B. Henry
February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant J.O. Magee
14 December 1945	—Flying Officer J.L. du Boulay

# 79 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 10 April 1944 | —formed at Broome, WA               |
| 31 May 1946   | —final entry in Unit History Record |

## NARRATIVE

79 Operational Base Unit was formed at Broome, Western Australia, on 10 April 1944, and Flying Officer A.J. Watts assumed command on 20 April.

Broome was an active base. On 10 May 1944, Spitfires from 54 (RAF) and 457 Squadrons staged through—40 aircraft were 'turned around' in 3 hours and 30 minutes. The same squadrons staged through Broome, heading north, on 22 May.

Beaufighters from 31 Squadron undertook patrols from Broome, commencing on 16 June 1944. Ten aircraft had arrived during the previous day, and the deployment ceased on 25 June. However, 31 Squadron Beaufighters operated from Broome on 15 July, 12 August and 13 September 1944. The deployments lasted for periods of approximately 10 days, and were not without loss. On 21 June 1944, A19-155 belly-landed on the east-west airstrip, after the landing gear failed to lock down. Next day the aircraft was jacked up and towed off the airstrip for repairs. On 18 September 1944, A19-163 crashed into the sea on take-off.

Patrols by six 14 Squadron Beaufort aircraft, armed with four 250-lb depth charges, were undertaken in the period 14–16 August 1944.

Mosquito aircraft from 87 Squadron staged through Broome, flying photographic reconnaissance sorties over 'destinations unknown'. Two aircraft arrived on 23 November 1944, and Mosquito aircraft staged through Broome to undertake missions over Indonesia on 16 and 29 December 1944, 21 January and 28 February 1945. Squadron Leader Gray and Flying Officer Sudlow, flying in A52-7, were reported overdue on the latter date. On 4 March, four Mitchell aircraft from 2 Squadron arrived to search for the missing Mosquito, but the search was inhibited by a cyclone warning on 2 March. On 6 March, 326 Radar Station reported that Gray and Sudlow had been discovered, and the two men were transported by air to Broome.

A regular visitor to Broome was Squadron Leader Sangster and the Air Ambulance Gannet aircraft. Among the more unusual flights made from Broome was that of a C-47 on 6 August 1944, which flew south with 16 'Chinese' crew members from a sampan which had been captured by members of 326 Radar Station. On 27 January 1945, Captain Van Breeman flew a Netherlands East Indies Mitchell on a 14-hour mission to drop leaflets over East Java—the first flight over the area by a Dutch aircraft since the Japanese invasion.

During April 1945, an Anson aircraft arrived from 7 Communication Unit to deliver fresh food to Derby, Noonkanbah and Port Hedland twice a week.

During October 1945, an 11 Squadron Catalina arrived from Darwin, with five prisoners of war being repatriated from Java. On 22 October, aircraft from the Unit participated in the search for Salvation Army Captain Pederson.

The final entry in the Unit History Record was made on 31 May 1946 though the disposal sale for the Unit was scheduled for 17 August 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

20 April 1944	—Flying Officer A.J. Watts
2 November 1944	—Flying Officer R. Odgers
2 February 1945	—Flight Lieutenant R.A. Kent
14 December 1945	—Flight Lieutenant E.W. McGee
20 July 1946	—Flight Lieutenant Benzie

# 80 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 3 July 1944      | —formed at Derby, WA |
| 19 December 1945 | —moved to Broome, WA |
| 11 January 1946  | —Unit disbanded      |

## NARRATIVE

The Operational Base Detachment, Derby, Western Australia, was formed into 80 Operational Base Unit on 3 July 1944. Pilot Officer R. Odgers arrived to take command.

The main activity was construction. 0.50-inch Browning machine guns were installed and personnel trained in their use. Other activities included the refuelling and maintenance of aircraft and the maintenance, storage and transfer of fuel and bombs. A large quantity of fuel was transhipped through Derby for 75 Operational Base Unit at Noonkanbah.

Apart from the normal sport, fishing was a major recreational activity, with a fishing party often returning with up to 24 lbs of barramundi. On 24 December 1944, parties were sent out to hunt for turkeys for Christmas dinner—six big birds were most welcome.

On 19 December 1945, the Unit moved to Broome, Western Australia, as a lodger unit of 79 Operational Base Unit. On 11 January 1946 the Unit was disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 3 July 1944     | —Pilot Officer R. Odgers   |
| 14 October 1944 | —Pilot Officer P.W. Hadley |

# 82 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 12 September 1944 —formed at 5 Personnel Depot, Subiaco, WA
- 1 November 1944 —operational at Riverside Drive
- 13 November 1944 —moved to Crawley Bay
- 16 July 1946 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

On 12 September 1944, 82 Operational Base Unit was established at 5 Personnel Depot, Subiaco, Western Australia. When Flight Lieutenant J. Cassells assumed command of the Unit on 19 September 1944, it had a strength of one officer and three other ranks.

On 23 October, a torpedo recovery launch, a target launch, two work boats and a lugger were allocated to the Unit. On the 30th personnel were allocated from the disbanded 81 Operational Base Unit to serve with 82 Operational Base Unit.

The Unit commenced operations from Riverside Drive on 1 November 1944, and moved to Crawley Bay on 13 November, where it remained until disbandment. The Unit maintained visiting service flying boats and Qantas Catalinas, and the boats were used in torpedo recovery duties off, and supplying the radar station located on, Rottnest Island. During January 1946, boats and personnel from the Unit were involved in the disposal of Royal Air Force Catalina aircraft at the 'graveyard' off Rottnest Island. In addition, the boats also assisted with the disposal of bombs off the island and during May 1946 the boats from 82 Operational Base Unit transported radar equipment and personnel from Rottnest Island to the mainland.

82 Operational Base Unit was disbanded on 16 July 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 19 September 1944 —Flight Lieutenant J. Cassells
- 14 May 1945 —Flight Lieutenant J. De Castilla
- 18 December 1945 —Flight Lieutenant B.B. Moore
- 21 January 1946 —Flying Officer K.R. Rodd

# 83 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

1 January 1945	—formed at Batchelor, NT
16 March 1945	—main party arrived at Jacquinot Bay
14 June 1945	—arrived at Morotai
14 July 1945	—moved to Balikpapan
8 October 1945	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

83 Operational Base Unit was formed at Batchelor, Northern Territory, on 1 January 1945. On 27 January 1945 a major proportion of equipment was sent by road to Darwin en route to Jacquinot Bay, New Britain. On 2 March 1945 a detachment arrived at Jacquinot Bay to assist in camp preparation. The main party arrived on 16 March 1945. While the main party was in transit, work on the camp site continued, and the main airstrip opened for all aircraft on 15 March 1945. On 20 March 1945, the Unit took control of the strip and on 31 March 1945 the base was fully operational, although transit accommodation was limited.

On 14 June 1945, the Unit arrived at Morotai and on 14 July moved to Balikpapan. On 17 July, perimeter defences were established accompanied by the rattle of small arms fire and constant rain.

The Unit occupied a camp site formerly used by Japanese Naval Headquarters on 18 July 1945. On 24 July, 10 Japanese aircraft dropped 28 bombs without causing damage or casualties. A Spitfire shot down one enemy aircraft, which crashed into the sea adjacent to the camp. While the raid was under way, a Japanese naval party landed within 25 yards of the camp. At daybreak, RAAF guards discovered the intruders and eight Japanese were killed with one or two escaping with serious wounds. The Japanese were carrying demolition charges and grenades.

In October 1945 the Unit's personnel were posted out in accordance with disbandment orders, and the Unit disbanded on 8 October 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

15 January 1945      —Flight Lieutenant D.S. Askew

# 84 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

9 January 1945	—formed at Kingaroy, Qld
11 May 1945	—departed Brisbane for Morotai
22 May 1945	—main party arrived at Morotai
11 June 1945	—arrived at Lacuna
29 December 1945	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

84 Operational Base Unit was formed at Kingaroy, Queensland, on 9 January 1945 to handle aviation fuel and bombs and ammunition for training requirements. The first Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant R.M. McKenzie. The strength of the Unit was 12 officers and 87 other ranks.

On 30 March 1945, the Unit equipment was loaded for shipment to Brisbane. The Unit departed Brisbane on 11 May 1945 on the USTS *Sea Ray*, arriving at Morotai on 22 May 1945. On 11 June 1945, it moved to Lacuna and by 17 June 1945 had established a camp.

The strength of the Unit was enlarged to 295 after the arrival of personnel from 47 Operational Base Unit on 30 September 1945.

As the War had ended the Unit was involved in clean-up operations and refuelling of aircraft returning to Australia.

The Unit finally disbanded on 29 December 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

22 January 1945	—Flight Lieutenant R.M. McKenzie
-----------------	----------------------------------



# 85 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 8 March 1945 —formed at Amberley, Qld  
17 June 1945 —moved to Balikpapan, Borneo  
16 November 1945 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

85 Operational Base Unit was formed at Amberley, Queensland, on 8 March 1945. The purpose of the Unit was the maintenance of bases used by 85 Wing Headquarters operational units. Flying Officer J.K.G. Weir was the temporary Commanding Officer, followed by Pilot Officer A.C. Evans on 31 May 1945.

On 25 May 1945, the Unit left Amberley by road for Winnellie, Northern Territory, travelling through Mount Isa, Queensland. On 7 June 1945, the Unit arrived at Winnellie, before embarking at Darwin for Balikpapan on 17 June 1945. The Unit disembarked on 25 June 1945, and manned the perimeter defences at its camp site. The construction of the camp was completed on 31 August 1945.

Due to the cessation of hostilities, the Unit did not undertake its operational function, and was disbanded on 16 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

- August 1945 —Flight Lieutenant H.C. Paterson

# 86 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 1 June 1945   | —9 Service Flying Training School ceased to function and 86 Operational Base Unit formed |
| 28 April 1946 | —Care and Maintenance Unit Cunderdin established and 86 Operational Base Unit disbanded  |
| 26 May 1947   | —Unit disbanded  |

## NARRATIVE

When 9 Service Flying Training School ceased to function at Cunderdin, Western Australia, on 1 June 1945, 89 Operational Base Unit was formed. Personnel and appropriate equipment were transferred from the former unit under the command of Squadron Leader C.D. Pallthorpe.

January 1946 was one of the wettest experienced whilst the Air Force was in residence at Cunderdin. The airstrip was flooded and it was impossible to move off the hard standing for fear of bogging aircraft and motor transport. During July, efforts were made to improve the drainage at the camp. A lack of manpower made these tasks difficult. Personnel from 25 Squadron, based at Cunderdin, had to be seconded to assist 86 Operational Base Unit members with normal station duties.

On 2 April 1946, Western Area Headquarters advised that 86 Operational Base Unit was to be reduced and re-named Care and Maintenance Unit Cunderdin. This took place on 28 April 1946, and the latter unit took over the former's role, with a strength of 66 airmen.

One of the duties of the Unit was the preparation of Tiger Moth aircraft for delivery to purchasers. Between 27 and 30 February 1946, seven aircraft were collected by the Royal Aero Club of Western Australia, and others were picked up by representatives of MacRobertson Miller Airlines and Vine Motors, Perth.

Buildings were emptied and cleaned, with furniture and stores being transported to 10 Stores Depot. On 12 May, four civilian caretakers were taken on the strength of Headquarters Western Area, and Care and Maintenance Unit was disbanded on 26 May 1947.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

17 June 1945	—Squadron Leader C.D. Pallthorpe
22 August 1945	—Flight Lieutenant B.T. Hill
20 November 1945	—Wing Commander J.B. Hampshire
August 1946	—Flying Officer A.J. Collins
8 October 1946	—Flight Lieutenant P.J. Norriss
31 November 1946	—Flying Officer C.R. Brown

# 87 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 June 1945      | —formed at Geraldton, WA            |
| 20 May 1946      | —re-named Care and Maintenance Unit |
| 5 September 1947 | —Unit disbanded                     |

## NARRATIVE

87 Operational Base Unit was formed at Geraldton, Western Australia, on 1 June 1945 to administer Geraldton Base after the disbandment of 4 Service Flying Training School. The first Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant H.V. Shearn. Unit strength on formation was six officers, one RAAF nurse, one WAAAF officer, two airmen pilots, 42 WAAAF, and 117 airmen.

The Unit was responsible for the packing up, vouching and despatch of equipment and some aircraft of 4 Service Flying Training School. All equipment was listed and 25 aircraft allotted were despatched by ferry pilots.

On 24 June 1945, a civil aircraft DH-86 crashed, killing the pilot instantly and badly injuring the co-pilot. One passenger was badly injured and the other suffered abrasion and shock. On 26 June an investigation board arrived to enquire into the cause of the accident.

Instruction on .303 rifle, Thomson sub-machine gun and Bren light machine gun was given to all personnel at the Unit and completed on 7 July 1945. On 11 September 1945, two Beaufort aircraft arrived from 14 Squadron to dispose of 18 500-lb bombs that had been condemned, as well as thousands of rounds of .303 and .50 ammunition.

All WAAAF personnel were posted from the Unit from 24 December 1945. The Unit ceased to exist as from 20 May 1946 and was re-named Care and Maintenance Unit Geraldton. This unit continued to function on a reducing care basis only and was disbanded on 5 September 1947.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 13 July 1945     | —Flight Lieutenant H.V. Shearn |
| 10 December 1945 | —Flight Lieutenant L.G. Ellers |
| 20 April 1946    | —Flight Lieutenant C.G. Jones  |

# 88 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1 June 1945   | —formed at Bundaberg, Qld   |
| 25 June 1945  | —advance party of Netherlands East Indies Air Force personnel arrived       |
| 24 July 1945  | —base handed over to the Dutch, 88 Operational Base Unit became lodger unit |
| 26 April 1946 | —Unit ceased to function  |

## NARRATIVE

88 Operational Base Unit was formed on 1 June 1945 at Bundaberg, Queensland. It was established to provide support services to the Netherlands East Indies Air Force, which was shortly to take over the base. The first Commanding Officer was Squadron Leader D.P.S. Smith. The establishment strength was 116 RAAF and 17 WAAAF.

On 3 July 1945 the station facilities were inspected by a senior officer of Headquarters NEI in preparation for the Dutch take-over. Dutch involvement with Bundaberg had arisen from a planned build-up of Netherlands East Indies forces in Australia following the cessation of the war in Europe and the recapture of Dutch East Indies territory. Subsequently on 24 July 1945, 88 Operational Base Unit was instructed to hand over Bundaberg to the Dutch and then become a lodger unit only to provide the following services: communications, meteorological, flying control and air-sea rescue.

The advance party of Netherlands East Indies Air Force personnel arrived by aircraft from Canberra on 25 June 1945, with the Commanding Officer, a lieutenant colonel, being attached to 88 Operational Base Unit.

All WAAAFs were withdrawn by 31 July 1945, and as at 30 September RAAF strength was six officers, 36 sergeants and above, and 189 airmen.

Due to a run-down of effort following cessation of hostilities on 15 August 1945 the Unit commenced a five-day working week. Unit tedium was relieved when, on 20 December 1945, a Mariner (A71-100) of 40 Squadron, Port Moresby, was forced down into the sea 40 miles seaward south of Bundaberg. The air-sea rescue launch from the Unit participated in rescue operations in the inclement weather and towed the

aircraft and its crew of six and 36 passengers to safety. After repair by Unit personnel the Mariner departed on 25 December.

During January 1946, the Unit repaired a Royal Navy Sea Otter aircraft and handled a Beaufort from 4 Communication Unit, Archerfield, and Mosquito aircraft from 5 Operational Training Unit.

By early March 1946 Netherlands East Indies Air Force activities were decreasing. On 28 March 1946, the Unit was advised by Eastern Area Headquarters of its impending disbandment. On 26 April 1946, 88 Operational Base Unit ceased to function.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

30 June 1945	—Squadron Leader D.P.S. Smith
6 December 1945	—Squadron Leader B.W. Graham

# 89 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

15 August 1945	—raised at Biak, Dutch New Guinea
14 March 1946	—moved to Madang
18 March 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

89 Operational Base Unit was established at Biak, New Guinea, on 15 August 1945, under the control of Flight Lieutenant B. Chirlian. The Unit provided transient accommodation—on 19 August 1945, 700 personnel were given accommodation and meals, and every possible space was used for sleeping quarters. Such was the pressure on the facilities at the Unit that drinking water had to be transported to the camp.

The United States Air Force advised that Mokmer airstrip would cease to be used by United States units on 1 September 1945. 89 Operational Base Unit assumed full control of Mokmer on 18 September 1945, taking over the duty tower and operations room, and organising the removal of the signals section and transmitters. By the end of August 1945, the Unit comprised three officers and 83 airmen.

Leading Aircraftman D.E. Haddow was drowned when the rubber dinghy in which he was a passenger overturned on 29 August 1945.

On 24 September 1945, a collision occurred between a 37 Squadron Dakota and a Kittyhawk of 120 (NEI) Squadron. The transport had landed and was taxiing down the airstrip when the Kittyhawk commenced its take-off run. The transport had not cleared the airstrip when the fighter crashed into its tail.

During the period October–December 1945, the Unit handled 6257 transient personnel and over 2000 aircraft movements. However, on 1 December, Headquarters Northern Area advised that Air Force Headquarters had agreed that 89 Operational Base Unit would be withdrawn from Biak. On 21 January 1946, the Unit was instructed to cease operations, and Mokmer airfield ceased operations on the 23rd, all traffic being diverted to the United States airfield at Sorido. Even so, 202 aircraft movements were recorded at Mokmer in January, and 660 transient personnel processed.

The strength of the Unit dropped from 117 personnel in October 1945 to 20 in February 1946. On 14 March, the Unit was transferred to Madang, and disbanded there on 18 March 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

15 August 1945	—Flight Lieutenant B. Chirlian
31 December 1945	—Flight Lieutenant N.O.W. Birt



# 90 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 23 July 1945 —formed at Kingaroy, Qld  
28 November 1945 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

Flying Officer C.A. Broadbent was the Commanding Officer of 90 Operational Base Unit when it was formed at Kingaroy, Queensland, on 23 July 1945. At the end of the month the strength of the Unit was one officer and 27 other ranks.

The rear party of 93 Squadron departed from Kingaroy on 31 July, and the strength of the Unit increased to two officers and 83 airmen. The additional officer was Flight Lieutenant W.M. Cavanagh, the signals officer.

Notification was received on 3 September 1945 that the Unit would cease to function as an operational base unit. The Unit strength was 77 personnel at the end of September.

The Unit was in the process of disbandment when Flight Sergeant R. Horton was killed at Wooroolin, in a motor vehicle accident, on 20 October 1945. Sergeant H.H. Chamberlain and Leading Aircraftmen J.L. Hughes and H.J. Simmons were admitted to Kingaroy General Hospital as a result of the same accident. Horton was buried in the Kingaroy War Cemetery.

On 21 November 1945, the Equipment and Transport Section was closed, and the disbandment of 90 Operational Base Unit was completed on 28 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

- 23 July 1945 —Flying Officer C.A. Broadbent

# 3 TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

*Djinnang (To Perceive)*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 15 October 1946 | —formed about 10 kilometres west of RAAF Base Pearce |
| 1 March 1992    | —Unit disbanded                                      |

## NARRATIVE

3 Telecommunication Unit was officially formed at a site about 10 kilometres west of RAAF Base Pearce on 15 October 1946. The site, which was built in 1941, comprised two cement buildings and a reinforced concrete 'igloo' structure that served during World War II as a remote receiving station for Air Force Base Pearce. Despite a long period of non-use, the facilities were in good condition.

After training at HMAS *Harman* in Canberra and later at the Army 101 Wireless Regiment at Cabarlah in Queensland, a group of operators returned to the Unit at the end of August 1946. This training was conducted by Chief Petty Officer Hall and three civilian instructors from the United Kingdom, and was designed to familiarise the trainees with the expertise to commence watchkeeping. The first recorded evening shift occurred on 6 September 1947 and was the precursor of around-the-clock operations for the next 45 years.

A group of airmen comprising Sergeant Roddy, Corporals Roddy and Horner with Leading Aircraftmen Hall and Southwell were posted to Hong Kong for duty with 367 Signals Unit Royal Air Force on 25 October 1949. This began a series of postings which continued for the next 33 years.

In February 1951 Flight Lieutenant F.H. Doherty led a party on posting to Labuan for duty with the Royal Air Force Detachment Labuan. Postings to Labuan continued until 1957 when the detachment was disbanded.

During October and November 1953 the Unit provided personnel for communications support of Sir William Penny's atomic weapons tests at Woomera. Known as the 'Totem' series of tests, it involved the detonation of two atomic devices at sites north of Woomera. Unit members provided air-ground-air and teleprinter and morse communications during the series.

The Unit became involved in postings to Singapore on 12 April 1958 when a party of 17 members went to Seletar for duty at Chai Keng, 4 miles from Seletar. Postings to and from Singapore continued until the detachment closed on 25 June 1968, but were resumed in April 1971 when a group of 16 personnel were posted for duty with 121 Signals Squadron of 9 Signals Regiment Australian Regular Army as part of the ANZUS Force. These activities continued until 28 February 1974 when the last RAAF operators were withdrawn.

Construction of a new operations building was completed on 26 June 1964 to accommodate all the functions previously conducted in the concrete bunker. The building was officially commissioned on 21 October 1964, with operations transferred on 25 April 1965.

A new combined mess and extensions to the operations building were formally accepted on 23 March 1976. Demolition of the old mess building made space for a new headquarters building comprising guard room, administration and equipment sections. Formal acceptance of the new headquarters building occurred on 22 February 1979. A new maintenance facility which centralised all maintenance functions was completed on 17 October 1983.

Celebrations commemorating the Unit's 40th anniversary, conducted on 17 October 1986, attracted a large number of past and present members of the Unit. Availability of seats on service aircraft ensured that many ex-members from eastern States were able to attend.

At a ceremonial parade on 8 March 1991 at RAAF Base Pearce, the Unit was awarded the Governor-General's Banner. The parade was attended by some 300 ex-Unit personnel as well as many dignitaries including the Chief of the Air Staff. The banner was subsequently laid-up in the interdenominational chapel at RAAF Williams, Point Cook, on 19 November 1991.

Operations ceased at 3 Telecommunication Unit on 30 November 1991 with functions continuing at a centralised communications establishment in Canberra. 3 Telecommunication Unit was officially disbanded on 1 March 1992.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

13 November 1946	—Flight Lieutenant Q.J. Foster
31 May 1948	—Squadron Leader R.G. Walker
1 September 1951	—Squadron Leader G.H. Barnes
26 March 1953	—Wing Commander C.E. Beurle
1 November 1954	—Wing Commander W.T. Faint
4 March 1957	—Wing Commander J.A. Robb
23 March 1959	—Wing Commander C.J. Lamb
5 February 1962	—Wing Commander H.W. Tyler
16 March 1965	—Wing Commander J.W. Stanfield
30 December 1968	—Wing Commander B.J. Ryan
7 January 1971	—Wing Commander R.N. Bell
2 January 1973	—Wing Commander P.R. Coleman
14 January 1975	—Wing Commander R.F. Brandli
30 January 1976	—Wing Commander J.M. Noble
16 December 1978	—Wing Commander P.R. Silcock
15 December 1980	—Wing Commander J.B. Aspinall
17 January 1983	—Wing Commander T.C. Douglas
9 January 1986	—Wing Commander D.B. Smedley
19 December 1988	—Wing Commander G. Bartlett

# 11 TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1 August 1945 —commenced operations on Morotai  
30 November 1945 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

11 Telecommunication Unit commenced operations at Morotai on 1 August 1945 with Squadron Leader G.C. Douglas as Commanding Officer. The Unit took over the following wireless transmitting (wireless/telegraph) circuits: Duplex II Group Tel U and AFHQ Tel U, Duplex II Group Telecommunication Unit and First Air Force Telecommunication Unit (Labuan), Aeradio Watch, H/F D/F Station, Heavy Bomber Watch and the following teletype circuits: 13 Air Force Teleswitch, 80 Wing Headquarters, 82 Wing Headquarters and AD RAAF Communications.

The Unit was disbanded on 30 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 1 August 1945 —Squadron Leader G.C. Douglas  
19 November 1945 —Squadron Leader R.R. Purdie

# 14 WIRELESS TRANSMITTING STATION

## CHRONOLOGY

- 4 March 1944 —formed at Kiriwina  
30 September 1944 —Station disbanded

## NARRATIVE

14 Wireless Transmitting Station was formed at Kiriwina on 4 March 1944. The first Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant E. Ptolomey. There was an establishment of 100 personnel. The unit then left for Milne Bay aboard the US *Marcus Daly*. From there personnel went on to stand off Finschhafen where they joined a convoy bound for Los Negros. During the sea voyage, tracer gun fire was observed passing the southern end of Los Negros. After arrival at the camp site, communications were set up in a tent with accommodation for both signals and cypher personnel. Considerable trouble was experienced in keeping the batteries up to charge. The only stationery available for sending messages was Japanese paper which had been captured.

On 22 March, a proper camp site was cleared and unit buildings were erected. Lines were opened with Goodenough Island. Watches with Nadzab Wireless Transmitting Station and weather circuits were opened on 2 April 1944. During this time 25 per cent of Station personnel were hospitalised with dengue fever and dysentery. Communications were carried on satisfactorily but under great difficulty.

On 13 April the advance party of the newly constituted 113th Air Task Force arrived from the South Pacific Forces to conduct operations under the control of the 5th Air Force.

RAAF signals officers were called to a conference and it was soon realised that the communications were to be left to the RAAF as the Americans had no ground equipment. The Station played a great part achieving remarkable results working with aircraft of the United States 13th Task Force. These aircraft were on strike missions and often encountered considerable enemy opposition which resulted in the Liberator formations being broken up and aircraft forced off course. Bearings were given via signals thus bringing all aircraft back safely to

base. The Station maintained a high standard throughout these operations. On 14 June 1944 the Commanding Officer received a letter of commendation signed by the Commanding General of the 13th Bomber Command and 13th Air Task Force expressing appreciation of the services rendered by 14 Wireless Transmitting Station. 13th Bomber Command subsequently opened its own communications network and handled its own traffic.

Personnel were very keen in their sporting activities and football matches were played with adjacent units. On 15 September 1944 a brief visit was made to the unit by the Chief Signals Officer Northern Command. On his instructions modifications were made to buildings in order that 14 Wireless Transmitting Station could be disbanded and amalgamated with 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit. On 28 September 1944 all signals responsibility of this unit transferred to 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit. The unit was disbanded on 30 September 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

7 March 1944	—Flight Lieutenant E. Ptolomey
10 July 1944	—Flight Lieutenant W.L. Heinrich

# AIR TRAINING CORPS



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1941 —Air Training Corps (ATC) formed with Directorate at RAAF Headquarters Melbourne and cadet wings set up in each of the six States
- 1945 —wings disbanded
- 1946 —ATC restructured with a squadron in each State
- 1947 —revised syllabus introduced for a peacetime training role
- 1950 —North Queensland Squadron established; State Commandants appointed in all seven squadrons
- RAAF flying scholarships introduced; Cadet Pilot Officer rank introduced; aeromodelling became a regular activity; Cadet Forces Medal established
- 1954 —ATC cadets commenced exchange visits with British ATC
- 1959 —Cadet Under Officer rank replaced Cadet Pilot Officer
- 1965 —ATC officers permitted to accompany cadets on annual exchange visits with the Malaysian ATC
- 1968 —gliding introduced
- 1969 —ATC entered International Air Cadet exchange visits with the USA Civil Air Patrol



- 1970 —exchange visits commenced with New Zealand ATC
- 1972 —ATC abbreviation changed to AIRTC
- 1975 —Government announced decision to discontinue cadet training
- 1976 —disbandment of the Corps suspended under new Government
- 1977 —Cadet Forces Regulations gazetted which reformed the AIRTC under revised system of control and conditions
- 1980 —Cadets changed from old style dark blue and drab uniforms to all-seasons blue-grey uniform
- 1981 —female officers and instructors appointed to the Corps
- 1982 —first female cadets enrolled in the Corps; first edition of the AIRTC Manual of Management issued
- 1987 —parachute training introduced by Queensland Squadron
- 1989 —inaugural award of the Air Force Trophy to the most efficient AIRTC squadron
- 1990 —AIRTC National Council established to guide the future development of the Corps
- 1991 —AIRTC celebrated its 50th anniversary
- 1992 —AIRTC regional councils formed in each State
- 1993 —eighth AIRTC squadron formed in the Northern Territory

## NARRATIVE

Ministerial approval for the formation of the Air Training Corps (ATC) was given on 28 April 1941. The original purpose of the ATC was to provide pre-entry training for boys aged 16 to 18 years who desired to serve in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

When Australia entered World War II, vast numbers of aircrew applicants were required for recruitment and training. From 1940, suitable volunteers were placed on an Aircrew Reserve list and asked to

complete a series of 21 tutorial lessons in mathematics and physics while they awaited call-up for enlistment. As the task of administering these lessons grew, the value of instituting a national air cadet corps was realised.

In Britain the Air Defence Cadet Corps set up in 1938 was reconstituted as the Air Training Corps in February 1941 and led to the establishment of similar ATC elements in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, the Directorate of Air Training Corps was approved by War Cabinet on 11 June 1941 and Group Captain W.A. Robertson was appointed as the first Director.

The Corps was divided into six wings—one in each State. Each wing comprised a number of squadrons and flights based at metropolitan and country centres.

As an integral part of the RAAF Reserve, the ATC was supported by a small cadre of RAAF personnel but staffed mainly by civilian instructors and officers of the Citizen Air Force Reserve on voluntary, unpaid, part-time duty. Cadets wore a RAAF pattern uniform with ATC insignia.

The two-year training syllabus began with lectures in mathematics, science, aircraft recognition, service knowledge, morse code and general technical knowledge. Cadets wishing to join as RAAF aircrew studied navigation, meteorology, theory of flight, armaments and anti-gas procedures, while ground crew cadets specialised in general aircraft studies and trade theory. These subjects were covered during two parade nights each week with drill and physical training programs on one Saturday afternoon each fortnight. Correspondence courses were available to cadets in remote areas. Graduates were issued with a Proficiency Certificate which was, in effect, a ready passport for entry to the RAAF when cadets reached 18 years of age.

After Wing Commander R.R. Radford, MM, took over as Director in 1943, the Corps reached a peak strength of 13 000 cadets, 1400 Reserve officers and 2000 civilian instructors, spread across 395 training units throughout Australia. By August 1945, 12 000 ATC cadets had entered the wartime RAAF, of which 7000 trained as aircrew.

In the period November–December 1945, the six wings were disbanded and the Corps was re-organised on the basis of a squadron in each State. In capital cities, the six squadron headquarters were staffed by Permanent Air Force personnel headed by a Commanding Officer of flight lieutenant, and later squadron leader, rank.

Cadets from 14 to 18 years of age attended weekly parades, annual camps and bivouacs manned by paid RAAF Reserve officers and airmen. Between March 1945 and July 1950 honorary commandants were appointed as patrons and senior officers of each squadron.

The peacetime ATC refocused its aims on general youth training with less tuition in academic subjects. In 1949 cadet promotion courses commenced at RAAF bases for cadets aspiring to NCO rank. In the following year, the first cadet pilot officers were appointed and the RAAF-sponsored flying scholarship scheme was introduced to train selected cadets to unrestricted pilot licence standard.

On 3 March 1950, a seventh ATC squadron was formed for North Queensland, controlled by a headquarters at Townsville. During the 1950s each squadron grew in strength and the number of flights doubled. Inter-squadron competitions and activities became popular and from 1954 a cadet visit program was initiated with the British ATC. In 1959 Cadet Pilot Officer rank was replaced by Cadet Under Officer.

Throughout the 1960s several ATC flights were accommodated in new facilities or upgraded premises. From 1965 ATC staff were invited to escort cadets on exchange visits with the Malaysian ATC and gliding became an approved ATC activity in 1968. International exchange visits were undertaken with the United States Civil Air Patrol in 1969 and the New Zealand ATC in 1970.

In 1972 the Air Training Corps abbreviation 'ATC' was changed to 'AIRC' to avoid long-standing confusion with Air Traffic Control.

As part of a major re-organisation of the Defence Force, a decision was made in 1975 by the Government to close down cadet training. This decision was subsequently reversed by the new Government when, under the Cadet Forces Regulations of 1977, the Air Training Corps was re-raised as an element of the Australian Services Cadet Scheme. Technically, the new AIRC was established on 29 July 1977 by the *Air Force Amendment Act (No. 138) 1976*.

AIRC officers and instructors were appointed as civilian employees of the Department of Defence with rank ranging from Aircraftman (AIRC) to Wing Commander (AIRC). The RAAF Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) controlled the Corps through his delegate, the Director of Personnel Services—A at Air Force Office and seven regional liaison officers. Each squadron was commanded by a Wing Commander (AIRC) Regional Commandant, retitled in 1981 as Commanding Officer. Cadet ages were broadened from 13 to 20 years. RAAF commitments to

the AIRTC were limited financially to the provision of uniforms, a seven-day annual camp for each member, a parade attendance allowance for staff, and maintenance of facilities used by AIRTC flights prior to 1976.

From June 1980, cadets were progressively re-equipped with the RAAF all-seasons uniform. On 12 October 1981 RAAF management of the AIRTC was passed to the Director of Reserves—Air Force and later in the decade to the Director of Reserve Personnel and Cadets—Air Force. The first female officers and instructors were appointed to the Corps in 1981, prior to the admission of female cadets in 1982.

During the early 1980s, a national executive of senior AIRTC officers was appointed to co-ordinate Corps activities and help formulate AIRTC policy. From 1990 this was substituted by senior RAAF, AIRTC and community representation on the AIRTC National Council and several AIRTC regional councils.

In April 1991, 50 years of AIRTC service was recognised by the CAS when he presented the Corps with its own banner at a special Canberra parade attended by cadets from every AIRTC flight in Australia. A further milestone occurred on 1 January 1993 when an eighth AIRTC squadron was formed in the Northern Territory with flights at Darwin and Tindal.

The official establishment for the Air Training Corps as at July 1993 was 7060 cadets and 840 staff.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Videon, B.J., *The First Fifty Years*, Lutheran Publishing House, 1991.

# AIR TRANSPORTABLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNIT

*Adroit*



## CHRONOLOGY

- 20 September 1965 —formed at RAAF Base Richmond, NSW
- 10 November 1972 —deployed to Papua New Guinea to provide communications to famine relief operations
- 25 December 1974 —deployed to Darwin to provide temporary communications and navigation aids after Cyclone 'Tracy'
- September 1990 —deployed to Phillip Island to provide communications at motorcycle grand prix
- 4 May 1992 —provided manning to United Nations peacekeeping in Cambodia
- November 1994 —based at Richmond, NSW

## NARRATIVE

Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit was formed at RAAF Base Richmond, New South Wales, on 20 September 1965. The Unit's original role was to provide a simple field communications centre.

The Unit continued to expand and be involved in Air Force exercises until 14 June 1967, when, during flood relief operations in northern New South Wales, the Unit was asked to provide communications support to civil agencies. This support has continued and has been utilised repeatedly in civil emergencies. The Unit has also provided support to famine relief operations in Papua New Guinea, bushfire and flooding

support within Australia and after cyclone devastation in the Solomon Islands and Tonga. On 25 December 1974 the Unit was one of the first into Darwin to provide temporary communications and navigation system support after the devastation of Cyclone 'Tracy'. This support continued until June 1975 when normal communications had been re-established and maintained.

The Unit's role has continually expanded until today, and is now to provide tactical and temporary communication—electronic facilities in support of single, joint and combined service exercises. Whenever elements of the RAAF deploy, the Unit is generally responsible for satisfying their communication requirements.

Contingency plans have been developed for aid to the civil community in times of bushfires in the Blue Mountains during the summer months. The Unit also holds replacement navigation aids and communication installations which may be used to replace facilities at fixed bases which may require work or become unserviceable. In the case of redeployment airfields, Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit has the ability to move to an alternate point of entry or a tactical airfield to establish and maintain communication—electronic facilities.

The Unit has been involved in over 650 exercises in its history, including every 'Kangaroo' and 'Pitch Black' exercise conducted. In order to provide such a wide range of support, the Unit needs to be versatile and to stock an extensive range of navigation aids, and precision approach and surveillance radars for air traffic control; and to use telex and facsimile, air-ground-air voice communications, telephone switchboards and a variety of radios to support airborne, land or seagoing operations. The Unit also provides a section which monitors RAAF communications to ensure correct procedures are being followed.

Since inception the Unit has grown to over 120 permanent personnel and increases in size to meet operational requirements by the attachment of staff from other units as necessary. Seldom does a month go by without personnel and equipment being deployed on an exercise somewhere in the country, either as a Unit detachment or as cadre element. They have also provided communications support to exercises held in New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the South Pacific Islands, Malaysia, Antarctica and Thailand. A fairly heavy training commitment is also part of the Unit's responsibility. Courses conducted for its members range from a tactical communications course through to technical courses on specific equipment maintenance activities.

As technology expands, Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit keeps in step, providing units of the RAAF with the latest facilities available to the Australian Defence Force and the expertise to run them.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

15 November 1965	—Squadron Leader C.R. McDonald
22 January 1968	—Squadron Leader M. Collins
22 December 1970	—Squadron Leader D.A. Haber
6 January 1972	—Squadron Leader J.P. Hughes
9 July 1975	—Flight Lieutenant R.T. Holsken
12 August 1975	—Squadron Leader I.T. William
20 December 1977	—Squadron Leader I.T. Latter
7 October 1980	—Squadron Leader R.E. Usher
15 January 1982	—Squadron Leader W.R. Lynch
10 January 1984	—Squadron Leader B.K. Jordan
20 January 1987	—Squadron Leader R.M. Porter
17 January 1989	—Squadron Leader R.J. Derlagen
18 January 1991	—Squadron Leader D.J. Wust
9 December 1993	—Squadron Leader N. Barneveld

# BIRDUM TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 15 July 1944     | —formed at Birdum, NT, as 9 Wireless Telegraph Station |
| 11 August 1944   | —re-named Birdum W/T Station                           |
| 1 February 1945  | —re-named Birdum Telecommunication Unit                |
| 1 March 1945     | —H/F-D/F Station at Gorrie Strip commenced operating   |
| 30 November 1945 | —last entry in Unit History Record                     |

## NARRATIVE

Birdum Telecommunication Unit was formed on 15 July 1944 at Birdum, Northern Territory. The original formation was that of Birdum W/T (Wireless/Telegraph) Detachment of 11 Signals Unit, formed into 9 W/T Station, which became Birdum W/T Station on 11 August 1944; on 1 February 1945 it was re-named Birdum Telecommunication Unit.

The Unit operated effectively in the isolated tropical environment with long hours of shift work involved. The Welfare Committee's work in keeping morale high contributed enormously to this success. The Welfare Committee organised such activities as tennis, football, billiards, euchre, music, basketball, gardening, discussion groups, community singing and a gymnasium.

The Unit also performed its normal telecommunication role and on 1 March 1945 the H/F-D/F Station at Gorrie Strip commenced operating. The Unit continued to operate till after the War and was still operational on 30 November 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |              |                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 15 July 1944 | —Flying Officer R.T. Hughes     |
| 28 June 1945 | —Squadron Leader A. Crudgington |



# BRISBANE TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 15 May 1942       | —formed as Brisbane Wireless Transmitting Station |
| January 1945      | —re-named Brisbane Telecommunication Unit         |
| 26 September 1946 | —Unit disbanded                                   |

## NARRATIVE

Brisbane Wireless Transmitting Station was formed on 15 May 1942 under the command of Flying Officer Hine and occupied Reid House, Edward Street, Brisbane. The following wireless transmitting circuits were in operation: Melbourne Wireless Transmitting Station, Port Moresby and Eastern Area. The following teleprinter circuits were in operation: Archerfield, Sandgate, Amberley, 3 Stores Depot, Townsville, Eastern Area, CTO, USS *Griffen* and Base Section 3 USASOS.

In January 1945 the Unit changed its name to Brisbane Telecommunication Unit and on 13 December 1945 the Unit moved to Victoria Park. On 4 June 1946 the disbandment of Remote Receiving Station, Zillmere, commenced and was completed on 4 September 1946. The Unit was disbanded on 26 September 1946.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 15 May 1942       | —Flying Officer Hine             |
| 30 July 1942      | —Flying Officer Balmer           |
| 2 September 1942  | —Pilot Officer A. Evans          |
| 12 October 1943   | —Flight Lieutenant R. Travers    |
| 14 December 1943  | —Pilot Officer J.W. Sexton       |
| 14 June 1944      | —Flight Lieutenant K.J. Martin   |
| 26 September 1944 | —Squadron Leader S.G. Edwards    |
| 13 December 1945  | —Squadron Leader A.L. Wallbridge |
| 17 June 1946      | —Squadron Leader A. Crudgington  |

# FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

27 March 1945	—formed on Morotai
July 1945	—moved to Labuan
10 December 1945	—moved to Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, Qld
15 July 1946	—Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

The First Tactical Air Force Telecommunication Unit was formed at Morotai on 27 March 1945 under the direction of First Tactical RAAF. The strength of the Unit on formation was Flight Lieutenant W.C. Gates and five airmen.

The Unit sent a detachment to Tawitawi on 14 May 1945 by air and moved itself to Labuan by air in July 1945. In November 1945 the Unit underwent reductions in preparation for a move to Brisbane which occurred on 10 December 1945. At Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, the Unit had been reduced to a nucleus and awaited instructions as to its future role. Eventually, on 15 July 1946, the Unit disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

27 April 1945	—Flight Lieutenant W.C. Gates
1 September 1945	—Squadron Leader J.R. Curtain
24 May 1946	—Squadron Leader A. Crudgington

# GAWLER TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- 10 February 1942 —commenced as Adelaide Wireless  
Transmitting Station
- 1 February 1945 —re-named Gawler Telecommunication Unit
- 31 May 1946 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

On 10 February 1942 Sergeant K.J. Martin of the Directorate of Signals Melbourne was attached to 4 Embarkation Depot for the purpose of supervising the erection of station buildings and installation of equipment. The station commenced to function on 16 March 1942 with Sergeant K.J. Martin in charge.

In September 1943 a detachment was sent to Gawler Strip and on 1 February 1945 the Unit changed its name to Gawler Telecommunication Unit. On 23 June 1945 the first Qantas Lancastrian aircraft landed on the Unit's strip en route to London. On the following day the first RAF Transport Command B-24 staged through the Unit en route to England; over the following months the Unit saw many Liberators arrive and depart en route for Darwin or for Southern Area. On 8 October 1945 one RAAF Liberator from Darwin carrying POWs of various services landed and refuelled en route to Laverton. On 9 October 1945 a United States Air Force Superfortress landed in support of the Fourth Victory Loan fundraising.

On 5 April 1946 the disbandment of Unit equipment proceeded in accordance with instructions from Headquarters Southern Area. Over the month the Unit saw a reduction in personnel and equipment and on 31 May 1946 a signal was sent to Headquarters Southern Area that the Unit had disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- 10 February 1942 —Sergeant K.J. Martin
- 2 September 1942 —Flying Officer R.R.W. Ridgeway
- 1 October 1942 —Flight Lieutenant K.J. Martin

27 September 1943	—Flight Lieutenant J.L. Galbraith
1 March 1944	—Flight Lieutenant F.A. Goodrich
2 January 1945	—Flight Lieutenant K. Balmer
29 March 1945	—Squadron Leader S.L. Bain
3 January 1946	—Squadron Leader F.W. Robilliard

# MELBOURNE TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

*Ocius Alis (Faster Than Wings)*



## CHRONOLOGY

- 23 February 1942 —formed as Melbourne Wireless Transmitting Station, Melbourne
- 29 May 1943 —moved to Froggnall, Mont Albert Road, Canterbury, Melbourne
- 1 February 1945 —re-named RAAF HQ Telecommunication Unit
- October 1945 —re-named Melbourne Telecommunication Unit
- 31 January 1976 —Unit disbanded

## NARRATIVE

Melbourne W/T (Wireless/Telegraph) Station was formed at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, on 23 February 1942 and comprised the following sections: Headquarters, Signals Cypher, 1 Transmitting Station Laverton, 2 Auxiliary Transmitting Station Point Cook, Remote Receiving Centre Mont Park and Remote Receiving Centre Werribee. Squadron Leader A.C.A. McBride was the Commanding Officer.

WAAAF personnel were employed in lieu of RAAF personnel up to a prescribed limit. Prior to formation of Melbourne Wireless Transmitting Station it was known as HQ Wireless Transmitting Station, a section of Air Force Headquarters, Directorate of Signals. At commencement of the Unit the following wireless telegraph circuits were worked: Air Ministry, Singapore, New Zealand, Vancouver, Bandoeng, Darwin, Pearce,

Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Richmond, Nabitac, Rathmines, Williamtown, Nowra, Canberra, Adelaide and Bankstown. The following teleprinter circuits were worked: Headquarters Point Cook, Headquarters Laverton, CTO, 1 Transport Group, Officer-In-Charge Records, Headquarters Ascot Vale, 1 Stores Depot, Weather Bureau, North-Eastern Area and Eastern Area. They also had a tone line with Canberra and Richmond; and a runner which combined the areas of Headquarters, Central War Room, Directorate of Intelligence and Southern Area Headquarters.

On 29 May 1943 the first shift moved into barracks at Frognall, Mont Albert Road, Canterbury, conveyed there by a special tram. Over the next few days the other shifts moved to Frognall with a changeover of communications from Victoria Barracks to Frognall at 2200 hours on 20 June 1943. While at Frognall there was plenty of social life with regular dinners, concerts, Christmas dinners, theatre nights, sporting activities and barbecues. In particular there was a WAAAF birthday dinner followed by a concert in St Mark's Hall, and airwomen and airmen visited the Box Hill RSL to represent the Service at a mannequin parade.

On 1 February 1945 the Unit changed its name to RAAF HQ Telecommunication Unit and in October 1945 to Melbourne Telecommunication Unit; it stayed with that name until disbandment. With the end of the War the Unit suffered with reductions in personnel and communication traffic, resulting in the closure of various circuits. However the Unit continued to function for many years and saw changes with the introduction of new technology such as microwave. On 31 January 1976 the Unit disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

23 February 1942	—Squadron Leader A.C.A. McBride
16 April 1945	—Wing Commander J.F. McCardell
1 August 1945	—Wing Commander H.V.L. Taylor
25 April 1947	—Squadron Leader J.R. Curtain
16 June 1952	—Wing Commander J.E. Reynolds
7 December 1955	—Wing Commander W.C. Blakeley
2 February 1960	—Wing Commander W.T. Faint
18 October 1963	—Wing Commander F.H. Doherty
10 January 1966	—Wing Commander R.A. Moore
15 December 1969	—Wing Commander F.W. Jordan
10 December 1972	—Wing Commander P.M. Rodes
22 January 1974	—Wing Commander I.D. McLean

# NORTH-EASTERN AREA HEADQUARTERS TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 9 May 1944       | —formed as Townsville W/T Station                                 |
| 1 February 1945  | —re-named North-Eastern Area HQ<br>Telecommunication Unit (NEATU) |
| 31 December 1945 | —last entry in Unit History Record                                |

## NARRATIVE

Townsville W/T (Wireless/Telegraph) Station was formed on 9 May 1944 under the command of Headquarters North-Eastern Area from 12 Signals Unit.

The following W/T circuits were in operation from Townsville: Melbourne W/T (high speed), RAAF Command, Brisbane W/T, North-Western Area, Moresby W/T (high speed), Cairns, Goodenough W/T, Cloncurry–Iron Range, Cooktown–Rockhampton, Higgins, Horn Island, Karumba and Merauke.

The following teleprinter and teletype circuits were in operation from Townsville: RAAF Command, Brisbane W/T, North-Western Area, Cairns, Cooktown, Charters Towers, Garbutt, 103 Fighter Control Unit, Aeradio, Higgins, Wireless Unit, Post Office, ADV Echelon 5 ACS, Air Move Loop and Sydney Street. Also one-line circuits were in operation to North-Western Area, Bowen–Rockhampton and Cooktown–Iron Range.

On 1 February 1945 the unit changed its name to North-Eastern Area Headquarters Telecommunication Unit (NEATU).

By 31 December 1945 several personnel had posted out and the Unit was only operating a minimum of circuits.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 August 1944    | —Squadron Leader G.C. Douglas  |
| 19 February 1945 | —Squadron Leader K.J. Martin   |
| 15 October 1945  | —Squadron Leader F.A. Goodrich |
| 23 November 1945 | —Squadron Leader W.A. Fisher   |

# NORTH-WESTERN AREA TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 15 July 1944    | —formed as 8 W/T Station  |
| August 1944     | —re-named NWA W/T Station                                       |
| 1 February 1945 | —re-named NWA HQ Telecommunication Unit                         |
| October 1945    | —re-named NWA Telecommunication Unit                            |
| February 1946   | —closed down and moved to RAAF Darwin as Darwin Signals Section |

## NARRATIVE

8 W/T (Wireless/Telegraph) Station was formed on 15 July 1944 in the North-Western Area. The Unit had previously been a detachment of 11 Signals Unit and had been known as NWA W/T Station. Headquarters was a lodger unit based at NWA HQ. A detachment at Fenton worked with 380th Heavy Bombardment Group, United States 5th Air Force.

On formation the watches in operation were: W/T watches with RAAF Command, Townsville, Gove, Millingimbi, Melbourne W/T, Corrunna Downs, Noonkanbah, Comaf 5 (alternate Bomcom 5), SWPA (Intercept), Truscott, Bathurst Island, Radar Administrative, Birdum Weather (Intercept), Inter-squadron 105FCU; L/T (land/telegraph) watches with Hughes, 105FCU, Fenton, Coomalie, Townsville, 2 Wireless Unit, Birdum, Katherine, Manbulloo; and T/P (teleprinter) watches with Adelaide, Alice Springs, RAAF Command, Darwin, Batchelor, Birdum, Townsville. Also in operation were L/T and/or W/T backing to Birdum, Darwin, Batchelor teleprinters and W/T backing to all landline circuits.

In August 1944 the Unit changed its name back to NWA W/T Station, followed by a change to NWA HQ Telecommunication Unit and finally in October 1945 to NWA Telecommunication Unit. In February 1946 the Unit moved its equipment to RAAF Darwin to become the Darwin Signals Section, bringing about the Unit's closure.



## COMMANDING OFFICERS

15 July 1944	—Flight Lieutenant J.H. Wilmott
1 August 1944	—Flight Lieutenant R.E. Jones
18 May 1945	—Flight Lieutenant K. Balmer
12 October 1945	—Squadron Leader G.H. Barnes

# NORTHERN COMMAND HEADQUARTERS TELECOMMUNICATION UNIT

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 12 January 1944  | —formed at Milne Bay as 15 W/T Station  |
| 22 June 1944     | —moved to Nadzab  |
| 28 August 1944   | —moved to Madang  |
| 7 September 1944 | —re-named Madang W/T Station; and<br>Nadzab location known as Madang W/T<br>Station Nadzab Detachment |
| 1 February 1945  | —re-named NORCOM HQ<br>Telecommunication Unit   |
| 7 February 1946  | —Unit disbanded   |

## NARRATIVE

15 W/T Station was formed at Milne Bay on 12 January 1944 under the direct control of Northern Command. The Unit moved by air from Milne Bay to Nadzab on 22 June 1944 and was established on the location of 13 Signals Unit.

On 17 June 1944 an advance party under the command of Flight Lieutenant J. Galbraith, the Commanding Officer of Milne Bay W/T Station, arrived at Nadzab to begin communications. An additional 13 signals personnel arrived on posting from Moresby W/T Station on 17 June 1944.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining technical equipment and barracks supplies owing to the lack of suitable air transport. Delays were also experienced because technical equipment arrived in an unserviceable condition.

In August 1944 Flight Lieutenant Galbraith went to Nadzab to take over 15 W/T Station and prepare for the shift to Madang. On 7 September 1944 the Unit was re-named Madang W/T Station and the Nadzab location became known as Madang W/T Station Nadzab Detachment. On 1 February 1945 the Unit was re-named NORCOM (Northern Command) HQ Telecommunication Unit with no change in its functional role.

On 31 December 1945 the Unit was advised to disband and on 7 February 1946 the Unit disbanded.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

12 January 1944	—Flight Lieutenant J. Galbraith
12 June 1944	—Flying Officer N.O. Quintrell
15 August 1944	—Flight Lieutenant J. Galbraith
5 February 1945	—Squadron Leader R.G. Walker

# OPERATIONAL RESEARCH SECTION (ORS)

## NARRATIVE

The introduction of operational research into the RAAF is associated with the visit to Australia late in 1943 of Sir Henry Tizard (scientific adviser to the Air Council).

In November 1943, the Air Board requested from the Air Ministry the services of two operational research officers, Dr J.C. Bower and Dr A.R. Miller. This request was approved by the Air Ministry and Ministry of Aircraft Production. The loan and transport of these officers was much facilitated by the co-operation of Overseas Headquarters Royal Australian Air Force and the Australian Scientific Research Liaison Office, London.

During November 1943, Squadron Leader C.S. Davis was transferred to operational research duties at RAAF Headquarters. The officer undertook much of the preliminary work connected with the organisation of the Section.

Dr Bower arrived in Australia on 24 January and Dr Miller on 13 February 1944. Both officers made contact with United States and Canadian operational research organisations en route, and saw some of the recent American developments. Staff at the RAAF Representative Office in Washington, the Australian Liaison Office in Ottawa and the Scientific Research Liaison Office in Washington were most helpful.

Two of the scientific officers originally appointed in 1942, Flying Officer J. Calvert and Flight Lieutenant F.J.D. Syer, were transferred to the Operational Research Section during March and April 1944. Mr J.G. Starke joined the Section on 24 April 1944 in a civilian capacity, but was later granted an honorary commission. The Section was also fortunate to acquire the services of Miss Foott, formerly in the Directorate of Organisation at RAAF Headquarters.

The establishment of ORS maintained, assisted and provided for four operational research organisations in the RAAF, located at RAAF Headquarters Melbourne, RAAF Command Brisbane, Northern Command (New Guinea), and Headquarters North-Western Area (Darwin).

Although earlier visits were made to RAAF Command and Northern Command, ORS RAAF Command became an effective section on 3 March 1944, with the arrival of Dr Bower in Brisbane, and ORS Northern Command became effective on 21 May 1944 with the arrival of Wing Commander Davis in New Guinea. Dr Miller then assumed command of ORS RAAF Command. ORS North-Western Area came into existence at a later date.

While sections were largely autonomous, the section at RAAF Headquarters was responsible for effecting any necessary co-ordination or conservation of operational research effort, and for the handling of administrative matters, such as personnel, recruiting, or overseas liaison.

The sections at RAAF Headquarters and RAAF Command were termed 'headquarter' sections, and the other two sections 'field' sections, in view of their more intimate contact with operational units. On operational matters, liaison between the field sections and RAAF Command section was indicated; on administrative investigation, liaison between the field sections and the section at RAAF Headquarters was necessary.

At RAAF Headquarters the first major investigation concerned the possibility of providing relief for personnel after a reasonable period of duty in tropical areas. Later investigations included a preliminary survey of squadron 'rate of effort' (especially as related to interceptor fighter squadrons), and a study of the age of aircrew recruits with a view to deciding the best age composition of recruits for aircrew duties. These studies tended to reflect the manpower shortage in Australia, in that they were concerned with the economical use of existing RAAF personnel and equipment, or with the selection of the best possible group of personnel for operational duties. Scientific advice was also given to various directorates regarding description of inventions.

The RAAF Command ORS devoted much of its effort to the analysis of RAAF operations in the South-West Pacific Area. Various investigations were concerned with bombing effort: results and accuracy, RAAF sea mining operations, mission failures of bomber aircraft, and submarine sightings and attacks. Advice was also given on the operational use of an Air-to-Surface Radar (ASV) and the operational employment of group radar equipment. Several articles were prepared by the Section for publication in the RAAF Command operational information bulletin. The ORS Northern Command also conducted an investigation into the

accuracy and operational usefulness of HF/DF fixing in the New Guinea area.

Several lectures were given by various members of the ORS. These included: 'Operational Research' by Wing Commander C.S. Davis, to the RAAF Staff School on 16 February 1944; 'Air Warfare Research' by Dr A.R. Miller, to Melbourne University Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of Victoria on 24 April 1944; 'Operational Research with Special Reference to its Armament Applications' by Dr J.C. Bower, to the Armament Officers Conference on 12 May 1944; and 'Operational Research' by Dr J.C. Bower, to the RAAF Staff School on 16 May 1944.

Contact was established and liaison maintained with the Operational Research Section, Australian Army, and the Second Operations Analysis Section, Fifth USAAF.

A number of visits were paid to various divisions of the CSIR, in particular to the radio physics division. Liaison with university departments was also undertaken.

# RAAF BASE AMBERLEY

*Bold and Faithful*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 17 June 1940  | —station headquarters formed   |
| 16 March 1942 | —3 Aircraft Depot formed   |
| 1 July 1942   | —RAAF Station Headquarters Amberley disbanded, 3AD assumed base administration functions     |
| 1947          | —Headquarters RAAF Station Amberley reformed   |
| April 1952    | —RAAF Station Amberley re-organised to Headquarters RAAF Amberley and Base Squadron Amberley |
| 1 June 1989   | —Base Support Wing formed  |
| 16 March 1992 | —501 Wing formed   |
| 1 July 1994   | —301 Air Base Wing formed  |

## NARRATIVE

Based on the need to establish a RAAF Citizen Air Force squadron in Queensland, the Minister for Defence, in July 1938, granted approval for the purchase of 1100 acres (445 hectares) of land at Boondall, near Brisbane, at an estimated cost of £6 500 (\$13 000). This proposal was abandoned when it was discovered that under certain conditions of tide and rainfall this area was subject to flooding. Another site near Zillmere was also declined due to the terrain and the cost of drainage and filling.

A good all-weather surface was of first importance for the establishment of an aerodrome and another site approximately 5 kilometres west

of the town of Ipswich and 42 kilometres west of Brisbane was recommended to the Air Board by the Chief of Air Staff and subsequently to the Minister by the Air Board on 11 November 1938. It was purchased at an estimated value of £10 000 (\$20 000) as the site for the establishment of RAAF Station Amberley, Queensland. Notification of the acquisition of this land was published and appeared in the Commonwealth Gazette No. 81 of 22 December 1938. The land area purchased subsequently tripled over the years to approximately 910 hectares by 1987.

'Amberley' was a local dairy farm, named by a Mr Collett, who arrived in the district from the small hamlet of Amberley in West Sussex, England.

The Station Headquarters, Amberley, was formed on 17 June 1940 with Squadron Leader S.A.C. Campbell appointed as temporary station commander. On the same day, 24 Squadron was formed with six officers and 33 airmen, Squadron Leader Campbell also being the Commanding Officer of this unit. 24 Squadron received its first aircraft—four Wirraways and three Moth Minors—in July 1940.

3 Aircraft Depot was formed at Amberley on 16 March 1942 and disbanded on 30 June 1992. During World War II, the depot was responsible for the assembly of many different types of aircraft, including P-39 Airacobras, P-40 Kittyhawks, P-43 Lancers, Vultee Vengeance, Spitfire, Hellcats (for the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm), and P-51 Mustangs for the RAAF. 3AD maintained a long history of engineering excellence.

On 21 October 1940, 3 Service Flying Training School was formed, and ultimately operated 54 Wirraway aircraft before being disbanded on 22 April 1942. In July 1942, Headquarters RAAF Station Amberley was disbanded and 3AD assumed the responsibility and control of all station functions and continued to administer the base until Headquarters RAAF Station Amberley was reformed in 1947.

Between 1941 and early 1946 there was a considerable American presence at RAAF Station Amberley, in the form of USAAF personnel and their aircraft. However, it is difficult to ascertain from available records the units and numbers of airmen and machine types. They did operate from their own working area, hangars, buildings and messes. The first to arrive in December 1941 was the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron and the 7th Bombardment Squadron, spending the next three months at Amberley assembling aircraft. Another USAAF unit was the 68th Fighter Squadron which arrived in Brisbane by ship in early March 1942 and moved to Amberley from the Ascot Racecourse on 16 March.



At Amberley, the 68th Fighter Squadron ground crews assembled P-39 Airacobra aircraft, many of which were ferried by squadron pilots to other Australian airfields. In May 1942, 68th Squadron personnel sailed to Tongatabu, an island in the Tonga group, where they assembled and were equipped with P-40E Kittyhawks.

On 10 April 1946, 82 Heavy Bomber Wing Headquarters re-located from Tocumwal in Victoria, 21 and 23 Squadrons following with their B-24 Liberator bombers on 24 and 25 April 1946. 12 Squadron also arrived from Darwin in May 1946, to become part of 82 Wing, which has remained at Amberley to this day and retained its responsibility for bomber and strike roles with Lincoln, Canberra, Phantom and F-111C aircraft, in 1, 2 and 6 Squadrons. 1 and 2 Squadrons saw active service in Malaya and South Vietnam with Lincoln and Canberra aircraft respectively.

In April 1952, RAAF Station Amberley was re-organised to become Headquarters RAAF Amberley and Base Squadron Amberley.

On 1 December 1960, 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron was formed at Amberley with RAAF and Army personnel and initially equipped with Cessna 180 and Bell 47G Sioux light fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. This unit later became 1 Aviation Regiment and moved to Oakey, Queensland.

114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit, which was formed at Camden, New South Wales, as 14 Fighter Sector Unit, was re-named 114MCRU on 7 March 1944, when the unit was based at Los Negros, Admiralty Islands. The unit was re-activated for the third time at Amberley during April 1968.

Following active service in South Vietnam, 2 Squadron and 9 Squadron returned to Amberley in June and December 1971, respectively, where 2 Squadron's Canberra aircraft were converted to a photographic and target towing role. 9 Squadron continued to support the Army with its Iroquois utility helicopters before re-locating to RAAF Base Townsville between November 1988 and February 1989 and subsequently being disbanded on 14 February 1989.

Following delays of an order of 24 F-111C strike aircraft placed in October 1963, an interim strike force of 24 F-4E Phantom aircraft, with spares, were leased from the United States Air Force, the first five arriving at Amberley in September 1970. All but one F-4E aircraft, lost in an accident, returned to the United States following the delivery of the

first of the F-111C aircraft in June 1973. On 4 December 1973, the last six F-111C aircraft arrived at Amberley from the United States.

12 Squadron was reformed at Amberley on 3 September 1973 to be equipped with 12 CH47-C Chinook medium lift helicopters, which arrived by sea from the United States in April 1974. 12 Squadron disbanded on 25 August 1989 and the Chinook helicopters were placed into storage.

The Defence Security Training School was re-located from RAAF Base Point Cook on 1 January 1986 and was subsequently re-named the Security and Fire School.

2 Airfield Defence Squadron, which formed at RAAF Base Richmond on 1 June 1988, re-located to Amberley during December 1988 and January 1989.

On 16 March 1992, 501 Wing was formed from 3 Aircraft Depot and 482 (Maintenance) Squadron to continue in the same maintenance role.

38 Squadron re-located from RAAF Base Richmond to Amberley in December 1992.

RAAF Base Amberley is one of the largest operational bases in Australia and is host to the F-111C strike force of 1 and 6 Squadrons in addition to a number of other units, namely Headquarters Strike Reconnaissance Group, 82 Wing, 38 Squadron, 501 Wing, 114MCRU, 23 Squadron, 2 Airfield Defence Squadron, Base Support Wing and Security and Fire School.

The history of the base has been preserved by naming the streets after the aircraft which have operated from this airfield over the years—for example Liberator Street, Lincoln Avenue, Catalina Road, Meteor Avenue, and, in the newer developments, Iroquois and Chinook Avenues.

301 Air Base Wing came into effect on 1 July 1994, continuing the long history of RAAF Base Amberley.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

16 March 1942	—Group Captain L.V. Lachal
11 May 1942	—Wing Commander W.R. Hartwright
18 June 1942	—Wing Commander G.E. Douglas
15 August 1947	—Group Captain G.E. Douglas
9 June 1948	—Group Captain J. Alexander
2 May 1949	—Group Captain C.T. Hannah

27 August 1951	—Group Captain W.H. Garing
November 1951	—Wing Commander G.C. Hartnell
14 July 1953	—Group Captain D.W. Colquhoun
9 July 1954	—Group Captain D.W. Kingwell
March 1959	—Air Commodore W.N. Gibson
May 1963	—Air Commodore W.N. Garrison
October 1964	—Air Commodore G.H. Steege
April 1967	—Air Commodore D.W. Kingwell
25 June 1971	—Air Commodore C.H. Spurgeon
14 February 1975	—Air Commodore S.D. Evans
22 April 1977	—Air Commodore R.F. Drury
November 1980	—Air Commodore P.H. Coy
October 1982	—Group Captain F.F. Freeman
9 January 1984	—Group Captain G.A. Perske
13 December 1987	—Group Captain R.F. Lowery
October 1988	—Group Captain C.J. Stjernqvist
October 1991	—Group Captain A.W. Corlas

# RAAF BASE BUTTERWORTH

*Pro Cura Pacis Armor (I Am Armed for the Defence of Peace)*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1930s           | —developed by Royal Air Force                                 |
| 1941            | —Australian squadrons deploy to Butterworth                   |
| 1955            | —2 Airfield Construction Squadron commenced upgrading of base |
| 15 January 1958 | —Air Base Butterworth headquarters raised at Amberley, Qld    |
| 1958            | —78 Wing deployed to Butterworth                              |
| 30 June 1988    | —Base Squadron Butterworth disbanded                          |
| 1 July 1988     | —RAAF Support Unit Butterworth formed                         |

## NARRATIVE

Butterworth (in Malaysia) was developed by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the 1930s on a 'care and maintenance' basis and was totally unprepared for the conflict of World War II that suddenly engulfed it. Japanese bombers and fighters made a devastating attack on the Base and many of the RAF and RAAF aircraft were destroyed on the ground or in the air; the Base was severely damaged by fire and delayed action bombs. Within weeks the Malay Peninsula had been overrun by the Japanese Army and Butterworth, in common with all other military bases in the area, was occupied for the remainder of the War. During their occupation the Japanese built an east-west runway which is now used as a hardstanding for visiting aircraft.

With the Japanese surrender in 1945, the RAF returned. Butterworth was used as a staging and refuelling post for aircraft flying between

Singapore and Ceylon. In this context the strategic importance of the Base was well recognised and in January 1950 the RAF stepped up its deployment and established the Base as a link with other Far East bases in Singapore. In addition, a staging base and marine craft section were developed at Glugor (on nearby Penang Island) for the Sunderland flying boats that called regularly.

At the outbreak of operations against the communist terrorists in 1950, 33 Squadron RAF (equipped initially with Tempests and later with de Havilland Hornets) was based at Butterworth. That squadron made daily bombing and rocket strikes against the terrorists. The attacks continued during 1952, 1953 and 1954 aided by detachments of various RAF squadrons flying Brigand, Vampire and Sunderland aircraft. RAAF Lincoln bombers were also deployed to Butterworth to assist in these operations.

In 1955 a new chapter in Butterworth's history began. The RAAF's 2 Airfield Construction Squadron (ACS) moved in to commence a refurbishment program on the Base. For two and a half years the men of 2ACS worked with their heavy equipment in trying conditions to reconstruct the airfield proper at a cost of A\$10 million. Included was a 9000-ft north-south runway with 800-ft hardened overruns at each end.

Throughout 1955 and early 1956, Canberra jet bombers from RAF Bomber Command were detached to Butterworth and carried out many bombing attacks against the communist terrorists.

RAAF Air Base Butterworth was formed at RAAF Base Amberley on 15 January 1958 to provide all base services and support for all units at Butterworth—barracks, catering, transport, personnel administration, and so on. At this time, in recognition of the part played by the RAAF in Malaya and in acknowledgment of the even greater task which the RAAF was accepting in this area, the Base was re-named 'RAAF Base Butterworth'. The official handover ceremony was performed on 30 June 1958 by Wing Commander R.G. Churcher, DSO, MVO, DFC, (RAF) to Air Commodore K.R.J. Parsons, DSO, DFC, AFC, (RAAF) Officer Commanding RAAF Base Butterworth.

On 1 July 1958, 2 Squadron (Canberra bombers) took over from the Lincolns and the RAAF operated for the first time in Malaya from the RAF base at Butterworth.

In 1958-59, as part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, the RAAF's 78 Fighter Wing, comprising two Sabre fighter squadrons (3 and 77 Squadrons from Williamtown, New South Wales) and one Canberra

bomber squadron (2 Squadron from Amberley, Queensland) flew in. These aircraft were supported by a maintenance squadron, a mobile control and reporting unit and a base squadron.

In the years succeeding 1958, the terrorist threat declined and on 31 July 1960 the Malayan Emergency was declared officially ended. The RAAF, however, remained in Malaya as part of the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve. 2 Squadron's Canberras were deployed to South Vietnam in 1967. In the same year 3 Squadron was replaced by 75 Squadron equipped with new Mirage fighter aircraft. 3 Squadron returned to Butterworth a year later, also equipped with new Mirage fighter aircraft. At this time 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit returned to Australia.

With the departure of British forces from the Far East, ownership of Butterworth Air Base was formally transferred from the RAF to the Royal Malaysia Air Force on 31 March 1970, under the 1955 Dudley Arrangements covering the return of British military bases, with the RAAF continuing to operate as a joint user. The Base was then known as Air Base Butterworth and was under the control of Headquarters Operational Command (Penrith, New South Wales).

During the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s there were about 2000 Australian and RAF personnel stationed at Butterworth, including approximately 200 Australian Army personnel who manned the light anti-aircraft battery. Between 1965 and 1983, the RAAF at Butterworth had a peak strength of approximately 1200 RAAF servicemen (totalling approximately 6000 with dependants). The RAAF members assimilated into the local community and participated in various sports. There were approximately 80 sporting clubs on the Base covering everything from cricket to jujitsu.

75 Squadron returned to Australia on 12 August 1983. 79 Squadron was reformed on 31 March 1986, when 3 Squadron returned to Australia. Subsequently, 478 Maintenance Squadron disbanded on 31 October 1983 and on 1 July 1987 4 RAAF Hospital was disbanded. The disbandment of these units saw a greatly reduced presence of the RAAF in Butterworth and the end of an era.

On 30 June 1988, Headquarters RAAF Butterworth, 79 Squadron and Base Squadron RAAF Butterworth disbanded. RAAF Support Unit Butterworth formed on 1 July 1988 and is still located at Butterworth, along with a P3-C Orion detachment from RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

### **RAAF Butterworth**

June 1958	—Air Commodore K.R.J. Parsons
February 1960	—Air Commodore G.C. Hartnell
January 1962	—Air Commodore N. Ford
October 1964	—Air Commodore W.E. Townsend
January 1967	—Air Commodore N. Ford
May 1967	—Air Commodore G.H. Steege
May 1969	—Air Commodore R.T. Susans
November 1970	—Air Commodore I.S. Parker
November 1972	—Air Commodore P.F. Raw
January 1976	—Air Commodore R.E. Trebilco
December 1977	—Air Commodore J.A. Jacobs
December 1979	—Air Commodore B.J. Reynolds
January 1984	—Air Commodore R.W. Bradford
December 1986	—Group Captain B.D. O'Loghlin
June 1988	—Wing Commander J.H. Graham

### **RAAF Support Unit Butterworth**

July 1988	—Wing Commander J.H. Graham
December 1988	—Wing Commander G.P. O'Brien
January 1991	—Wing Commander J.R. Farquhar



# RAAF BASE DARWIN

*Vigilant and Ready*



## CHRONOLOGY

1 June 1940	—formed as RAAF Station Darwin
22 August 1942	—re-named Operational Base Darwin
30 October 1942	—re-named 52 Operational Base Darwin
24 December 1942	—re-named 52 Operational Base Unit, Darwin
1 August 1944	—re-named RAAF Station Darwin
20 June 1952	—RAAF Station Darwin disbanded
8 July 1952	—Base Squadron Darwin formed
28 July 1983	—re-named RAAF Base Darwin

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Station Darwin was formed on 1 June 1940. Almost 3000 acres of woodland had been approved for purchase in December 1937. The Base was still under construction when the first RAAF element, 12 Squadron, arrived in 1939. The aircraft were housed in a Guinea Airways hangar on the civil aerodrome because the RAAF facilities were not yet complete. As one of the pilots put it, the planned move had been 'accelerated almost a month on account of the show on in Europe'.

Operations at Darwin were entirely the province of 12 Squadron until the formation of station headquarters in June 1940 under Wing Commander C. Eaton. The squadron then split up, some of the officers moving to headquarters, others remaining on 12 Squadron's strength and still others to a new squadron, 13. Station headquarters carried out its work from a so-called temporary hutted camp until August 1940, when it



moved into the newly erected administration building at the RAAF aerodrome. The war alert saw both 12 and 13 Squadrons engaged in patrols over the sea, the latter flying Lockheed Hudsons.

A memorable event in July 1940 was a visit by the Minister for Air, the Honourable J.V. Fairbairn. The Minister, piloting his own Percival Q6, was surprised and delighted to be intercepted by a flight of Wirraways from 12 Squadron. Mr Fairbairn's energy and optimism left a lasting impression on all concerned and the Minister subsequently indicated his appreciation of the 'keenness and efficiency of all ranks' at Darwin, particularly in view of the unfavourable conditions in which personnel had been working.

The Pacific war began in the early hours of 7 December 1941; Singapore fell on 15 February 1942 and Darwin suffered its first air raid four days later. Over 100 enemy aircraft made two separate attacks which destroyed 23 Allied aircraft, sank eight ships and killed 255 people. RAAF casualties numbered seven dead and five injured. Japanese raids continued until November 1943, 64 being logged in total. Damage to buildings and station installations was extensive but, for the most part, casualties were remarkably light.

The Air Force had not been idle in the weeks following the outbreak of the Pacific war. RAAF Station Darwin came under the aegis of the Senior Air Staff Officer, North-Western Area, on 15 January 1942. Satellite airfields were established in Batchelor, Millingimbi, Livingstone, Strauss, Fenton, Long, Gove, Coomalie, Hughes and Groote Eylandt. Local air defence was provided by the USAAF 49th Fighter Group, flying P-40 Kittyhawks. Darwin hit back at the enemy with Hudsons from 12 and 13 Squadrons bombing targets in Dili, Koepang and Ambon, as well as dropping supplies to guerillas in Timor.

By January 1943 Darwin and the surrounding area boasted a formidable array of combat aircraft including Beaufighters from 31 Squadron, Boomerangs from 83 Squadron, Kittyhawks from 76 and 77 Squadrons, Mitchells from 18 (Netherlands East Indies) Squadron and Liberators from 319 Squadron (USAAF). These were soon joined by three squadrons of Spitfires, 54 (RAF), 452 and 457. Amongst the Spitfire pilots was Australia's top-scoring ace, 'Killer' Caldwell, who celebrated his arrival by shooting down two Japanese planes in his first sortie in March. The Allied bombers harassed positions in New Guinea, New Britain and Timor, whilst the fighters were generally able to get the better of incoming raiders. On 20 June the Spitfires recorded one of their most

successful actions above Darwin, 14 enemy planes being downed for the loss of two of their own number. Japanese attacks became less and less frequent as the year progressed.

By 1944 aircraft from Darwin and the surrounding airfields maintained operations across an area ranging from Micronesia to Malaya. Catalinas from 43 Squadron joined 11 and 20 Squadrons mine laying around Borneo and the Carolines, while Liberators from 21, 23 and 24 Squadrons carried out attacks on enemy shipping. The following year saw the Liberators attacking Japanese-held airfields in Java and the Catalinas operating as far north as China and Hong Kong.

With the cessation of hostilities in August 1945, Darwin became a port of call for parties travelling to and from territories formerly occupied by the Japanese. The Base has served as a major transit centre ever since. In the second quarter of 1967 a detachment of three Hercules flew 2400 soldiers between Darwin and Vung Tau in South Vietnam. In 1975 aircraft based at Darwin were again in action in Timor, when Caribous from 35 Squadron ferried refugees out of the region. Although severely damaged by Cyclone 'Tracy', the Base resumed limited operations in time to handle the influx of relief aircraft.

Darwin has been the site of numerous peacetime exercises. 'Pitch Black '83' brought together Mirages from Williamtown, F-111s and Chinooks from Amberley and Hercules from Richmond, as well as B-52s and KC-135 tankers from the USAF. The subsequent open day attracted a crowd of 25 000. The Base has always been close to the local population and to non-military flying. At various times the RAAF aerodrome, its hangars and even the control tower have been occupied by the Department of Civil Aviation.

The last decade has seen strike aircraft permanently based in the north once again. 75 Squadron re-located to Darwin in 1983 following service at Butterworth, Malaysia. In 1988 it moved to Tindal and re-equipped with F/A-18 Hornets. Currently Darwin's inventory includes a detachment of 35 Squadron flying Caribou tactical transports. It is also home to 13 Squadron, now designated 'City of Darwin', which began its operational life at the Base a half a century before.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 June 1940	—Wing Commander C. Eaton
7 October 1941	—Group Captain F.R.W. Scherger

3 February 1942	—Wing Commander S.deB. Griffith
15 April 1942	—Squadron Leader A.D. Swan
6 October 1942	—Squadron Leader E.G. McMurtrie
15 January 1943	—Flight Lieutenant W.R. Armstrong
11 May 1943	—Squadron Leader S.S. Evans
25 February 1944	—Squadron Leader W.H. Shehan
1 August 1944	—Wing Commander J.P. Ryan
26 September 1945	—Wing Commander A.S. Hayes
1 November 1945	—Wing Commander K.H. Springbelt
22 February 1947	—Wing Commander H.F. Boston
22 April 1948	—Wing Commander T.S. Ingledew
6 September 1948	—Wing Commander I.F. Rose
28 September 1950	—Wing Commander A.C. McCormack
12 September 1952	—Wing Commander G.A. Cooper
14 December 1953	—Wing Commander P.J. McMahon
19 June 1954	—Squadron Leader K.R. Rodd
30 May 1956	—Squadron Leader M.H. Payne
28 April 1958	—Squadron Leader H.V. Shearn
18 January 1960	—Wing Commander S. Bradford
15 January 1962	—Wing Commander C.H.D. Browne
6 March 1964	—Squadron Leader C.P. Gundelack
7 April 1964	—Wing Commander W.O.K. Hewett
1 January 1967	—Wing Commander V.D. Guthrie
30 August 1968	—Wing Commander W.C. Keritz
18 December 1970	—Wing Commander K.J. Munday
3 January 1973	—Wing Commander W.D.J. Monaghan
January 1975	—Wing Commander D.H. Porter
December 1976	—Wing Commander E.D. Plenty
December 1978	—Wing Commander A.J. Simmonds
7 January 1981	—Group Captain D.A. Robertson
25 January 1984	—Group Captain I.H. Whisker
8 August 1986	—Group Captain D.J. Leach
9 January 1988	—Wing Commander R.J. Seager
January 1991	—Wing Commander B.W. Hudson
10 August 1992	—Group Captain M. Cottrell

# RAAF BASE EAST SALE

*Always Ready*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| January 1942   | —East Sale approved as site for 1 Operational Training Unit |
| 22 April 1943  | —1 Operational Training Unit transferred to East Sale       |
| 1 January 1946 | —became RAAF Base East Sale                                 |

## NARRATIVE

Following the decision of the War Cabinet in January 1942 to locate 1 Operational Training Unit at a new base at East Sale, the Minister for Air, Arthur Drakeford, approved the acquisition of the site of 1186 acres (482 ha) on 29 March 1942.

From the outset, East Sale was designed as a permanent station. The accommodation huts, unlike at other stations, resembled suburban homes with red tile roofs and weatherboard sides. However, they were unlined with no ceilings or gutters and were extremely cold in winter.

The initial runways consisted of an east-west runway of 7000 feet (2128 m) and a north-east – south-west runway of 5000 feet (1520 m).

1 Operational Training Unit, which had been at West Sale prior to moving to Bairnsdale, returned to East Sale when the new base opened on 22 April 1943, under the command of Wing Commander C.D. Candy.

At various times accommodation was stretched to the limit—originally designed for 1800 personnel, the Base accommodated up to 2763.

In June 1945 an additional 650 acres (263 ha) were purchased at the eastern end of the aerodrome enabling expansion to take place.

With the end of hostilities, all flying training ceased on 27 September 1945 with 1 Operational Training Unit being disbanded on 31 December.

On 1 January 1946 the Base became RAAF East Sale. By January 1946 only 882 personnel and 17 aircraft remained on strength, but by March a crew conversion unit, an air armaments school and the School of Air Navigation had been established at East Sale and aircraft strength rose to 41. However, station strength was only 177 in November 1946.

The Crew Conversion Unit was disbanded in August 1946 but the Central Flying School was moved to East Sale on 1 December 1946.

The new 7000 yard (6398 m) east-west runway, constructed by the Country Roads Board, was opened on 17 March 1950. Construction then commenced on an additional runway of 8000 yards (7312 m) to cater for future bomber, general reconnaissance and jet aircraft.

The first National Service trainees arrived at the station on 30 July 1951, closely followed on 15 August by members of the WRAAF.

Permanent lighting for the airfield was installed in 1956 and concrete hardstanding areas were laid in 1957, making the airfield suitable for use by jet aircraft.

2 Airfield Construction Squadron re-located to East Sale in September 1958. This unit was primarily responsible for the lengthening and improvements to the runways and taxiways.

From its inception, members of the Base have played an active part in community affairs in the Sale area. In recognition of this, the City of Sale granted Freedom of Entry to the City on 22 November 1959. This was the first RAAF base to be so honoured.

1978 was the start of a development scheme to update buildings and accommodation and this extended into the 1990s. The new School of Air Traffic Control was completed in October 1987, followed by the new School of Photography in December 1988 and the new School of Air Navigation in May 1990.

The Base won the Military Base Section of 'Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns' competition in 1988.

In the words of a former Commanding Officer, Air Commodore D.W. Kingwell:

Today, East Sale is one of the most modern bases and one to be justifiably proud of its tradition and achievements. A massive rebuilding program has seen the demise of most of the old wartime huts with the best of modern facilities available. It is also the home of the then RAAF's premier aerobatic team, the 'Roulettes', as well as about 850 service and civilian staff.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

April 1943	—Wing Commander C.D. Candy
June 1943	—Wing Commander K.S. Hennock
July 1943	—Wing Commander J.P. Ryland
August 1943	—Group Captain W.H. Garing
March 1944	—Wing Commander J.P. Ryland
December 1944	—Wing Commander G.D. Nicholl
April 1945	—Group Captain G.C. Hartnell
August 1945	—Group Captain K.R.J. Parsons
February 1946	—Group Captain D.W. Kingwell
March 1948	—Group Captain A.D. Charlton
March 1951	—Wing Commander W.E. Townsend
June 1953	—Group Captain W.N. Gibson
February 1955	—Group Captain K.R.J. Parsons
May 1958	—Group Captain E.J. Fyfe
February 1961	—Group Captain A.D. Henderson
February 1963	—Group Captain W.N. Lampe
December 1964	—Group Captain J.G. Cornish
March 1966	—Wing Commander J.H.D. Blackwell
January 1968	—Group Captain A.R. Hodge
August 1970	—Group Captain J.S. Wilson
January 1973	—Group Captain H.K. Parker
January 1974	—Group Captain K.M. Staib
January 1976	—Group Captain H.J. Hurley
January 1978	—Group Captain T.C. Owen
July 1979	—Group Captain R.E. Gillard
January 1981	—Group Captain G. Dyke
July 1983	—Group Captain A.J. Pappin
July 1986	—Group Captain J.D.M. Edwards
August 1987	—Group Captain D.J.S. Riding
December 1990	—Group Captain P.J. McDermott
January 1993	—Group Captain J.T. Day

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lax, M. (ed.), *Always Ready*, RAAF Base East Sale, 1993.

# RAAF BASE EDINBURGH

*Always on Guard*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 17 January 1955 | —headquarters formed                                       |
| February 1988   | —Headquarters Edinburgh became Base Support Wing Edinburgh |
| 1 July 1994     | —re-named 304 Air Base Wing                                |

## NARRATIVE

Headquarters RAAF Edinburgh was formed on 17 January 1955, with an establishment of seven officers and eight airmen.

On 23 June 1955 the Royal Air Force Courier Service (Hastings aircraft) moved from Mallala to Edinburgh, and on 28 October the first WRAAF personnel arrived on posting from Mallala.

The new Sergeants' Mess was opened on 7 September 1956 while 29 September 1956 saw the first official function in the Officers' Mess.

On 12 July 1958, 1 Squadron arrived from Pearce en route to Laverton (Operation 'Welcome Home') after participating in the Malay Peninsula Campaign. A fatal crash occurred at Crouch's Hill, South Australia, on 21 October 1958, of a Meteor Mk 7 aircraft piloted by Pilot Officer A.J.C. Bierman.

The new Airmen's Recreation Centre was officially opened by Air Commodore Garing on 16 June 1961.

Flight Lieutenant Cook, Headquarters Edinburgh, died when Dakota A65-106 crashed shortly after take-off from Pearce on 1 August 1961.

Headquarters of 15 Joint Services Trials Unit was formed at Edinburgh on 1 September 1961.



Air Commodore Garing unveiled a plaque at West Beach Airport in memory of 10 and 461 Squadrons on 15 April 1962.

16 Joint Trials Unit (British Army) disbanded at Weapons Research Establishment, Salisbury, on 14 December 1964 and on 14 May 1965, 4 Joint Services Trials Unit disbanded at Edinburgh. Maintenance Squadron Edinburgh disbanded on 1 June 1965 after amalgamation with 2 Air Trials Unit. The WRAAF Flight moved from Point Cook to Edinburgh on 15 July 1965 under the control of 1 Recruit Training Unit. Open days at Edinburgh proved very popular with 25 000 people attending one on 17 February 1965 and 130 000 on 11 September 1966.

Air Commodore Ford, on behalf of the Department of Air, officially accepted RAAF Edinburgh from the Director, Weapons Research Establishment, acting on behalf of the Department of Supply, on 1 February 1968. 13 May 1968 saw the arrival of the first of three P-3B Orion aircraft at 11 Squadron, with 11 Squadron completing its move to Edinburgh in June 1968. His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, visited RAAF Edinburgh on 24 March 1971 and reviewed a parade of the Queen's Colour and 11 Squadron Standard.

An open day and flying display was held on 17 April 1971 at which 90 000 to 100 000 people attended. A formation parade was held on 8 October 1971 and the traditional dark blue uniform was 'marched out of service'. An Anniversary Open Day and flying display were conducted on 26 March 1972 before a crowd of 60 000 people.

The Recruits' Recreation Centre was opened on 8 October 1974.

An open day/flying display for the 54th Anniversary of the RAAF was held on 6 April 1975—100 000 people visited.

A detachment of Aircraft Research and Development Unit (Detachment 'B') was raised at Edinburgh on 15 November 1976. The unit completed its move from Laverton during February 1977.

A plaque was presented to the Officers' Mess on 17 November 1976 depicting the original name of the base as 'Mirrabooka', an Aboriginal name meaning 'stinking swamp'—this was changed to 'Edinburgh'.

92 Wing was formed at Edinburgh on 1 July 1977 and comprised 10 and 11 Squadrons, Maritime Analysis and Training Squadron and 492 Maintenance Squadron. The first P-3C Orion aircraft arrived on 26 May 1978.

Air Marshal N.P. McNamara, Chief of the Air Staff, officially opened the new entrance to the Base on 1 February 1980 and sealed a time capsule to be opened in 2030.



The Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowen, presented 11 Squadron with the Duke of Gloucester Cup on 20 November 1980.

Approximately 250 Edinburgh personnel were involved in fighting bushfires between 16 and 18 February 1983.

The last P-3C modified with the AQS901 Sonics Processor was accepted on 15 November 1986.

In February 1988, the Force Element Groups came into being. Headquarters Edinburgh became Base Support Wing Edinburgh and answered to the Commander, Headquarters Maritime Patrol Group. In July 1992, Base Support Wing and Headquarters Maritime Patrol Group became separate entities and Base Support Wing answered direct to the Air Commander Australia. On 1 July 1994, Base Support Wing Edinburgh became 304 Air Base Wing.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

17 January 1955	—Group Captain P. Jeffrey
23 April 1956	—Wing Commander D.R. Cuming
14 April 1960	—Air Commodore W.H. Garing
18 December 1964	—Air Commodore J. Dowling
15 July 1966	—Air Commodore N. Ford
13 June 1969	—Air Commodore G.H. Steege
27 July 1970	—Air Commodore E.T. Pickerd
4 December 1972	—Air Commodore S.W. Dallywater
13 January 1975	—Air Commodore J.C. Thorp
28 February 1977	—Air Commodore B.J. Connaughton
18 December 1978	—Air Commodore L.R. Klaffer
16 January 1981	—Air Commodore R.N. Law
20 November 1981	—Air Commodore J.A. Paule
20 January 1986	—Air Commodore T.W. O'Brien

### **Base Support Wing Edinburgh**

2 February 1987	—Group Captain K.J. Bricknell
15 December 1987	—Group Captain K.R. Blakers
26 October 1988	—Wing Commander J.B. Playford
3 January 1989	—Group Captain A.W. Gilbert
13 January 1992	—Group Captain G.W. Kirk

### **304 Air Base Wing**

1 July 1994	—Group Captain G.W. Kirk
-------------	--------------------------

# RAAF BASE FAIRBAIRN

*Uphold and Endure*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 April 1940    | —formed at Canberra as RAAF Station Canberra                            |
| 31 May 1952     | —Headquarters RAAF Station Canberra ceased to function                  |
| 1 June 1952     | —reformed as Headquarters RAAF Canberra                                 |
| 19 March 1962   | —re-named Headquarters RAAF Fairbairn                                   |
| 30 January 1991 | —ceased to function and functions taken over by Base Squadron Fairbairn |

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Station Canberra was officially established on 1 April 1940 under the temporary command of Squadron Leader P.G. Heffernan. Prior to the station's establishment, 8 Squadron, which was formed on 11 September 1939, was based at Canberra. It was from this squadron that personnel were posted to form RAAF Station Canberra.

The first involvement of the RAAF with Canberra dates back to 1927, when a temporary camp was established near the site of the present aerodrome at the time of the official opening of Federal Parliament.

In the early days of the station, all sleeping accommodation and messing facilities were in tents. During the early 1940s, the station was a base for anti-submarine patrols and a training school for Army co-operation personnel. During the period April 1942–December 1943, the station was also home to three squadrons of the Netherlands East Indies

Air Force.

Over the years, the station has been involved with many official functions, ceremonies, guards of honour for members of Parliament, the Royal family, royalty from other countries, and foreign officials. On 11 November 1941 the Commanding Officer and a detachment attended the official opening ceremony of the Australian War Memorial.

On 5 August 1944 the station received a report from Army security section that 500 Japanese prisoners had escaped from the Cowra prisoner of war camp, and aircraft were sent to reconnoitre the country around Cowra.

On 17 October 1945 the Superfortress *Waltzing Matilda* landed and was displayed. This aircraft made many raids over Tokyo and was loaned to the Commonwealth Government for promotion of the Fourth Victory Loan. On 2 February 1946 the first Australian-built Wirraway arrived, in addition to Lancaster G *for George* (which had made approximately 100 raids over Germany), a Spitfire and a Hampden for storage, waiting transfer to the Australian War Memorial.

On 31 May 1952 Headquarters RAAF Station Canberra ceased to function and on the following day Headquarters RAAF Canberra was formed. On 19 March 1962 the name of Headquarters RAAF Canberra was changed to Headquarters RAAF Fairbairn, in honour of Mr J.N. Fairbairn, who was Minister for Air when he died in an air crash at Canberra on 13 August 1940.

On 30 January 1991 Headquarters RAAF Fairbairn was closed and the functions were taken over by Base Squadron Fairbairn which is still in operation. At present Fairbairn is the home to the Air Power Studies Centre, RAAF Staff College, Base Squadron, 28 Squadron, 34 Squadron and the Australian Defence Force Helicopter School.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 May 1940	—Squadron Leader P.G. Heffernan
4 August 1940	—Flight Lieutenant L.W. Law
23 September 1940	—Wing Commander W.G. Compagnoni
25 September 1941	—Squadron Leader S.deB. Griffith
28 January 1942	—Wing Commander I.D. McLaughlin
27 May 1942	—Wing Commander J.N.T. Stephenson
22 March 1943	—Wing Commander B.R. Pelly
20 May 1943	—Wing Commander R.H. Moran
24 December 1943	—Wing Commander J.R. Paget

8 November 1944	—Wing Commander I.L. Campbell
27 July 1945	—Wing Commander G. Bills-Thompson
21 October 1945	—Wing Commander J.P. Costello
25 February 1949	—Wing Commander D.L.G. Douglas
25 March 1952	—Wing Commander K.S. Hennock
11 January 1955	—Group Captain A.D. Garrison
14 May 1957	—Group Captain G.H. Steege
19 January 1959	—Group Captain W.L. Brill
1 December 1959	—Wing Commander D.E. Mosely
August 1962	—Group Captain W.K. Bolitho
31 November 1964	—Group Captain A.D. Garrison
August 1967	—Group Captain I.S. Parker
December 1968	—Group Captain C.J. Melchert
10 December 1971	—Group Captain C.G. Thomas
22 December 1975	—Group Captain I.B. Gration
4 January 1977	—Group Captain B.J. Reynolds
12 June 1978	—Group Captain P.J. Reed
9 March 1979	—Group Captain D.L. Dunstan
16 February 1981	—Group Captain M.A. Turnbull
4 February 1982	—Group Captain S.C. Mitchell
18 July 1983	—Group Captain D.W. Owens
23 December 1985	—Group Captain G.J.J. Beck
8 December 1986	—Group Captain E.J. Walker
12 September 1988	—Group Captain N.J. Montgomery
20 February 1989	—Group Captain J.T. Huet

# RAAF BASE LAVERTON

*To Strengthen*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 1 March 1926  | —1 Aircraft Depot moved from Point Cook to Laverton                    |
| 20 April 1936 | —Station Headquarters formed as a separate unit at Laverton            |
| 31 May 1952   | —RAAF Station Laverton disbanded and Headquarters RAAF Laverton formed |
| 2 June 1952   | —Base Squadron Laverton formed   |
| 31 March 1989 | —RAAF Bases Point Cook and Laverton amalgamated as RAAF Williams       |

## NARRATIVE

Point Cook was the only base in Victoria until 1925, when Laverton was opened to support the increased workload in flying and maintenance commitments. The Air Board realised that the expansion of the RAAF was largely dependent on the provision and distribution of equipment. The existing warehouses and workshops at Point Cook were inadequate to service the expanding numbers of aircraft requiring accommodation there. The Air Board had also discovered the speed with which machinery stored in unsealed canvas hangars at Point Cook was deteriorating, due to the close proximity to sea water. This made Point Cook itself an inappropriate site for the growing support squadron.

A 160-acre site seven kilometres north of Point Cook, was deemed the most practical solution. This land, which had been acquired in 1921 for a total cost of £3528 (\$7056), was located between (Old) Geelong Road and

the railway line in the Werribee Shire, was easily accessible from the city Headquarters, and had the potential to house an aircraft landing strip. It was chosen for the equipment services station because it adjoined the railway line, the land was reasonably flat and items could be transferred by road to Point Cook as required. Point Cook was by this time functioning as an efficient and effective pilot training centre, and support for crews, staff and aircraft had to be located nearby.

As a result of the Air Board's decision to establish a unit at Laverton, 1 Aircraft Depot was transferred from Point Cook. The move was completed on 1 March 1926, and the new depot consisted of one large hangar which included the administration block. The estimated cost of establishing the depot at Laverton in 1923 was £300 000 (\$600 000).

In 1928, Laverton became home to 1 Squadron, which had been reformed at Point Cook three years earlier. Laverton was also the testing ground for several RAAF aircraft, the Wapiti, the Hawker Demon and the Bristol Bulldog amongst them.

With war looming, activity at Laverton was stepped up and during World War II the Base was the birthplace of some of the squadrons which were to serve later with distinction in the Pacific theatre. Laverton also saw the formation of a paratroop training unit, an equipment training school and 150 Radio Direction Finding Unit in May 1943. Many of the units formed moved north, but Laverton's prime function, that of an aircraft depot, continued throughout the War.

The Aircraft Research and Development Unit moved to Laverton from Point Cook on 25 October 1948. 6 RAAF Hospital moved to Laverton in 1949; the School of Radio moved from Ballarat to Laverton in 1961 to join the radio apprentice school already located there.

In June 1946, Laverton stepped proudly into the jet era when a Gloster Meteor made its first flight. Shortly after, in May 1947, the first Vampire jet aircraft assembled at 1 Aircraft Depot was flown for the first time in Australia. The first Canberra aircraft arrived from the United Kingdom in August 1951, and later the first Australian-built Canberra aircraft arrived for delivery to 1AD in July 1953. With a name change in May 1952 to Headquarters RAAF Laverton, the Base continued to be the starting point for several aircraft types introduced to the Air Force. The first Australian-built Sabre fighter aircraft arrived in September 1953 and the aircraft were later commissioned into the RAAF at Laverton in August the following year. September 1955 saw the first Australian-built Winjeel arrive at Laverton Base.

During the first 40 years of its operation, Laverton's IAD was responsible for the overhaul and maintenance of 42 aircraft types. In 1961, a change in Defence policy resulted in the closing down of the aircraft repair section, although aircraft engines continued to be overhauled at the depot until 1968.

On 6 March 1954, the Base was honoured by a visit from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This, an earlier visit in September 1934 by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester to the then fledgling Laverton Base, and a further visit by Lord and Lady Louis Mountbatten in 1946, are the recorded visits by royalty to the Base in its history to date.

The Base has hosted visitors from many other countries, however. During the 1960s, the United States Air Force 57 Weather Reconnaissance Squadron occupied several buildings at Laverton. For many decades, too, the Base has accommodated visitors from neighbouring countries such as Papua New Guinea (Niugini), Pakistan, Malaysia and New Zealand, as they have either been studying or tutoring at the Defence International Training Centre/ADF Language School, or on exchange to the flying or training squadrons. Today, the messes at Laverton Base permanently accommodate Army, Navy, Air Force and transient personnel.

Laverton today comes under the auspice of 'RAAF Williams', a change made in March 1989 which saw Point Cook and Laverton amalgamated. As a result, several aspects of support which had been duplicated by the two bases were able to be consolidated. The commercialisation of the catering functions of Base Squadron Williams has been one of the most noticeable changes to the face of RAAF in Melbourne.

The future of RAAF Williams, Laverton Base, is certain to include an increase in prominence in the southern Victorian region. Already a naval reserve unit and air cadet unit operate from the Base. Laverton will be the only functional RAAF base to remain in Melbourne (as RAAF Williams). While several areas within the Base's perimeter are under investigation for sale or lease (including the airfield and some warehouses), the units housed there are scheduled to share the Base with Headquarters Logistics Command, which is planned to move from the city. This will mean an influx of 900 personnel—civilian and military. Many of these will require new married quarters or single living-in accommodation, and the prospect of expanding the current facilities to carry the impact of the increased Base population is valid.



# COMMANDING OFFICERS

## 1 Aircraft Depot

1 March 1926	—Squadron Leader P.A. McBain
18 January 1929	—Squadron Leader J.R. Bell
8 April 1929	—Wing Commander W.H. Anderson
26 August 1929	—Wing Commander A.T. Cole
23 January 1933	—Wing Commander F.H. McNamara

## RAAF Station Laverton

20 April 1936	—Group Captain F.H. McNamara
30 October 1936	—Group Captain H.N. Wrigley
14 February 1939	—Group Captain A.T. Cole
4 December 1939	—Group Captain F.W.F. Lukis
26 May 1941	—Wing Commander A.L. Walters
2 July 1942	—Wing Commander I.D. McLachlan
21 October 1942	—Group Captain J.R. Fleming
30 June 1943	—Group Captain D. McLean
11 September 1944	—Group Captain A.G. Carr
20 January 1945	—Group Captain H.T. Hammond
28 September 1945	—Group Captain R.F.M. Green
1 April 1946	—Group Captain C.W. Pearce
4 November 1946	—Group Captain C.McK. Henry
30 January 1950	—Wing Commander A.E.L. Davies

## Headquarters RAAF Laverton

2 June 1952	—Wing Commander A.E.L. Davies
10 June 1952	—Group Captain J.R. Fleming
25 July 1955	—Group Captain A.G. Carr
29 January 1957	—Group Captain J.F. Lush
25 January 1960	—Group Captain D.L.G. Douglas
21 June 1961	—Group Captain A.G. Pither
29 January 1963	—Group Captain P.A. Parker
1 December 1964	—Group Captain L.H. Williamson
1 May 1965	—Group Captain N.T. Quinn
14 July 1966	—Group Captain H.C. Plenty
1 March 1971	—Group Captain J.D. Espie
5 November 1971	—Group Captain J.W. Newham
December 1972	—Group Captain J.A. Whitehead
January 1973	—Group Captain T.L. Bourke



30 July 1975	—Group Captain R.N. Law
May 1978	—Wing Commander H.R. Thomas
July 1978	—Group Captain MacNeil
January 1980	—Group Captain H.J. Roser
July 1982	—Group Captain C.M. Roff
November 1984	—Group Captain J.G. Gazelle
July 1987	—Group Captain R.N. Moore
January 1988	—Group Captain M.J. Rawlinson
<b>RAAF Williams</b>	
31 March 1989	—Group Captain F.E. Burt
April 1991	—Group Captain I.H. Ashbrooke
June 1992	—Group Captain D.C. Stevens

# RAAF BASE PEARCE

*Direction*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 15 October 1935 | —construction commenced                                       |
| 10 March 1938   | —23 Squadron moved to Pearce                                  |
| 1952            | —re-named RAAF Base Pearce                                    |
| 1956            | —Headquarters RAAF Pearce established                         |
| 1968            | —satellite airfield at Gin Gin established                    |
| 1993            | —Republic of Singapore Air Force commenced training of pilots |

## NARRATIVE

In 1928, Air Marshal Sir John Salmond recommended to the Australian Government that an air station should be set up near Perth to enhance the defence capabilities of the vast State of Western Australia. He chose 670 acres of relatively flat land at Bullsbrook, 27 miles north-east of Perth. The RAAF base was named Pearce, to commemorate the former Western Australian senator and Minister of Defence, Sir George Pearce.

Construction commenced on 15 October 1935 and 23 (City of Perth) Squadron moved from Laverton to Perth on 10 March 1938. On 1 January 1939, it was re-named 25 (City of Perth) Squadron. Another unit, 14 Squadron, was formed at Pearce on 6 February 1939 as a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron, equipped with Hudson aircraft. The unit flew security, anti-submarine and convoy patrols, and naval co-operation. 14 Squadron was disbanded on 10 December 1945. Pearce continued as an operational base until 1 June 1952. During this time it was the home of such operational squadrons as 85 Squadron, which

operated 20 Spitfires. 85 Squadron arrived at Pearce from Guildford on 16 May 1945 and the training programs for the pilots included local flying, aerobatics, strafing Lancelin Island, battle climbs, formation and low flying. The last entry in the Unit History Record of 85 Squadron was on 31 October 1945, and the remaining 19 Spitfires moved to Oakey, Queensland, for storage. 35 (Transport) Squadron, was formed at Pearce on 11 February 1942, and operated Fox Moths and DH-84 Dragons until it moved to Maylands on 6 April 1942. 77 Squadron operated Kittyhawk aircraft until it was moved to Guildford on 16 March 1942, then to the Darwin area during July. 7 Communication Unit, 17 Repair and Salvage Unit and 5 Initial Training School were based at Pearce during World War II.

11 Squadron operated Dakotas, Lincolns and Neptunes out of Pearce from 12 November 1950, until it moved to RAAF Base Richmond on 31 May 1954.

In 1952, as part of a RAAF post-war re-organisation, Base Squadron Pearce was formed to provide base services. In 1956, Headquarters RAAF Pearce was established.

In 1958, Australia's first jet trainer, the Vampire, made the long trip across the desert from Point Cook, Victoria, to take up residency at Pearce. Advanced flying training was transferred to Pearce from Point Cook, and Pearce has remained the sole advanced flying training centre for RAAF and RAN pilots. What was once 1 Applied Flying Training School was re-named 2 Flying Training School. Apart from the Vampire, the school has operated the Macchi MB.326H and Pilatus PC-9 aircraft in the pilot training role. Following the disbandment of 1 Flying Training School in January 1993, 2 Flying Training School and the PC-9 shouldered the responsibility of both basic and advanced pilot training.

The high flying activity at Pearce led to the establishment of a satellite airfield at Gin Gin, 17 miles north-west of Pearce, in 1968. 25 (City of Perth) Squadron now operates Macchi aircraft in the maritime support role and conducts pre-introductory fighter conversion courses for graduates of 2 Flying Training School and Macchi refresher courses.

In 1993 the first Republic of Singapore Air Force aircraft arrived at Pearce to take up residency. The 30 Marchetti S211 are also being operated in the pilot training capacity—a concrete sign of the close defence ties. The Republic of Singapore Air Force, with 55 staff, 38 students and 160 maintenance personnel at Pearce, takes advantage of Western Australia's uncluttered air space and constant good weather.

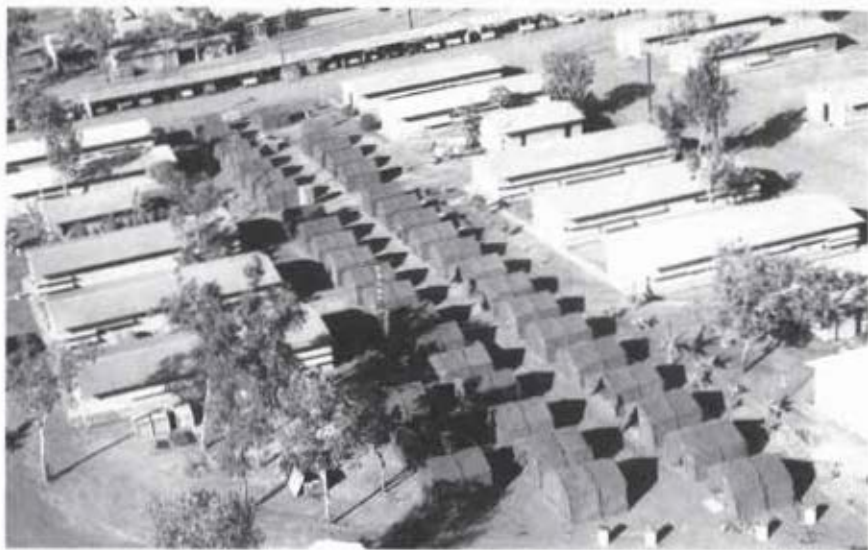
## COMMANDING OFFICERS

6 February 1939	—Group Captain R.J. Brownell
14 March 1940	—Squadron Leader R.F.M. Dalton
17 August 1940	—Group Captain A.M. Charlesworth
9 January 1941	—Wing Commander R.F.M. Dalton
27 May 1941	—Wing Commander J.R. Fleming
10 December 1941	—Wing Commander I.J. Lightfoot
20 January 1942	—Group Captain P.G. Heffernan
20 May 1942	—Wing Commander D. McLean
24 May 1943	—Wing Commander S.G. Brealy
24 September 1944	—Group Captain R.F.M. Green
9 April 1945	—Wing Commander R.H. Thompson
14 September 1945	—Group Captain G.C. Hartnell
6 July 1946	—Group Captain R.H. Moran
16 April 1948	—Group Captain N.P. Ford
24 September 1951	—Air Commodore E.W.L. Hely
25 August 1953	—Group Captain M.O. Watson
3 November 1953	—Wing Commander E.C. Saunders
7 April 1955	—Wing Commander C.H.D. Browne
10 December 1956	—Group Captain R.H.S. Davis
22 January 1962	—Group Captain I.S. Podger
16 March 1964	—Group Captain D.W. McCarthy
10 August 1964	—Group Captain D.L. Wilson
11 January 1967	—Group Captain E.B. Courtney
4 October 1969	—Group Captain A.E. Mather
21 January 1971	—Air Commodore S.W. Dallywater
4 December 1972	—Air Commodore I.S. Parker
20 January 1976	—Air Commodore D.W. Hitchins
16 January 1978	—Air Commodore J.W. Hubble
15 January 1979	—Air Commodore J.S. Puleston-Jones
6 January 1981	—Air Commodore N.F. Ashworth
7 January 1983	—Air Commodore K.J. Tuckwell
31 May 1985	—Air Commodore G.W. Neil
14 May 1987	—Air Commodore B.I. Lane
12 December 1988	—Air Commodore R.P. Lowery
5 March 1992	—Air Commodore N.A. Smith

*Right: RAAF Base Tindal was named to commemorate Wing Commander A.R. Tindal, who was killed in action at Darwin, 19 February 1942*



*Below: Permanent tented accommodation, Tindal, January 1968*



*Left: 3 Squadron Mirage aircraft at Tindal during Exercise 'High Jupiter', January 1968*



*An Air Training Corps graduation parade at Edinburgh, 2 September 1974*



*Air-sea rescue transition. An Iroquois from Williamstown flies over crash launch 016-100 as it departs from Newcastle, May 1975*



*The RAAF ketch 06-11 (formerly Yalata) off Townsville, September 1944*





*Launching a RAAF weather balloon*



*Meteorology class, circa 1943*

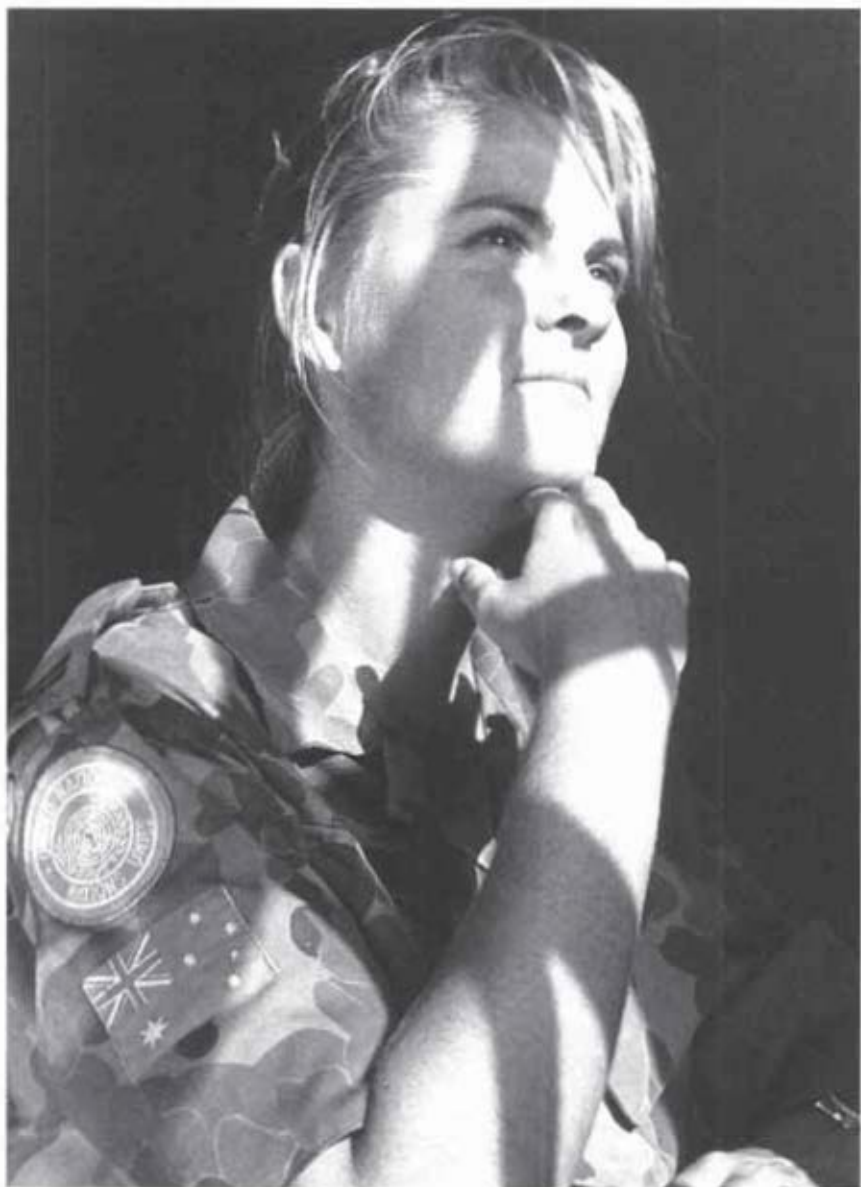




*The first crew to honour Australia's commitment to the United Nations Observers Group in Pakistan*



*A Caribou aircraft in United Nations colours, February 1975*



*Corporal Cindy Hyder served in the United Nations communications centre at Sihanoukville, Cambodia, February 1993*



*The first Director, WAAAF, Group Officer Claire Stevenson*



*Group Officer L.K. Pittman, Director, WRAAF, 14 November 1968*



*Aircraftwomen Alma Warner and Dorothy Heitsch, flight mechanics, work on an aircraft engine, 9 October 1943*

*WAAAF armourers  
of World War II*



*A WAAAF  
instrument  
mechanic of  
World War II*

# RAAF BASE POINT COOK

*First and Foremost*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 13 August 1921  | —formed as RAAF Station Point Cook   |
| 1 March 1926    | —1 Aircraft Depot re-located to Laverton   |
| 29 April 1940   | —Central Flying School formed  |
| October 1941    | —Station Headquarters Point Cook formed  |
| 30 June 1947    | —1 Flying Training School re-located from Uranquinty   |
| 1 August 1947   | —RAAF College formed   |
| 15 June 1950    | —Station Headquarters Point Cook reformed as Headquarters Training Group                         |
| 1 April 1952    | —Headquarters Training Group reformed as Headquarters Point Cook                                 |
| 1 January 1961  | —RAAF College re-named RAAF Academy  |
| 31 March 1989   | —Headquarters and Base Squadron Point Cook disbanded; reformed as Point Cook Base, RAAF Williams |
| 7 February 1990 | —Headquarters Training Command formed at Point Cook  |

## NARRATIVE

Cradle of the Royal Australian Air Force, Point Cook was chosen in October 1913 to be the site of the Commonwealth Government's newly established Central Flying School. When the first members of the Aviation Instructional Staff arrived to take up residence the place was 734 acres of bare land and it was not until July 1915 that accommodation,

hangars and workshops, sufficient to house all personnel and equipment, had been constructed. The first training aircraft was a Bristol Boxkite and it was in this machine that the initial intake of pupils learned to fly. The starting date of that historic course was 17 August 1914, less than two weeks after Britain declared war on Germany. Lieutenant Richard Williams, who would become known as the 'Father of the RAAF', was the first man to graduate. By 1916 the famous Mesopotamian Half Flight and three squadrons of the Australian Flying Corps had been formed at Point Cook. Around 90 officers qualified as pilots during World War I, going on to serve with the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) in France and the Middle East. One of these pilots, Lieutenant F.H. McNamara, won the Victoria Cross in the Sinai Desert.

The men of the AFC were demobilised upon return to Australia in 1919. A short-lived Australian Air Corps (AAC), which had little to do but run the Central Flying School, was formed in 1920. Both the AFC and the AAC were simply branches of the Australian Military Forces but on the last day of March 1921 the embryonic Australian Air Force was established as an independent Service. In August that year it became the Royal Australian Air Force. Appropriately, the first RAAF station, consisting of 1 Flying Training School and 1 Aircraft Depot, was formed at Point Cook. A total of 15 officers and 123 airmen, under the command of Squadron Leader W.H. Anderson, manned the station. The Base had at its disposal 20 Avro 504Ks, 10 Sopwith Pups and 6 Fairey seaplanes, with a further 128 Avro 504Ks, Royal Aircraft Factory SE 5s and de Havilland DH-9s in storage. Those machines, plus many vehicles and spare parts, were donated by the British Government.

The cadet training scheme was introduced in 1923. Suitable candidates embarked on a 12-month course and graduates were offered short service commissions in the RAAF or the RAF. By the outbreak of World War II hundreds of young men had passed through the flying training school. The graduates included many who were soon to distinguish themselves in battle, such as Victoria Cross winners Flight Lieutenant Bill Newton and Wing Commander Hugh Edwards (RAF). During this period of gradual expansion, ground training continued and refresher courses were run for the benefit of both civilian and Air Force pilots. A six-week survey of the Australian coastline by Wing Commander S.J. Goble and Flight Lieutenant I.E. MacIntyre, the first circumnavigation of the continent by air, was just one of many important flights emanating from the station.



Point Cook's most rapid growth occurred after the declaration of war on 3 September 1939. A vastly expanded training program schooled pupils in flying, navigation, reconnaissance, signalling, armaments, operations and instruction. Under the Empire Air Training Scheme, many new squadrons were formed and Great Britain was supplied with a steady flow of trained aircrew for the bombing offensive against Germany. Station Headquarters Point Cook was established in October 1941 to co-ordinate the new activity. 2730 pilots graduated from the flying training school before the end of the War, winning for themselves an enviable reputation from New Guinea to North Africa.

During and after the War many units came into being and many others were reformed, re-named or re-located. Flying training at Point Cook took on a plethora of guises, being at various times under the control of 1 Service Flying Training School, 1 Applied Flying Training School and 1 Basic Flying Training School. 1 Flying Training School, known for most of the War as 1 Service Flying Training School, was re-designated 1 Applied Flying Training School in 1952. In 1958 it transferred to Pearce, Western Australia, where it became known as 1 Advanced Flying Training School. The same year, 1 Basic Flying Training School arrived at Point Cook from Uranquinty. In 1969 1 Basic Flying Training School resumed the mantle of 1 Flying Training School and 1 Advanced Flying Training School was re-named 2 Flying Training School. 1 Air Performance Unit moved to Point Cook in September 1946; it was re-named Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) in September 1947, moved to Laverton in 1948 and then to Edinburgh, South Australia, in 1977. The old Central Flying School, reincarnated in 1940 but absent from Point Cook for most of the war years, returned briefly in 1944 before moving to its new home at East Sale.

RAAF College was established in 1947 and assumed the role of cadet instruction from 1 Flying Training School. The new course had the character of a modern university education, lasting for four years and aiming to provide graduates with a thorough grounding in the principles of air power and the art of leadership, as well as theoretical and practical flying training. In January 1961 RAAF College became the RAAF Academy, graduates now receiving a Bachelor of Science degree approved by the University of Melbourne.

RAAF Staff College was formed at Albert Park in 1949 and transferred to Point Cook the same year. The Staff College was conceived as an institute to groom senior officers for future commands. It moved to

Canberra in 1960. Also in 1949 the Aviation Medical Section of Station Headquarters Point Cook, and the Medical Training Section of 6 RAAF Hospital, Laverton, merged to form the School of Aviation Medicine.

The list of training aircraft employed at Point Cook over the years is a long one. The major pre-war types included Avro Cadets, Westland Wapitis and Avro Ansons. The ubiquitous Tiger Moth was the mainstay of the flying training school during World War II, augmented by Wirraways, Wackett Trainers and Airspeed Oxfords. The Tiger Moths and Wirraways soldiered on into the 1950s until replaced by the Winjeel, which entered service in 1955. The New Zealand-built CT-4 Airtrainer began replacing the Winjeel as the basic trainer in 1975. Examples of the Tiger Moth, the Wirraway and the Airtrainer, as well as many other types used by the Air Force, are on display at the RAAF Museum, inaugurated at Point Cook in 1952.

Point Cook, like the Air Force in general, has undergone many changes in recent years. In 1986 the RAAF Academy closed to make way for the tri-service Australian Defence Forces Academy in Canberra. RAAF College was re-established to prepare graduates of the academy for service in the Air Force. In 1993 an era came to an end when 1 Flying Training School was closed.

On 31 March 1989 RAAF Williams was formed, incorporating both Point Cook and Laverton. Sad though it is that Australia's oldest Air Force station is no longer an autonomous unit, it is fitting that it should be part of a new station named for the first man to graduate from Central Flying School so many years ago. The Base continues to function under the umbrella of RAAF Williams and the RAAF Museum, RAAF College, Institute of Aviation Medicine and other long established schools remain.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

November 1941	—Group Captain R.S. Brown
April 1944	—Wing Commander H.R. Harding
September 1944	—Group Captain R.E. Dupont
February 1945	—Wing Commander N. Ford
November 1945	—Group Captain R.B. Burrage
February 1947	—Group Captain E.B. Courtney
September 1952	—Air Commodore A.M. Murdoch
January 1953	—Air Commodore E.G. Knox-Knight
October 1955	—Air Commodore T.A.B. Parselle



December 1955	—Air Commodore W.H. Garing
January 1961	—Air Commodore K.R.J. Parsons
January 1966	—Air Commodore C.F. Reed
May 1968	—Air Commodore J.F. Lush
February 1970	—Air Commodore D.W. Colquhoun
January 1972	—Air Commodore E.W. Tonkin
February 1977	—Air Commodore J.A. Whitehead
March 1979	—Air Commodore P.J. Reed
February 1982	—Air Commodore A.R. Reed
January 1984	—Air Commodore R.J. Walsh
May 1987	—Air Commodore R.R. Tayles
October 1988	—Air Commodore K.R. Blakers

# RAAF BASE RICHMOND

*Constant Vigilance*



## CHRONOLOGY

30 June 1925	—formed
1 January 1936	—2 Aircraft Depot formed
20 July 1936	—Station Headquarters formed
1 April 1952	—Headquarters Richmond reformed
2 February 1987	—Headquarters Air Lift Group formed
July 1992	—2 Aircraft Depot re-organised as 503 Wing

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Base Richmond was established in 1925. The site's connection with military aviation goes back to 1916, when the New South Wales Government set up a school to train pilots for the Australian Flying Corps. The area was then known as Ham Common.

Richmond's first squadron, 3 Squadron, with DH-9 light bombers and SE-5 scouts, arrived on 20 July 1925 and was under the command of Flight Lieutenant F.W. Lukis. For the next 10 years, the commander of 3 Squadron was also the Base Commander and it was not until 20 April 1936 that Station Headquarters Richmond was established, utilising personnel from 3 Squadron and the recently formed 2 Aircraft Depot. Group Captain A.T. Cole was the Commanding Officer.

Between 1923 and 1936 Richmond was used as a supplementary civil airfield for Sydney and played host to a number of famous fliers, including Charles Kingsford-Smith and Miss Jean Batten.

When war was declared on 3 September 1939, Richmond's strength included the following squadrons: 3 Squadron, flying Hawker Demons;

6 and 22 Squadrons, flying Avro Ansons; and 9 Squadron, flying Seagulls. In 1940, 3 Squadron transferred to the Middle East where it served as an Army co-operation unit. 6 Squadron, re-equipped with Lockheed Hudsons, departed for the Pacific in 1942 and saw action in New Britain and New Guinea.

Two of the squadrons formed at Richmond during World War II, 11 and 38 Squadrons, are still flying. 11 Squadron began life in September 1939 with two Empire Flying Boats before graduating to Catalinas in 1942. It was disbanded in 1946 but reformed at Pearce in 1950 and continued in its original role of maritime reconnaissance. By 1954 it was back at Richmond flying Lockheed Neptunes. Since 1968 the squadron has been based in Edinburgh, South Australia, where it operates Lockheed Orions. 38 Squadron was established in September 1943, flying Hudsons. In 1944 it took delivery of its first Dakotas and began operations in the Pacific out of Archerfield, Queensland. It maintained a courier service to Japan throughout 1947, was in Berlin for the airlift in 1948 and in 1950 supported anti-terrorist operations in Malaya. The squadron was re-equipped with Caribous in 1964 and the ensuing years have seen its presence in Vietnam, Timor, Papua New Guinea, India and Pakistan. A detachment is still based at Richmond, where it continues to engage in disaster relief in addition to its normal tactical transport duties.

Richmond's twin Hercules squadrons, 36 and 37 Squadrons, also originated during World War II. 36 Squadron was formed at Laverton in March 1942 and flew DC-2s and Dakotas in New Guinea. 37 Squadron, also established at Laverton, operated Lockheed Lodestars and then Dakotas throughout the South Pacific. Both these squadrons were in Singapore to evacuate former prisoners of war. In August 1946 these units, together with 38 Squadron, formed 86 (Transport) Wing at RAAF Schofields. 37 Squadron was disbanded in 1948 and 86 Wing in 1964 but both reformed in later years. 36 and 38 Squadrons moved to Richmond in 1949 and 37 Squadron was re-raised there on 21 February 1966. 36 and 37 Squadrons are currently based at Richmond while 38 Squadron moved to Amberley in 1992. 36 Squadron took delivery of its first C-130A Hercules in 1959 and 37 Squadron was re-activated in 1966 to operate the new E model. Both squadrons were in action during the Vietnam conflict, flying sick and wounded soldiers out of the war zone, and both were in Darwin in 1974 providing aid for the victims of Cyclone 'Tracy'. 36 Squadron converted to the 'H' model C-130 in 1978 and in 1984 clocked up 200 000 accident-free flying hours on the Hercules.

The latest additions to Richmond's inventory are Boeing 707 jet transports. Two of these aircraft, ex-Qantas, were purchased in 1981 and made up 33 Flight.

On the administrative side, the Base has undergone a good deal of re-organisation since World War II. The running of the station was streamlined with the formation of Headquarters Richmond and Base Squadron in April 1952. In February 1987 Headquarters Richmond became Headquarters Air Lift Command and Base Squadron was re-named Base Support Wing. 86 Wing, incorporating 33, 36 and 37 Squadrons, was re-established the same month. A new Queen's Colour was presented to the RAAF at Richmond in 1983 and in 1988 the Base hosted the highly successful Bicentennial Air Show. This was followed by the RAAF's 70th Anniversary Air Show in 1991, a year which also saw the C-130s attain 500 000 accident-free flying hours.

Richmond's future as an RAAF base was under a cloud in the early 1990s as the Service faced budgetary cutbacks and governments deliberated on the site of Sydney's controversial second airport. With an apparently firm decision to build the new airport at Badgery's Creek, Richmond looks set to continue as the hub of Australia's military transport and civil disaster relief force. As recently as January 1994 the Base again demonstrated the vital part it plays in the region when its C-130s undertook operations to contain the spread of the Sydney fires.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

20 April 1936	—Group Captain A.T. Cole
10 January 1938	—Group Captain H.F. De La Rue
1 October 1940	—Group Captain D.E.L. Wilson
13 August 1941	—Wing Commander J. Alexander
May 1942	—Group Captain F.W. Scherger
23 May 1942	—Group Captain P.G. Heffernan
17 February 1943	—Wing Commander H.T. Hammond
29 August 1944	—Group Captain W.J. Duncan
23 April 1945	—Group Captain S.F. Kearney
28 February 1946	—Group Captain K.R.J. Parsons
27 October 1948	—Wing Commander E.G. Fyfe
21 February 1951	—Group Captain R.H.S. Davis
2 December 1953	—Group Captain W.H. Garing
21 November 1955	—Air Commodore J. Alexander

3 April 1957	—Air Commodore C.W. Pearce
1 February 1965	—Air Commodore D.L.G. Douglas
17 April 1967	—Air Commodore K.S. Hennock
4 March 1968	—Air Commodore C.F. Read
29 July 1969	—Air Commodore H.D. Marsh
25 October 1972	—Air Commodore J.W. Hubble
2 September 1974	—Air Commodore R.A. Scott
6 February 1976	—Air Commodore G.G. Michael
16 January 1979	—Air Commodore I.B. Gration
9 December 1981	—Air Commodore S.S.N. Watson
15 January 1985	—Air Commodore I.R. Gordon
2 February 1987	—Air Commodore J.I. Mitchell
2 February 1990	—Air Commodore S. Clarke

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Roylance, D., *Air Base Richmond*, RAAF Base Richmond, 1991.

# RAAF BASE TINDAL

## CHRONOLOGY

1944	—construction completed
1970	—re-construction of airfield completed
31 March 1989	—RAAF Base Tindal officially opened

## NARRATIVE

Originally known as Carson's Airfield, Tindal was planned during World War II, and constructed between 1942 and 1944. It was to be one of three airfields between Katherine and Daly Waters designed to operate heavy B-24 bombers, but no aircraft squadrons were based there during World War II, and the Base was never used operationally. The Base was re-named after Wing Commander A.R. Tindal, the Commanding Officer of 24 Squadron, who was killed in action in 1942 during the first Japanese air raid on Darwin.

Between 1963 and 1970 the airstrip at Tindal was re-constructed and extended by more than 300 officers and men of 5 Airfield Construction Squadron, at a cost of seven million dollars. Tindal was then a bare base acting as a back-up airfield for Darwin, and after the departure of 5 Airfield Construction Squadron, was used only for exercises, both by the RAAF and Army. The Base was initially manned by several airfield defence guards for security, but later two civilian caretakers were employed to do this work, as well as attend to the maintenance of buildings and assets.

In 1982, Tindal was named in preference to Darwin as the base for the Hornets. Its advantages are strategic, operational and environmental, and it offers almost limitless potential for development. Over 300 kilometres inland, and outside the cyclone belt, it is a secure base for operations and for support of other bases in the north and north-west of Australia.

Located 15 kilometres south of Katherine, Tindal covers an area of 122 square kilometres, and is 11 times larger than RAAF Base Amberley, previously Australia's largest base. A particularly harsh climate is characterised by periodic heavy rains during the hot humid summer, and warm to hot rainless conditions in the winter.

Tindal comprises all facilities necessary to operate and maintain a fighter aircraft squadron, including support functions, accommodation

and messing. Facilities associated with flying operations include an air traffic control centre, control tower, sophisticated communications centre, fire station and search and rescue facility. Air movement cargo and passenger facilities have been built close to the existing taxiway. Support facilities for the aircraft comprise aircraft maintenance hangars, aviation fuel storage, workshops and stores, offices and dining facilities; an F/A-18 flight simulator; 75 Squadron Headquarters; ordnance storage and an engine test facility. The development also includes a base headquarters, maintenance workshops, police services, facilities for ground defence and medical/dental treatment and a police dog complex.

Residential accommodation on the Base comprises both single quarters and houses for married personnel. Additional houses have been built off the base at Katherine. The on-base residential area has been planned around the community centre, which provides a focus for off-duty activities. The single accommodation units are linked to covered parking areas and the central messes by covered walkways, giving protection from sun and rain. In the community centre, leisure activities have been catered for with the provision of a gymnasium, squash courts, floodlit tennis courts, playing fields and a 50-metre swimming pool. A family store, postal and banking facilities, a snack bar and service station are also included.

RAAF Base Tindal was officially opened on 31 March 1989 by the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, as the new line of defence for northern Australia, and continues operations today as one of the most important defence bases to be developed in Australia in many decades.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

July 1988	—Group Captain P.G. Nicholson
July 1990	—Group Captain B.J.S. Mouatt
January 1994	—Group Captain G.R. Lee

# RAAF BASE TOWNSVILLE

*Guard the North*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Early 1939       | —Garbutt Airfield, Townsville, transferred to Department of Defence                    |
| 8 May 1941       | —Northern Area Headquarters RAAF formed  |
| 15 January 1942  | —Northern Area Headquarters RAAF re-named North-Eastern Area Headquarters              |
| 24 December 1942 | —Station Headquarters, Townsville, re-named 23 Operational Base Unit                   |
| 15 December 1944 | —23 Operational Base Unit disbanded and RAAF Station Garbutt formed                    |
| 1 January 1951   | —RAAF Station Garbutt re-named RAAF Townsville   |
| 16 May 1955      | —Headquarters RAAF Townsville formed in name only                                      |
| 3 December 1956  | —North-Eastern Area Headquarters disbanded and Headquarters RAAF Townsville activated  |
| 1 June 1988      | —Headquarters Townsville re-named Headquarters Tactical Transport Group                |
| 15 February 1991 | —Headquarters Tactical Transport Group re-named Headquarters Operational Support Group |



## NARRATIVE

During October 1940, the first RAAF aircraft flew into the newly established RAAF Station Garbutt—named after Garbutt Brothers, a firm of butchers who had large slaughtering yards in the area. Early in 1939, negotiations had begun between the Townsville Town Council and the Department of Interior to transfer the aerodrome at Garbutt to the Department of Defence. The acquisition was gazetted on 12 December 1940. Less than a year later, the construction of three sealed runways, each of 5000 feet, had been approved and started.

The work was completed shortly before the arrival of the first elements of the 5th Air Force, United States Army Air Force (USAAF), in February 1942. During the month, work commenced on a number of satellite airfields in and around Townsville.

General Order 64, issued from Headquarters Allied Air Forces on 14 November 1942 by Lieutenant General G.C. Kenney, Commander Allied Air Forces, South-West Pacific Area, placed 'Garbut (sic) Field, Townsville... under the control of the Commanding General, Air Service Command, Fifth Air Force, insofar as all flying activities are concerned'. Station Headquarters Townsville, however, formed at the beginning of 1942, remained under the command of North-Eastern Area, RAAF.

In March 1942, two RAAF fighter squadrons formed at RAAF Station Garbutt before moving north to oppose the Japanese in Papua. Townsville was raided on three occasions by Japanese long-range flying boats based in Rabaul. Anti-aircraft fire and pilots of the USAAF's 8th Fighter Group engaged the intruder on one of these raids. Bombs dropped caused little or no damage.

In May 1942, aircraft of the USAAF's 19th Group based at Townsville flew a number of missions against the Japanese fleet in the Battle of the Coral Sea. On one mission, B-17 Flying Fortresses of the 435th Armed Reconnaissance Squadron mistook the heavy cruiser *Australia* for a Japanese battleship and dropped their bombs, fortunately without success.

RAAF and USAAF units operated out of Townsville until the end of the war in the Pacific. Amongst the support units there were two air depot groups, two air support groups, a number of radar stations, a repair and salvage unit and sundry other units. At its height, the 5th Air Force organisation at Townsville was 'one of the largest air servicing bases outside the United States'.

Early in 1951, RAAF Station Garbutt, now the home of the Lincolns of 10 (General Reconnaissance) Squadron, was re-named RAAF Townsville, and shortly after received its first intake of National Service trainees. In December 1956, Headquarters RAAF Townsville was activated, replacing its predecessor, North-Eastern Area Headquarters.

In the years to 1977, RAAF Townsville saw the departure of 10 Squadron to RAAF Edinburgh, and the arrival of 35 Squadron, equipped with Caribou and Iroquois helicopters. In 1979 the RAAF's Combat Survival Training School re-located to RAAF Townsville, and in 1981 27 (City of Townsville) Squadron, Citizen Air Force, was formed.

The late 1980s saw the start of a re-organisation within the RAAF which was to result in great changes to RAAF Townsville. The Base became the headquarters for the RAAF's tactical transport force; Headquarters Townsville was disbanded, with the Base Commander's responsibilities being transferred to the Commanding Officer, Base Support Wing. Shortly after, the Army assumed responsibility for all helicopter battlefield operations.

Early in 1991, the units at Townsville were again re-organised. Headquarters Tactical Transport Group became Headquarters Operational Support Group, with Operational Support Wing, 84 Wing and Base Support Wing Townsville under command. Since then, command and control of 84 Wing and Base Support Wing have been transferred elsewhere and 1 Operational Support Unit has been re-located to RAAF Townsville under command of Operational Support Wing. In addition, an Airfield Defence Wing headquarters has been formed. The role of Operational Support Group, as part of the ADF's Ready Deployment Force, is the provision of operational base support services and ground defence to Air Force elements deployed forward.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

February 1942 —Wing Commander F.W. Thomas

### **Following disbandment of North-Eastern Area**

2 January 1957 —Group Captain A.D. Charlton

June 1958 —Wing Commander I.L.L. Campbell

16 June 1959 —Group Captain D.L.G. Douglas

December 1960 —Group Captain A.R. Hodge

March 1964 —Group Captain W.L. Brill

October 1964 —Group Captain D.D. Hurditch

1966	—Group Captain J.I. Adams
1968	—Group Captain V.B. Cannon
1972	—Group Captain F.M. Griggs
1976	—Group Captain M.K. Lyons
1977	—Group Captain P.J. Scully
1978	—Group Captain C.L. Ackland
1980	—Group Captain J.M. Chesterfield
1981	—Group Captain B.I. Lane
1983	—Group Captain S. Clark
1985	—Group Captain L.S. Fisher

# RAAF BASE WAGGA

*We Prepare*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Early 1939    | —decision made to establish a flying training school at Forest Hill                                       |
| Early 1944    | —1 RAAF Hospital moved from Base to Turvey Park, Wagga Wagga  |
| January 1946  | —1 Engineering School (Ascot Vale) transferred to RAAF Wagga  |
| January 1948  | —RAAF Engineering Apprentice School Scheme commenced  |
| May 1950      | —Ground Training School re-named RAAF Technical College   |
| December 1952 | —RAAF Technical College re-named RAAF School of Technical Training (RAAFSTT)                              |
| December 1960 | —Headquarters Wagga formed  |
| June 1985     | —RAAF School of Clerical and Supply Training and RAAF School of Management and Training Technology formed |
| January 1994  | —Radio School Laverton transferred to RAAFSTT   |

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Base Wagga is situated at Forest Hill some 11 kilometres east of the city of Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. It has been a permanent RAAF base since July 1940. Suitable land was purchased from the estates

of the Brunskill and Lyons families early in 1939 and development work commenced immediately. It was always intended that the new Base would be permanent and brick structures were extensively used.

The Ensign was hoisted for the first time on 29 July 1940, as 2 Service Flying Training School became operational. The first Commanding Officer was Wing Commander F.R.W. Scherger. Pilot trainees came to the Base from elementary flying schools and continued their training to 'Wings' standard on Wirraways and Ansons—the latter aircraft being withdrawn as the school concentrated on fighter type training.

A spectacular 'piggy-back' landing of two Ansons near the small town of Brocklesby occurred on 28 September 1940. In this incident two aircraft collided and became firmly attached in a 'piggy-back' fashion. The two trainee pilots from the bottom and one from the top aircraft descended by parachute, but the remaining trainee (Leading Aircraftman Fuller) found that as the engines of the bottom aircraft were still operating he could control the two aircraft. He force-landed successfully.

After formation in January 1942, 60 and 61 Squadrons, each operating 18 Wirraways, enhanced the tactics of staff pilots. 31 Squadron was raised at Wagga Wagga before proceeding on operations to the north and 5 Operational Training Unit provided advanced training on the Beaufighter during this period.

The close association with the RAAF and the people of the City of Wagga Wagga was enhanced by the establishment of 2 Training Group Headquarters in Romano's Hotel in 1942, where it remained until 1946. 2 Communications Flight occupied the civil aerodrome at Gumly from 1942 to 1944.

After the disbandment of 2 Service Flying Training School in March 1942 the spacious engineering facilities at the Base enabled development of 5 Aircraft Depot to repair operational aircraft. During the next three years, this unit carried out maintenance work on 1686 engines and 602 aircraft, including such types as Anson, Beaufighter, Boomerang, Beaufort, Kittyhawk, Ventura, Vengeance and Mitchell. The Base was further developed with the addition of more Bellman hangars and domestic accommodation. In 1944 the Base recorded its highest ever service population of 2270. For a brief period the United States Air Force used the Base when the 4th Air Depot Group and the 70th Bombardment Squadron moved in with their bombers prior to transfer to the Pacific islands.

In 1943 vital repair work was severely interrupted when a spectacular fire destroyed the instrument repair section.

1 RAAF Hospital was moved from temporary quarters at the Base to spacious accommodation at Turvey Park, a suburb of Wagga Wagga. The hospital buildings were declared surplus in 1948 and formed the basis of the teachers college which became an important faculty of Charles Sturt University.

At the end of World War II, 5 Aircraft Depot was disbanded and the Base was placed in care and maintenance with hundreds of surplus aircraft being parked for eventual sale.

With the move of 1 Engineering School to the Base from Ascot Vale the unit became the principle trade training school of the RAAF.

Until 1985, the Base basically consisted of Headquarters, Base Squadron and RAAF School of Technical Training (RAAFSTT). The restructuring of RAAFSTT formed independent training squadrons with a base squadron reporting to the Headquarters.

Base Squadron Wagga's history began in March 1956, when it was recognised as a unit in its own right after the formation of RAAF Wagga. At this time, unit routine consisted mainly of support to RAAFSTT.

During 1981 the Base celebrated the RAAF diamond jubilee with an Officers' Mess commemorative dinner attended by local dignitaries, and an open day. In January 1985, an electronic scoreboard was installed in the gymnasium to coincide with the Base implementation of the RAAF physical fitness program. October 1989 saw the first uniplex computer package installed on the Base. For the 50th anniversary of the formation of RAAF Wagga, Base Squadron set up a display of photographs and memorabilia in the Wagga Wagga Commonwealth Bank chambers. The Base celebrated the anniversary by exercising its right of Freedom of the City, an Officers' Mess dining-in night, an all ranks ball and an open day, at which one of the highlights was the five cakes iced with the crests of the five RAAF Wagga units.

During the 1980s major accommodation and training projects were constructed making RAAF Base Wagga one of the most modern training facilities in Australia. This was further expanded with the transfer of the Radio School to the Base in 1994. Base Squadron Wagga was disbanded on 29 June 1994.

RAAF Base Wagga has grown from a small flying training school to an organisation responsible for the majority of the RAAF's ground training. It has developed a close relationship with the local community.

It will continue to serve, committed to uphold the Base motto—'We Prepare'.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 July 1940	—Group Captain F.R.W. Scherger
24 October 1941	—Group Captain C. Eaton
8 April 1942	—Group Captain H.B. Seekamp
5 December 1943	—Wing Commander R.A.A. Saw
11 December 1944	—Group Captain H.C. Owen
16 October 1945	—Wing Commander C.R. Hackforth
8 February 1946	—Wing Commander E.L. Chapman
9 January 1950	—Group Captain J.W.C. Black
18 April 1952	—Group Captain H.H. Smith
5 May 1955	—Group Captain E.V. Millett
8 March 1960	—Group Captain A.T. Fay
21 December 1964	—Group Captain N.F. Lamb
23 December 1966	—Group Captain R. Noble
6 March 1967	—Air Commodore J.W.C. Black
5 February 1968	—Air Commodore G.F. De La Rue
18 January 1971	—Air Commodore G.E. Prosser
14 July 1975	—Group Captain C.G. Thomas
8 May 1979	—Group Captain W.D. Monaghan
11 September 1981	—Group Captain I.F. Andrew
9 December 1983	—Group Captain K.R. Blakers
13 January 1986	—Group Captain J.B. MacNaughtan
5 January 1987	—Group Captain W.N. Hall
9 January 1988	—Group Captain K.V. Griffin
January 1991	—Group Captain R.C. Bennett
January 1994	—Group Captain D.B. Judge

# RAAF BASE WILLIAMTOWN

*Strength*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 15 February 1941 | —RAAF Station Williamtown opened              |
| May 1942         | —disbanded                                    |
| November 1948    | —RAAF Station Williamtown reformed            |
| 1963 to 1985     | —development as main fighter base             |
| 1986 to 1992     | —high technology reconstruction and expansion |

## NARRATIVE

In 1938, local authorities recognised Newcastle's growing needs for new airport facilities over and above the capacity of District Park at Broadmeadow. Acquisition of land on the Williamtown moors was gazetted on 14 March 1940, and works were started, using unemployment relief labour. With World War II in progress, the strategic importance of Williamtown was soon appreciated. Accordingly, the airfield was placed under the control of the RAAF.

RAAF Station Williamtown was officially opened on 15 February 1941, Squadron Leader Paget being the first Commanding Officer. In January 1941, a detachment of Hudson bombers of 6 Squadron was sent to Williamtown, and was involved in anti-submarine patrols. Later Williamtown was used as a staging base.

During 1941, the new base was used for a variety of purposes such as landing practice for amphibious aircraft from Rathmines, air gunnery training, defence exercises, deployments and detachments involving Seagull, Catalina, Wirraway, Fairey Battle and Boston aircraft.



2 Recruit Depot (2RD) transferred to Williamstown in September 1941, training 1208 recruits before transferring to Bradfield Park in February 1942.

Also in 1941, under the Empire Air Training Scheme, new squadron personnel gathered at Williamstown for service overseas. The first was 450 Squadron, followed by 452, 454, 455 and 458 Squadrons. February 1942 heralded the arrival of the United States Army Air Corps 9th Pursuit Squadron with 25 P-40E Kittyhawks. P-39 Airacobra detachments also arrived at the base for training. During April, administrative control was handed over to USAAC, and RAAF Station Williamstown was disbanded in May. USAAC aircraft left the base at the end of September 1942, and 4 Operational Training Unit arrived in late 1942. Shortly afterwards, members of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) joined the strength of Williamstown. Satellite airfields, emergency landing grounds, bombing and gunnery ranges, radar stations and radio direction finders were set up to service Williamstown's needs.

During World War II RAAF units based at Williamstown were 4 Operational Training Unit, Central Gunnery School, 2 Operational Training Unit Spitfire Detachment and 5 Operational Training Unit.

Post-war changes began in 1946 with the arrival of 78 Fighter Wing, comprising 75 and 78 Squadrons (flying Mustangs) and 114MFCU. The former 5OTU (re-named CCU (Fighter)) was disbanded in 1947. 378 Base Squadron was formed, followed by 478 (Maintenance) Squadron. In October 1947, training courses began for fighter pilots going to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan to relieve pilots who were completing their tours of duty. During 1948, 75 and 78 Squadrons were disbanded as were 378 Base Squadron, 478 Maintenance Squadron and 114MFCU. The Wing then became almost non-functional, being reduced to four airmen and no officers.

RAAF Station Williamstown reformed in November 1948. The School of Land/Air Warfare moved to Williamstown in November 1948 and, during January 1949, 76 Squadron was reformed. With 75 Squadron and 478(M) Squadron, it became part of 78(F) Wing. 114MFCU was reformed in 1949, and Williamstown entered the jet age with the introduction of Vampires.

Considerable expansion took place in the 1950s, involving improvement of Base facilities—buildings, runways, taxiways, aprons, and a crash barrier to accommodate Sabres.

With the introduction of the Mirage, 75 Squadron was re-equipped during February 1965, and 76 Squadron converted in September 1966. 75 Squadron moved to Butterworth in May 1967 to replace 3 Squadron which returned to Williamtown. 3 Squadron returned to Butterworth in February 1969, and 77 Squadron returned to Williamtown.

3 Control and Reporting Unit was installed in 1967–68. 5 Operational Training Unit was reformed in April 1970 with Sabres and Vampires. Macchis replaced the Vampires, and 5 Operational Training Unit continued operations until July 1971, when it was disbanded.

Williamtown was developed during the 1960s and early 1970s. World War II huts were replaced by modern buildings and significant works took place, costing approximately 10 million dollars. When the decision was made in the 1980s to acquire the F/A-18 Hornet, 100 million dollars were spent in a major reconstruction program which changed the face of the Base.

Following RAAF withdrawal from Butterworth in 1988, a major restructuring saw the creation of the Tactical Fighter Group, with its headquarters at Williamtown, commanding 81 Wing, 41 Wing and 481 Wing. At the time of writing, the units currently based at Williamtown are 3 Squadron, 76 Squadron, 77 Squadron, 2 Operational Conversion Unit, 3 Control and Reporting Unit, Software Development Unit, Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and Aircraft Equipment Maintenance Squadron. 66 Ground Liaison Section is under the operational control of Commander Tactical Fighter Group, who also provides administrative support.

Base Support Wing, Williamtown, operates as a separate entity, being virtually the Base housekeeper.

Tactical Fighter Logistics Management Squadron, an element of Headquarters Logistic Command, is a lodger unit at Williamtown. Another lodger unit is the Australian Defence Forces Warfare Centre, an agency of Headquarters Australian Defence Force in Canberra, which runs introductory and full joint warfare courses for the three Services.

Civilian units which operate at Williamtown include contractors assisting 481 Wing, as well as civilian air services and their ground support organisations. From March 1987, search and rescue has been provided by civilian services. The current SAR operators also provide a towing service for airborne targets.

Another major civilian organisation is Australian Construction Services which undertakes major construction work at the Base.

The longest serving autonomous civilian unit is the Bureau of Meteorology Office. Originally a wartime RAAF unit, it has been a dedicated unit run by the bureau since 1945.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

15 February 1941	—Squadron Leader J.R. Paget
12 November 1942	—Wing Commander E.G. Fyfe
28 June 1944	—Group Captain W.E. Townsend
26 June 1946	—Wing Commander A.D. Henderson
29 March 1947	—Wing Commander R.C. Cresswell
3 March 1948	—Squadron Leader J.R. Kinnimont
1 November 1948	—Air Commodore A.M. Charlesworth
27 June 1949	—Group Captain W.H. Garing
7 August 1950	—Wing Commander J.H. Perrin
7 November 1950	—Group Captain W.H. Garing
22 June 1951	—Air Commodore E.G. Knox-Knight
2 December 1953	—Group Captain R.H. Davis
15 September 1954	—Group Captain R.D. Davis
12 March 1955	—Air Commodore A.G. Adnams (RAF)
5 March 1957	—Group Captain B.A. Eaton
20 February 1959	—Group Captain N. Ford
13 June 1960	—Group Captain W.E. Townsend
21 January 1963	—Group Captain R.N. Dalkin
5 February 1964	—Air Commodore R.T. Susans
14 November 1966	—Air Commodore G.A. Cooper
27 February 1970	—Air Commodore I.S. Parker
11 January 1971	—Air Commodore A.E. Mather
1 May 1973	—Air Commodore J.H. Flemming
9 December 1974	—Air Commodore R.E. Frost
13 January 1976	—Air Commodore F.W. Barnes
13 January 1977	—Air Commodore J.R. Boast
9 January 1979	—Air Commodore W.H. Simmonds
21 September 1981	—Air Commodore W.D.J. Monaghan
16 February 1984	—Air Commodore R.J. Bomball
12 December 1986	—Air Commodore D.A. Robertson

### Commanders, Tactical Fighter Group

2 February 1987	—Air Commodore D.A. Robertson
9 April 1988	—Air Commodore T.R. Richardson

9 July 1990

—Air Commodore B.G. Weston

9 July 1993

—Air Commodore D.T. Bowden

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Muller, P. & Hutcheson, J., *RAAF Base Williamtown: The First 50 Years*, Base Support Wing, RAAF Williamtown, 1991.

# RAAF CANTEEN SERVICES

## CHRONOLOGY

1 May 1943	—formed at Melbourne
June 1943	—hairdressing facilities inaugurated
January 1944	—training of stewards and stewardesses commenced
11 March 1944	—authorisation granted for supply of liquor
10 July 1944	—regional sections re-named
October 1944	—headquarters moved to Sydney
January 1946	—first civilians employed
March 1946	—regional offices ceased to function— replaced by sub-regional offices; headquarters moved back to Melbourne
January 1953	—first wet canteen operated
January 1954	—last recorded entry in <i>Unit History Record</i>

## NARRATIVE

The RAAF Canteen Services Unit was formed at Melbourne on 1 May 1943 as a separate unit under the direct control of Air Force Headquarters. The regions in operation upon its formation were Southern, Eastern, Northern, North-Western and North-Eastern. According to the constitution of RAAF Canteen Services, the object of the canteens was to 'provide members of the Service with articles and commodities of common requirement, and to provide out of profits, means for the recreation and amusement of members and for the general welfare of members and their families'.

The unit was commanded by the Executive Officer of RAAF Canteen Services. Each region had a regional officer in charge. In addition to providing canteen commodities the unit was also responsible for the supply of supplementary rations provided to the Department of Air on repayment and for providing hairdressing facilities throughout the Service for both RAAF and WAAAF personnel.

Prior to November 1942, each station had its own canteen controlled by a committee of management made up of personnel at the station and presided over by the station commander. With the expansion of the Air Force when war broke out, the number of canteens and the volume of

trading increased enormously. The need for a centralised control of canteens soon became apparent. It was found that, whilst canteens at the larger units outside operational areas could procure all or most of the stocks required at favourable prices and from their trading accumulate considerable profits for expenditure on welfare, smaller units and particularly those in operational areas remote from sources of supplies were at an obvious disadvantage in respect of these matters. Therefore, in order to secure greater economy in the case of canteen services generally, as well as a more assured supply of articles and commodities and equality of benefits among personnel, the management and control of all RAAF canteens at stations and units in Australia and other theatres of war in the Pacific were vested in a central committee.

In January 1944, courses for the training of stewards and stewardesses were commenced, and on 11 March 1944 authority was given to the unit for the control of supply of liquor in forward areas. Initial issues of beer commenced from all issuing points from July in that year.

On 10 July 1944 all regional sections were re-named as Headquarters Melbourne, Southern, Eastern, South Queensland, Western, South Australian, North-Eastern, North-Western and New Guinea.

Throughout the unit's existence all the premises, storage, supplies and the accounting systems of each canteen were regularly inspected by regional officers. Many supplies were written off due to heat, poor refrigeration and infestation of white ants, weevils and so on. Other supplies, particularly cigarettes and tobacco, were lost through pilferage. Supplies, liquor, equipment and supplementary rations were transported to the various canteens by sea and by rail and pilferage between the supply station and the canteens proved to be a constant problem for the unit.

In late October 1944 Central Office (Headquarters) was transferred from Melbourne to Sydney. In December that year the Australian Army Canteen Services officially took over the supply of canteen goods and liquor to RAAF units in Papua New Guinea with the exception of the Milne Bay area.

Christmas was a particularly busy time for the unit with RAAF personnel being treated to fresh turkey, smoked ham, Christmas cake and pudding, asparagus, cordials and one bottle of beer per person. The unit made every effort to provide its members with Christmas treats and when in December 1944 the Christmas cargo for troops in the northern areas was lost when the freighter in which it was carried struck a reef,

arrangements were made to convey 1000 lbs of poultry to these areas by a Beaufort.

In February 1945 beer supplies in Australia were very low. Accordingly, the beer ration of one gallon per man per week was reduced to half a gallon per man per week. At the same time consideration was being given to reducing the cigarette and tobacco ration from 3 ounces of tobacco or 105 cigarettes per member per week to 2 ounces of tobacco or 60 cigarettes per week. There was great concern at the time that such a reduction in rations would have a serious effect on the morale of the troops.

With the acceptance of peace terms by Japan on 15 August 1945 arrangements were made for guards to be on duty at all regional bulk stores during the peace celebrations. Only one incident—the theft of a small quantity of liquor from the bulk store in Brisbane—was reported.

Owing to a number of RAAF units being disbanded in the post-war period, several 'A' class canteens were either closed down or converted to 'B' class canteens. Even though several canteens at Balikpapan, Labuan and Tarakan were closed following the disbandment of units in the area, some 70 canteens were still operating in this region at the end of October. In the same month Canteen 259, Moore Park, RAAF Demobilisation Wing, was opened to cater for discharged personnel and a canteen was opened at Kuching to make supplies available for aircrew engaged in the evacuation of prisoners of war in the area. Arrangements were also made with the Australian Army Canteen Services to make supplies available in Singapore to RAAF personnel who were engaged in the evacuation of prisoners of war in that region.

Given the high rate of discharge of RAAF Canteen Services members, approval was sought and granted in January 1946 to employ civilians within the organisation in order to maintain services to RAAF personnel.

In January 1946 the supply of goods to RAAF units in the North-Western Area was taken over by the Australian Army Canteen Services with all stocks held by RAAF Canteen Services being transferred to the Army. Supply of goods to units in the Borneo region also ceased.

In March 1946 all regional offices, with the exception of Southern and Western Regional Offices, ceased to function and sub-regional offices in Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Darwin and Port Moresby were formed. Southern Regional Office controlled Adelaide and Perth sub-regions and Eastern Regional Office controlled the remainder. In the same month headquarters of RAAF Canteen Services unit moved back to Melbourne.

In September 1946 the unit started to employ civilians as canteen stewards and stewardesses.

In July 1948 arrangements were made for canteens to carry grocery lines to assist married personnel domiciled at RAAF stations and units. Later that year the unit instituted a mail order system throughout the canteens whereby members could purchase Christmas toys and have them delivered to any part of Australia free of charge. The exercise proved to be a great success.

By November 1949 the number of canteens operating had fallen to 54. All were on the mainland with the exception of one at Manus Island. In the years ahead canteens were opened at Changi and the Cocos Islands.

In January 1953 the first of many wet canteens began to operate.

The final entry in the Unit History Record was made in January 1954.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 May 1943	—Wing Commander W.T. Kelly
25 March 1946	—Wing Commander B.W. Green



# RAAF KIRIWINA WIRELESS TRANSMITTING STATION

## CHRONOLOGY

- |               |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| 9 August 1943 | —formed at Kiriwina Island |
| 12 July 1944  | —Station disbanded         |

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Kiriwina Wireless Transmitting Station was formed at Kiriwina Island as part of 10 Signals Unit on 9 August 1943 for aircraft watchers communications. The initial establishment was for eight officers and 84 airmen. Work commenced immediately on the camp site. The unit experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining equipment, stores, barracks equipment, tents, pumps and piping equipment for a water supply. 73 Wing Headquarters endeavoured to supply the material to the Station. The first Commanding Officer was Flying Officer J.F. Graydon.

On 26 October 1943 there was an early morning raid by enemy aircraft. No damage or casualties were reported. During December 1943 the installation work at the transmitting station was completed by 10 Signals Unit and a noticeable improvement in facilities resulted. Steps were then taken to build a mess hut and quarters for all personnel on duty at the transmitting section and these were occupied in early January 1944. On 30 April 1944 another transmitter, which was battery operated, was installed as an emergency measure to keep aircraft watchers' channels open in any circumstances.

On advice from Headquarters, the unit was disbanded on 12 July 1944 with all personnel moving to 46 Operational Base Unit.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 9 August 1943    | —Flying Officer J.F. Graydon  |
| 30 November 1943 | —Flight Lieutenant A.B. Evans |
| 31 January 1944  | —Flying Officer L.B. George   |
| 8 April 1944     | —Flying Officer T.H. Wilson   |

# RAAF MARITIME SECTION

## NARRATIVE

Until recently, the RAAF maintained a Marine Section which not only supplied an air-sea rescue facility for its aircraft, but also transported stores, provided support for seaplanes and carried out torpedo recovery. The history of these marine craft can be traced back as far as the boats that were used by the Australian Flying Corp (AFC) at the Central Flying School, Point Cook, prior to the formation of the RAAF on 31 March 1921.

With the arrival of the Fairey IIID seaplane at Point Cook in 1921, it was found that boats were necessary to assist in mooring and removing the seaplanes from the water each night for storage in their hangars. Consequently, on 1 March 1921, a proposal was put to the Air Board for the purchase of four pulling boats. However, after consideration, only two were obtained. During the period 1921 to 1938 further boats were bought and disposed of as they became obsolete. On 28 February 1938, the RAAF moved into a new, more modern era with approval being granted for the purchase of the first of the 01 class target boats from England.

While the Marine Section was coming of age, the Air Force was expanding with new bases being established in other States. In 1939 the first two bases that were later to employ marine craft were established at Darwin, in the Northern Territory, and at Rathmines, on Lake Macquarie in New South Wales. With time and the threat from the north and the war with Germany, there was an increase in RAAF manpower and bases. A massive expansion program went into effect to obtain further boats to meet the RAAF's marine requirements.

When the Allies declared war against Japan on 8 December 1941, the RAAF was caught unprepared as it had not completed its expansion program. A massive building program went into effect with companies such as Halvorsen and Sons, Botterill and Fraser, Spring and Dinard and Slazenger building marine craft for the RAAF. The RAAF itself built small marine craft at Rathmines. In conjunction with this building plan a program was instituted to obtain craft from civilian sources by loan, secondment or contract. With the United States Forces, RAAF, RAN and the Army all undertaking similar programs, the sea transportation, fishing and pearling fleets of Australia were almost decimated. During World War II the Marine Section reached its peak, with in excess of

600 powered and 700 unpowered craft. Some of the craft the RAAF obtained were the *Waimana* (06-10), *Oomoobah* (015-3), *Ena* (06-8), and the *Victory* (015-10).

Initially the RAN was responsible for air-sea rescue in the Northern Area which was covered by a range of seconded craft and Fairmile launches. From 1942 to 1945 the RAAF were fortunate to have the assistance of the United States 5th Air Force air-sea rescue facility. However, as the War moved on so did the US Air Force. The RAAF Marine Section gained more craft and began to be tasked with air-sea rescue, mooring assistance, supply and refuelling of seaplanes and flying boats, and conveyance of stores to units isolated by sea.

Marine sections sprang up all around Australia, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, such as those at Port Moresby, Townsville, Milne Bay, and Doctor's Gully in Darwin. Marine crews were normally located in small pockets and administered by a multitude of units, such as transport and movement organisations, operational base units, radar units and seaplane squadrons and bases. The majority of training for marine crews was carried out at Rathmines.

While the Marine Section was not a well-known organisation it often became involved in dangerous and deadly situations not only with enemy action but also volatile climatic conditions. The RAAF stores vessel *Wanaka* sank during a cyclone on 16 December 1941 with the loss of 10 lives. Air-sea rescue launch 08-5 was shelled and subsequently destroyed at Milne Bay on 29 August 1942, and Catalina A24-206 and bomb scow 010-12 were destroyed on 20 June 1945 when depth charges on the bomb scow exploded.

At the conclusion of the War the RAAF disposed of unwanted marine craft by selling them to the public, foreign countries, or transferring them to other Services. Many sank at their moorings before they could be sold. Ironically, the 63-foot 02 Class Air Series air-sea rescue launch, the mainstay of the post-war marine section, was transferred to the RAAF from the RAN at the conclusion of the War. A revision of the RAAF small marine craft program at the conclusion of the War led to the retention of only 65 powered and 42 unpowered craft to provide support in the areas of supply, torpedo recovery, air-sea rescue and flying boat servicing at eight RAAF bases. These bases gradually decreased in number until only three marine sections were being maintained at Townsville, Williamtown, and Point Cook.

One of the proudest moments for the RAAF Marine Section was on 23 February 1963, when two 02 Class launches took up rear guard station on the port and starboard quarters of the Royal Yacht *Britannia* when it visited Melbourne. In December 1992, an instruction was issued stating that the remaining RAAF marine sections were to close on 31 January 1993. Consequently the Section's three remaining boats—*Air Hawk*, *Air Condor*, and *Air Eagle*—were sold off and the musterings of marine navigator, coxswain, and marine craft crew were abolished. This instruction ended 72 years of proud tradition for the RAAF's little-known fleet.

# RAAF METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES

## NARRATIVE

At an inter-service conference at Victoria Barracks in June 1939, it was recommended that responsibility for meteorological services for all Defence forces be allocated to the RAAF. In fact, the section which emerged to provide RAAF meteorological services was already functioning within the civil meteorological organisation at the outbreak of War in September 1939, performing duties associated with meteorological research, investigation and training.

The first weather officers course commenced in June 1937, when 13 experienced meteorological assistants were selected and trained to undertake weather forecasting duties on civil aviation aerodromes. Further courses were conducted, one from September to December 1937, and the last pre-war course in mid-1939. One further course was conducted in March 1940. Most of the graduates from these courses were later to become RAAF meteorological officers when the RAAF Directorate of Meteorological Services was established in April 1941.

The first RAAF meteorological officers course was conducted in the first half of 1941, with further courses following from September 1941 to September 1942. The first WAAAF meteorological trainee attended course No. 3, in March 1942. Some of these courses were to train newly appointed personnel, while others were conversion courses for meteorological assistants.

Training of meteorological observers, whose main duties were ground and upper air observations and plotting of synoptic charts, commenced in 1938. These observers were later to be categorised as RAAF meteorological assistants after the establishment of the RAAF Directorate of Meteorological Services. From 1 April 1941, a new mustering of meteorological charters was established, and the first course for this mustering began in August 1941.

During the ensuing years, observing, forecasting, and interpreting stations and sections were established far and wide throughout Australia and the South Pacific. The services provided by these meteorological stations included regular aerodrome weather reports for broadcast to operating aircraft, as well as the preparation and issue of air route

forecasts and warnings to aircraft operating through local and dependent aerodromes.

Six mobile meteorological flights were formed as part of the LHQ Mobile Meteorological Squadron. These flights were raised in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane, and consisted of a combined RAAF/Army staff. Whilst still in Australia, these flights were to provide advice and assistance with meteorological reports during artillery shoots with the AIF.

The flights were later to serve in Balikpapan, Labuan, Morotai, Wewak, Torokina and Lae, digging in behind the front line troops. The value of the reports provided by the personnel of these flights was proved time and time again when accurate artillery barrages were fired against the enemy. Life was hard for these troops who had to endure the harsher conditions of service with the Army in action—lack of water, enemy attacks, repeated digging and lying in wait in water and mud for enemy infiltrators. Many caught severe colds from living for some time in damp underground dugouts, even though near the equator.

There were many and varied requests for weather reports in these jungle regions, including suitable days and winds for mosquito spraying from aircraft and hourly sea level barometer readings for infantry patrols in mountainous and uncharted country. Each field regiment was assigned a meteorological section, and equipment on a jungle scale was adopted. Pilot balloons were used to observe upper air currents, although during close encounters with the enemy, these could not be used between sunset and sunrise for fear of alerting the enemy to the position of the camp.

Other reports issued by the meteorological sections included storm warnings, information on tides and water depths, and the state of the sea and surf, so that troop landings could be accurately planned. As well as daily forecasts, long-range forecasts were issued, to prepare in advance for troop movements and operations. Often, information on the state of roads, ground and rivers was required for advancing forces. In June 1945, one flight issued 311 meteorological reports, carried out 48 pilot balloon ascents, made 33 forecasts and prepared 12 synoptic charts.

After the Japanese surrender, the mobile meteorological flights continued to provide reports and forecasts well into September 1945, due to the hostile attitude of local Japanese commanders. Final disbandment orders were issued for the flights on 1 October 1945, but it was not until the end of December 1945 that the last flight actually completed its disbandment.

# RAAF MILNE BAY WIRELESS TRANSMITTING STATION

## CHRONOLOGY

- 20 May 1944 —formed at Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea  
12 August 1944 —Station disbanded

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Milne Bay Wireless Transmitting Station was formed on 20 May 1944, with a strength of 16 officers and 202 airmen. Formerly the Station was a section of 10 Signals Unit. The Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant J.L. Galbraith.

Communication was kept open to RAAF Headquarters, Goodenough, Nadzab, Port Moresby, Woodlark Island and RAAF Command Townsville. On 10 June 1944 a circuit was opened with the Admiralty Islands.

At first the Station had trouble with flooding and was unable to spray oil to kill off Kunai grass from around the transmitters. Arrangements were made to have the site graded which greatly improved the situation.

On 27 July 1944, a member was accidentally killed from electrocution. Safety measures were strictly enforced after this unfortunate incident.

On 9 August 1944 an instruction was received from Northern Command that the Station was to cease to exist from 12 August 1944. The equipment was moved to Madang on the SS *Betty* and the Woodlark detachment was handed over to 46 Operational Base Unit. The unit disbanded on 12 August 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

- 20 May 1944 —Flight Lieutenant J.L. Galbraith

# RAAF NURSING SERVICE— ACTIVE SERVICE WITH USAF 902ND AERO MEDICAL EVACUATION SQUADRON 1966–1969

## NARRATIVE

In 1965 with rapid build-up of American troop numbers in Vietnam, United States Army nurses were deployed to medical units in support of their fighting forces and United States Air Force flight nurses of the 9th Aero Medical Evacuation Group arrived in Saigon to co-ordinate airlifting of casualties.

Evacuation flights from Vietnam and Thailand staged through the hospital medical centre at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, then on to Korea, Japan and Okinawa. From there, Military Airlift Command evacuation flights with a total of 67 flight nurses took over to return the wounded to America in the massive C-141 Starlifters.

America began 'phasing down' its forces mid-1969. The chief nurse of the 902nd, Major D. Zablocki, flew to Australia to confer with the RAAF Nursing Service (RAAFNS) matron-in-chief regarding the medical evacuations involving the RAAFNS. By January 1971, evacuation flights had been reduced to one per week, mainly to evacuate the drug abusers. The 901st Tachikawa (Japan) had been disbanded to become a detachment of the 902nd AMES, while the 6485th Operational Group had been transferred from Formosa to Clark.

From 1966 to 1969, RAAF Nursing Service officers from 4 RAAF Hospital, Butterworth (Malaysia), were attached to the USAF 902nd AMES on a single short-term 60-day assignment to gain invaluable medivac war experience that would ultimately benefit the existing RAAF Vietnam–Australia evacuation commitment.

Each RAAF sister was oriented and familiarised in all aspects required of the operational area to air evacuation squadron level, and subsequently (for obvious reasons) adopted USAF rank during her attachment as she would be required to fly with different crews each mission throughout the entire South-East Asia 9th Aero Medical Evacuation Group area.



Before medivac flights into Vietnam nurses were required to attend familiarisation courses with the M16 assault rifle and Smith and Wesson .38 revolver. These courses were necessary for self-protection as the nurses were considered 'non combatant', yet were flying into areas designated combat/hostile fire zones on missions from Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon and Da Nang. They flew into unsecured areas and at times the airfields came under sniper attack. Nurses were required to wear sidearms in such cases, and aircrew were armed at all times.

There were a number of harrowing flights, with medivac planes limping back to Clark with a declared emergency, such as bullet-riddled wings, supported by other escorting planes and ships. Another terrifying flight finished with a 'runaway' propeller, the pilot prepared to ditch with the RAAF sister frantically helping to pull the many wounded Koreans off the stretchers. Another RAAF sister experienced a frightening direct rocket attack in Vietnam.

In a tense and exciting flight line atmosphere, four C-118 medivac aircraft, each with two flight nurses and one to three medical technicians left Clark every day between 2400 hours and 0700 hours for destinations 'unknown' to Vietnam with flight time ranging from 12 to 16 hours.

The first Nurse-in-Charge assumed operational control of the medivac aircraft, both in the medical and operational aspects of the flight including ground operations at all times. The RAAF sisters assumed this most challenging and at times daunting role. The second 'documentation' nurse had by definition a totally time-consuming role.

A further four flights per day left Clark for Korea and Japan via Formosa, to bases that were on red alert with China. Crew members were forbidden to leave the aircraft except in an emergency, and then only accompanied by two armed guards.

The average medivac load was between 45 and 55 casualties, combining stretcher and ambulatory patients with some horrific battle injuries. Medical cases included infectious hepatitis, TB and malaria. Psychiatric patients often required bodily restraint.

Everybody was on 24-hour call, and one RAAF sister was called out after 2400 hours on an emergency mission only to land on an aircraft carrier... 'somewhere'. Secrecy surrounded all flight operations, and at times nurses became disoriented and extremely fatigued. There was one official day off per month.

Medivac aircraft took a constant pounding. Landings at times were bone jarring, and flight problems occurred—clear air turbulence and

malfunctioning engines that leaked oil, billowed smoke, and on one occasion caught fire. Some sisters were left stranded in Vietnam either without crew or with a broken-down aircraft. One sister was ordered to stand guard against grenade attack. She was told it was her duty to pick up any grenades and throw them off the plane.

By the end of the first year of their individual attachments, just over half a dozen RAAF flight sisters had nursed and evacuated more than the equivalent of the entire Australian wounded in Vietnam. On average they each flew approximately 30 000 nautical miles on 60 missions and evacuated between 650 and 700 American and South Korean casualties from Vietnam.

Their dedication was a major factor in the unparalleled saving of life that was a feature of casualty management during the Vietnam war.

# RAAF PEACEKEEPING AND HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

## NARRATIVE

In the 75-year history of the Royal Australian Air Force, the Service has been called on to perform peacekeeping tasks and humanitarian relief. These tasks are often as hazardous as wartime operations, being carried out in the middle of two warring factions. The following examples of United Nations involvement represent only a small cross-section of the many operations in which the RAAF has been involved since World War II.

During July 1976, an Australian force of approximately 45 RAAF personnel and four Iroquois helicopters joined a United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Sinai Desert. The purpose of the peacekeeping force was to prevent hostilities between Egypt and Israel following the 1973 Arab–Israeli conflict.

During July 1976, 5 Squadron Detachment UNEF became Australian Air Contingent (AUSTAIRCONT) UNEF, marking the progression from the planning to the operational stage. It was the first time that helicopters were used in any peacekeeping role by the United Nations. Subsequently, their arrival and performance were keenly observed by the 4000 service personnel from Canada, Finland, Ghana, Indonesia, Panama, Poland, Senegal and Sweden.

The contingent was commanded by Wing Commander H.R. Thomas, and was tasked with providing a number of services, including resupply to UNEF outposts, the insertion and extraction of observers and medical evacuation flights.

The first aircraft arrived in a RAAF C-130 on 12 July 1976, and the first flight occurred on 20 July 1976. Upon arrival in country, personnel set out to make their accommodation, located in a less than pristine hotel, as comfortable as possible. The Australian contingent was allocated the 2nd, 5th and 6th floors.

The first operational task for the contingent was flown by Flight Lieutenant P.J.C. Wagner, to resupply the Sinai Field Mission of Giddi, on 31 July 1976. Two days later, the Commanding Officer captained another flight to pick up observers at El Tasa for a reconnaissance of the buffer zone boundaries, then to fly to Baluza, before returning to Ismailia.

Problems were experienced in locating one position and Israeli territory was penetrated.

Life in the desert was harsh, with the Australians being exposed to various local weather and climatic phenomena—they experienced their first dust storm on 18 September. The swirling dust and sand reduced visibility to 1 kilometre, and the temperature rose to 42 degrees. Dust storms caused problems over the duration of the deployment, not only by reducing visibility to below-safe flying parameters, but by causing damage to the aircraft.

The Australian contingent soon settled into a familiar routine and its performance resulted in praise from the highest levels of the United Nations force. Tasks included water pick-ups, medivacs, resupply, inspection of outposts and buffer zone flights, and the Australians had to battle the climate and conditions, locals shooting at the aircraft and communication breakdowns with contingents of other countries who used different procedures and languages.

On 12 November 1976, the Egyptian immigration authorities caused a problem by refusing to accept that the C-130 from Australia, which was resupplying essential equipment and spares, was a United Nations aircraft, because there were no visible United Nations markings on it. The problem was solved by applying a 15-inch by 15-inch United Nations decal, which made the aircraft acceptable to the Egyptians and it was thus allowed to continue to RAF Brize Norton, in the United Kingdom.

The Australian sense of humour and ingenuity were often tested. One example of Australian persistence was recorded in the Unit History Record of 13 November 1976:

Today we tackled the sand dunes around the plastic hut. To remove the amount of sand piled around the hut by hand would probably have required about six months. But the Canadians assured us that there was no way that we could get their front-end loader for at least one month. So having exhausted the official channels we adopted the victorious Egyptian method: one case of Australian beer to the driver not to notice the disappearance of the loader, provision of our own driver (the unstoppable and inexhaustible Leading Aircraftman H.E. Price) and another few cans of Australian beer for the silent repair by the Canadian welders of the water pipe we broke. All in all another victory in the desert for AUSTAIR UNEF.

Another example occurred in December 1976 when Sergeants Benson and Martin and Leading Aircraftman Price returned from Gaza with a truck full of bar furniture. The official Unit History Record reports that:

While picking the furniture up at the factory in Gaza, our team was the subject of a Customs raid, with the whole procedure being conducted in Arabic. Fortunately a UN interpreter happened along and it transpired that the manager of the factory was avoiding paying the sales tax on the furniture. 'Crocodile' tears, Christmas, Australians loving the World and impending repatriation finally won the day and a two week impounding was narrowly avoided. Quite drained by their emotional ordeal at Gaza, the team proceeded across the Sinai to Al Quantara where they met a VEA inspector who was highly motivated towards impounding the furniture and the truck. This problem was a horse of a different colour. The Egyptians objected quite violently to the importation of articles with 'Made in Israel' written on them, so the first step in the procedure was to forget how to open the back of the truck! The problem resolved itself to a lack of a cargo manifest. So a repeat of the Gaza pleadings was initiated with the additional statement that those terrible Swedes at Baluza (the new but acceptable point of manufacture) had not told the Poor Australians about the requirement for a manifest. Finally the inspector relented and mildly chastened the 'team', and they made it to the Sinai Palace Hotel without further incident.

On 16 August 1978, Squadron Leader Pyers and Flight Lieutenant Fielding flew a special mission to convey the Chief Co-ordination Officer for UNEF on a tour of the Mitla area. On the return flight, and while the aircraft was at 3000 feet, in the Egyptian Low Flying Area, it suffered a severe compressor stall. A forced landing was carried out, but it took the Egyptian Army 45 minutes to react to the landing.

The last sorties by AUSTAIR in support of UNEF/UNTSO was flown on 8 October 1979, ending three years and four months of commitment to the force.

Another example of the RAAF involvement with the United Nations, was in Pakistan during 1975. In April 1975, Australia provided a Caribou of 38 Squadron to operate from Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The Caribou aircraft replaced an aircraft of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The first operational flight occurred on 1 April 1975. Rawalpindi was to be the detachment's home base for only a month. On 1 May 1975, the first official trip for the Squadron detachment was flown from the Australians' new home, Srinagar. Eight days later the Squadron commenced regular operations when Squadron Leader B.J. McKenny flew to Kargil, to transport personnel to a field station, which had been closed during the winter months. Kargil is 9800 feet above sea level, making it the highest airfield an RAAF Caribou had landed on. The trip

from Srinagar to Kargil took 40 minutes at an altitude of 15 500 feet. Oxygen masks were left on until the aircraft had landed. A planned second trip to the remote airfield had to be cancelled due to the rapid build-up of cloud.

The detachment consistently flew 'milk runs' to outlying posts. It was extremely difficult just to perform the most basic tasks in the extreme conditions. The first winter snow falls experienced were in November 1975; the temperature in the mornings at Rawalpindi was -1 degree, and at Srinagar as low as -5 degrees. Despite the conditions and the unfamiliar flying environment, and a lack of modern instrument flying aids at the airfields, the members of 38 Squadron Detachment 'B' performed the tasks and duties well.

One of the most recent examples of the RAAF being involved in a United Nations force occurred in 1982.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced, late in 1981, that Australia would contribute to the multinational peacekeeping force in the Sinai. The role of the force was to patrol the demilitarised zone known as 'Zone C' and to conduct verification checks in Zones 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D', to confirm that both Israel and Egypt conformed to the terms of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty (the Camp David accords). The role of the air component which was supplied by Australia and New Zealand in a combined unit was to provide medical evacuation, VIP, patrol and verification flights.

The Australian and New Zealand force arrived in March in 1982. Despite climatic inconveniences, the ANZAC forces prepared the base at Eitam. As there were few permanent free-standing buildings or hangars, the airmen constructed 'tent hangars' to be used until permanent hangars could be erected.

On 21 March 1982, the ANZAC pilots picked the helicopters up from the dockside where HMAS *Tobruk* had delivered them. The first operational flight of 'Anzac Airlines' in support of the peacekeeping effort took place on 23 March, with Flight Lieutenants Mackerras and McClelland (RNZAF) and Sergeant Ryan as crew. This flight provided an indication of the exciting times that were to come. When the aircraft landed at Etzion, a large Israeli base, to wait for the air defence clearance, its arrival caused confusion. The Israelis were in the process of destroying most of the facilities.

On 18 July 1984, the Anzac forces helicopter A2-915 was tracking along the Sudr road on a verification mission when it came across a

burning Egyptian Army truck, from which a badly burned Egyptian soldier was flown to an Army hospital in Sudr. Throughout their stay in the war-torn country, the Anzacs realised that they were in a hostile and unstable environment. For example, the contingent was confined to base when the cruise ship *Achille-Lauro* was hijacked, or when an Egyptian policeman opened fire on a number of Israeli tourists, killing a large number of them. One of the most alarming times was when a high explosive anti-tank missile was found in the Fijian Headquarters; all radio transmissions were prohibited while the missile was removed. Flying operations were stopped for a short time, until it was discovered that it was not the act of a terrorist group, but of some soldier who had been using it as a door stop.

Working at servicing and flying the aircraft in the extreme heat, often reaching the mid-40s, motivated the contingent members to establish the ANZAC Surf Club (Sinai), which was officially affiliated with the Australian federal body. This club became the focal point of all non-official activities and possibly motivated the Canadians to set up their own social club, the Beaver Lodge.

The RAAF has conducted mercy missions and other civilian relief flights. In 1974, floods affected three States and the Northern Territory. RAAF helicopters and Caribou, Hercules and Dakota air transports rescued hundreds of men, women and children. The RAAF mercy effort was sustained by elements of eight squadrons; 54 aero medical evacuations were carried out by the Iroquois of 5 and 9 Squadrons, and the Service transported 232 000 lbs of freight and 2787 passengers in a total of 1914 sorties and 778 flying hours.

The most famous case of the RAAF coming to the aid of the civilian population in a time of need was immediately after Cyclone 'Tracy' ravaged Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974. The RAAF base and its personnel became the centre of activity. All contact with the outside world was conducted through the base, using the standard radio set on board a C-130 from 37 Squadron, which arrived in Darwin on 25 December 1974 at 2100 hours. Over the next days the personnel of the RAAF base worked around the clock; one of the busiest areas was the base hospital, where personnel were working with no water, and lighting supplied by a few gas lamps. The other area of extreme activity was the movements area, with 16 or more aircraft unloading, refuelling, reloading with the injured and sick, then despatching, within the first 24 hours after the cyclone hit.

36 Squadron alone flew 554 hours on Darwin tasks and carried 2864 passengers, 793 000 lbs of freight and had eight out of 12 aircraft flying on Darwin tasks. 37 Squadron flew 700 flying hours and carried 4400 passengers and 1 300 000 lbs of equipment. Of the Squadron's 12 aircraft 11 were flying on these tasks.

The RAAF has also supported peacekeeping operations in areas such as Somalia and Cambodia.



# RAAF PORT MORESBY WIRELESS TRANSMITTING STATION

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 15 June 1943      | —formed near Kila Airstrip |
| 27 September 1944 | —Station disbanded         |

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Port Moresby Wireless Transmitting Station was established on 15 June 1943 near Kila Airstrip to provide communication facilities and perform cypher duties. The first Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant C.J. Foster, the initial establishment was of 287 airmen and 29 officers and the Station came under the command of 9 Operational Group under the control of 73 Wing Headquarters. On 23 June 1943, 4 and 5 Wireless Transmitting Stations arrived on attachment and commenced duties. Personnel of 10 Signals Unit operated the Transmitting Station from 29 June 1943. On 31 May 1944, owing to bad weather conditions, emergency landings were made at Kila strip by a C-47 aircraft of the 33rd Troop Carrying Squadron and the 6th Troop Carrying Squadron (American squadrons). Aircrew and personnel were given accommodation for the night and were able to continue their flight the next morning. The strip was used quite often for emergency landings of American aircraft although it was never classed by the 5th Air Force as an emergency landing strip.

On 22 September 1944 an instruction was received from Northern Command that the unit was to cease operations. The unit disbanded on 27 September 1944.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |                 |                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 23 June 1943    | —Flight Lieutenant C.J. Foster  |
| 10 January 1944 | —Flight Lieutenant R.H. Travers |
| 6 April 1944    | —Squadron Leader G.C. Douglas   |
| 23 August 1944  | —Flying Officer C.T. Miller     |

# RAAF TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNIT SYDNEY

*Faster Than Wings*



## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 1 May 1976       | —formed at Timor Barracks, Dundas, NSW   |
| 30 June 1976     | —took over 5 Signal Regiment's HF Receiving Station at Bringelly   |
| 5 May 1978       | —former 5 Signal Regiment HF Transmitting Station at Wallgrove handed over                                   |
| 12 December 1977 | —Unit headquarters re-located from Dundas to Wallgrove, and RAAFTUS made an independent self-accounting unit |
| 15 August 1988   | —Unit headquarters re-located from Wallgrove to Glenbrook, NSW   |
| November 1994    | —based at Glenbrook, NSW   |

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Telecommunications Unit Sydney (RAAFTUS) traces its inception to the formation of the single Department of Defence from the three individual departments of Navy, Army and Air in the first half of the 1970s. In the spirit of the newly unified department, communications were determined fairly early on to be a prime candidate for amalgamation. Hence, the Defence Communications Rationalisation Studies were instigated to examine how best to integrate the three essentially independent (but interlinked at relevant points) communications networks which had been developed almost autonomously by each of the Services to meet their needs.

In the meantime, RAAF was to undertake the Defence Communications Facility Sydney (DCFS) project, to establish a new communications message relay capable of taking on all of the circuits into and out of Sydney. As part of that project's development, the need to form a specialist independent RAAF unit for the task of controlling, providing and maintaining all of the strategic communications services in New South Wales was recognised. Air Force Organisational Directive No. 2/76 dated 2 March 1976, established RAAFTUS as an independent non-self-accounting unit on 1 May 1976. The Commanding Officer of RAAFTUS was appointed Regional Network Controller New South Wales. The Unit initially formed at Timor Barracks, as an adjunct to 5 Signal Regiment, in recognition of the need for a closely integrated transfer of function and responsibility from the Army unit to the RAAF unit. A significant proportion of the manpower assets were transferred from Melbourne Telecommunications Unit (MTU), which had previously been the RAAF's largest strategic communications unit. RAAFTUS was also to assume responsibility for RAAF single-Service telecommunications services at Glenbrook, such as the Communications Centre, Sydney, the HF radio outstations and telephones/switchboard, and the corresponding resources.

RAAFTUS operated for about a decade in a configuration of four geographically dispersed elements, interconnected by a fully duplicated microwave link system providing all Australian Defence Force telegraph/message services for New South Wales. After this the requirement for a complete overhaul of the Australian Defence Force's strategic communications system had been identified, and the Defence Integrated Secure Communication System (DISCON) project was initiated. This new system was to extend the telegraphic capacity of DEFCONNET to include secure voice, facsimile and data capacity. RAAF Glenbrook was chosen as the site for the DISCON hub for New South Wales. RAAFTUS remained as the controller and provider of Australian Defence Force strategic communications for its region.

In 1988 secure telephone and facsimile transmissions between suitably equipped DISCON subscribers were made operational. In the light of the Force Structure Review of 1991 and the follow-on Commercial Support Program within Defence, the historic arrangement whereby the commander of the relevant single-Service communications unit/element was also tasked to be the Regional Network Controller, but not under any direct command or control of Headquarters Australian Defence Force,

was determined to be unsuitable for the future. RAAFTUS is still providing New South Wales with administrative, supply and all the other domestic services needed for the Regional Network Controller to exist and operate within a military environment.

For the RAAF role of RAAFTUS, there has not been as great a change as in the strategic communications environment. The base switchboard and all the handsets at RAAF Glenbrook were replaced with modern equipment in January 1990, and the Communication Centre was refitted with new terminal equipment to correspond with the installations of DISCON. However, Air Operations Communications Centre (AOCC) Sydney still relies on some of the equipment originally installed before RAAFTUS was formed. Telegraph terminal and cryptographic equipment was modernised over the period 1989-90, and actual HF radio will be replaced in the future.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

1 May 1976	—Squadron Leader P.J. De Visser
18 January 1977	—Wing Commander K.F. Tipping
7 January 1980	—Squadron Leader M.J. Evans
30 July 1982	—Wing Commander C.J. Knowles
1 July 1983	—Wing Commander W.J. Aberneathy
1 January 1986	—Wing Commander A.W. Esler
1 July 1987	—Wing Commander R.G. Glenister
1 January 1989	—Wing Commander R.W. Tyler
1 December 1990	—Wing Commander G.N. Hockings
1 January 1994	—Wing Commander S.C. Sheedy

# RAAF WIRELESS TRANSMITTING STATION CHARTERS TOWERS

## CHRONOLOGY

- 15 October 1943 —formed at Charters Towers  
27 January 1945 —Station disbanded

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Wireless Transmitting Station Charters Towers was established on 15 October 1943 to provide Headquarters North-Eastern Area with cypher interception services and fixers to aircraft. There was an establishment of one officer, 12 airmen and 25 WAAAF. The Commanding Officer was Flying Officer H.S. Crapper. On 23 December 1943 the teleprinter channel to Townsville was installed and operating. A telegraph line to Breddon and Macrossan commenced operation on 2 February 1944.

To provide some sort of sporting facilities a tennis court was laid in September 1944. This proved a definite attraction to members. The unit competed in a sports meeting which was held at the All Souls' Oval, Charters Towers, on 3 December 1944. Also on 3 December the teleprinter circuit Charters Towers to Townsville and telegraph lines Charters Towers to Breddon and Macrossan were disconnected and circuits direct from Townsville to Breddon and Macrossan were installed, thus removing the unit from the link.

On 10 January 1945 a signal was received from Headquarters North-Eastern Area advising that the unit was to disband. On 27 January 1945 this was completed.

## COMMANDING OFFICER

- 15 October 1943 —Flying Officer H.S. Crapper

# RAAF WIRELESS TRANSMITTING STATION GOODENOUGH ISLAND

## CHRONOLOGY

- |              |                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| 15 June 1943 | —formed at Goodenough Island |
| 27 June 1944 | —Station disbanded           |

## NARRATIVE

RAAF Wireless Transmitting Station Goodenough Island was formed on 15 June 1943 under the command of 9 Operational Group. It operated with 1 Wireless Transmitting Unit pending the building of a new camp site which was to be in a forest area. The first Commanding Officer was Flying Officer D.H. Dougan. On 28 November 1943, 8 Wireless Transmitting Station staff arrived to supplement the present staff. The kitchen building was commenced.

All communication with the airstrip operations area was cut on 29 November 1943 due to an American bulldozer shearing the wiring of the cables. The teleprinter line was only available on a temporary line until an American signals party found the break and repaired it. A cricket pitch was built to provide some sort of welfare activities for the unit.

In January 1944 continuous heavy rain flooded the camp area and personnel were marooned. The water caused havoc with the transmitters and only drainage and drying ovens saved the equipment. On 23 April 1944 a review of welfare facilities was carried out with satisfactory results—a weekly concert was organised and softball facilities were made available. A working party was sent to a new camp site at 41 Operational Base Unit on 29 May 1944. There it erected two blocks of buildings for sleeping quarters for wireless transmitting personnel. The work was delayed by rain but was finished by 2 June 1944.

Following advice from Northern Headquarters the unit was disbanded on 27 June 1944. All signals matters were to be handled by the new Wireless Transmitting Section of 41 Operational Base Unit.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

- |               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 23 June 1943  | —Flying Officer D.H. Dougan   |
| 30 March 1944 | —Pilot Officer N.O. Quintrell |

# RAAF WIRELESS UNITS 1-7

## NARRATIVE

The most secret of all RAAF operations in World War II were those carried out by the RAAF's wireless units. The title 'wireless units' was devised to conceal their true identities and functions—the interception and decoding of Japanese military operational messages. The intelligence information derived from these messages was then passed to American and Australian air, land and naval commands giving prior warnings of enemy actions or intentions, hours, days, sometimes weeks in advance of their actual happenings.

Although the original 1 Wireless Unit was officially designated on 26 April 1942, the genesis of the RAAF's interest in intercepting and breaking into Japanese messages goes back to mid-1941. Then, two RAAF officers, Flight Lieutenant H.R. Booth and Flying Officer Clem Blakeley, were chosen for attachment to the British FELO (Far Eastern Liaison Office) in Singapore, to be instructed in Japanese intercept intelligence by the British Navy.

However the first RAAF intercept group to be engaged in actual operations against the Japanese was stationed in Darwin, in September 1941—three months before Pearl Harbor. Led by Warrant Officer T. (Snow) Bradshaw, this group consisted of Bradshaw, C. Hermes, T. Cook, J. Wilson, A. Towers, B. Crosby and G. Davis. These airmen had been secretly instructed by Royal Navy personnel in the special Japanese version of the morse code, called the 'kana' code—entirely different to the international morse code—and they were the founders of the highly successful RAAF wireless units in World War II.

The Darwin group functioned successfully up to late February 1942. They had intercepted messages giving advance information of Japanese war preparations before and after hostilities commenced. On 19 February 1942 this group passed a warning of the first enemy raid on Darwin to the Commanding Officer RAAF Darwin over 2 hours before the Japanese aircraft attacked. Unfortunately, no action on this advice was taken by RAAF Darwin.

After Pearl Harbor, the RAAF proceeded to train further airmen in the 'kana' code. When General MacArthur arrived in Australia and set up his Central (Intelligence) Bureau, he decided to use the RAAF interceptors as his main intelligence gatherers. These airmen were posted to Townsville,

North Queensland, where, on 26 April 1942, 1 Wireless Unit was formed. The Unit occupied and operated in civilian houses in Townsville until late September 1942 when its new state-of-the-art, bomb-proof, fully air-conditioned operations building was completed at Stuart Creek, 11 miles south-west of Townsville. Bomb-proof direction finding stations were then built at Tolga and Julia Creek, North Queensland, to provide 1 Wireless Unit with bearings on Japanese aircraft transmissions and locations of enemy airfields.

By the end of 1942, 1 Wireless Unit was producing high-grade intelligence on all aspects of the enemy air operations in the South-West Pacific Area. The importance of this intelligence was quickly recognised by General George C. Kenney soon after he arrived in Australia to assume command of the United States 5th Air Force. On 16 December 1942, he requested the Australian Government to provide five more RAAF wireless units, to cover the entire continent of Australia as well as the Japanese-occupied areas to the north. This turned out to be an almost impossible task, given the time required to train special 'kana' operators, direction finding 'kana' operators and code breaking clerks, and the critical manpower shortage in the RAAF at that time.

However, Prime Minister John Curtin did approve two further wireless units—one for Darwin, the other for Port Moresby. As the War progressed, further urgent requests (endorsed by General MacArthur) for more wireless units were received. By the end of hostilities, six RAAF wireless units had been formed and were in the field—a total personnel of approximately 1000 (RAAF and WAAAF), about 300 of whom were 'kana' intercept operators. A further unit, 7, was formed in Brisbane in 1945—too late to become operational.

1 Wireless Unit provided most of the leaders and the nucleus of each new unit. Because of the wartime security blanket imposed, no personnel rolls are available. Information regarding movements of personnel from unit to unit and area to area is practically non-existent—especially for those periods later in the War when 1, 4, 5 and 6 Wireless Units were under American control.

The areas in which the RAAF wireless units served covered almost every significant area of conflict in the South-West Pacific Area. 1 Wireless Unit was stationed at Townsville, Queensland, in 1942–43; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 1943–44; Nadzab, Papua New Guinea, 1944; and Biak, Dutch New Guinea, 1944. 1 Wireless Unit personnel also served in detachments at Dobodura, Popondetta, Lae, Salamaua, Kiriwina,



Goodenough, Milne Bay, Cape Gloucester and at Hollandia, Merauke, and Owi. 2 and 3 Wireless Units were stationed at Coomalie Creek, Darwin, 1943–45, with attachments at Groote Eylandt, Wyndham and Broome. 4 Wireless Unit personnel served in Borneo 1944–45 and were part of the Borneo invasion forces landing at Tarakan and Balikpapan. 5 Wireless Unit was located in Manila, San Miguel and Luzon in the Philippines in 1945. 6 Wireless Unit landed with General MacArthur's invading American troops at Tacloban (Leyte), Philippines, on 20 October 1944. Later in 1945 it moved up to Lingayen as part of the United States invasion force, and to Manila, San Miguel and Luzon.

At the end of the Pacific war, the RAAF flag flown by 4, 5 and 6 Wireless Units at San Miguel, 80 miles north of Manila, was the closest RAAF unit flag to Tokyo.

During 1942, the Japanese Army, Navy and its air forces were almost irresistible. The main thrusts of 1 Wireless Unit's intercepts at that time were directed to locating new enemy airfields, tracking movements of enemy aircraft carriers and providing early warnings of bombing raids by Japanese aircraft. The three air raids on Townsville (25, 27 and 28 July 1942) were all pre-warned by 1 Wireless Unit by up to seven hours—almost from the time the Japanese HK8 Kawanishi flying boats took off from Rabaul Harbour 1500 miles away and sent their first messages back to their base. Day and night raids on Port Moresby, Oro Bay, Milne Bay, Guadalcanal were also pre-warned by 1 Wireless Unit by up to 1½–3 hours, thus minimising Allied casualties and damage. 1 Wireless Unit intercepts provided valuable input into many of the vital operations of 1942 including the Coral Sea Battle and the United States invasion of Guadalcanal when 1 Wireless Unit provided information to the American fleet as to the safest route to best escape enemy air action.

The years 1943, 1944 and 1945 saw the wireless units' contributions to Allied intelligence increasing in importance. Tens of thousands of operational messages were intercepted and decoded—many of them with quite spectacular results. On 13 April 1943 a message disclosing Admiral Yamamoto's flight plan and itinerary for a visit to his forward areas was intercepted at 1 Wireless Unit Townsville (and by the Americans at Honolulu and Dutch Harbour, Aleutians). This information enabled United States P-38 fighter aircraft to ambush his flight over the Solomon Islands and Yamamoto's plane was shot down. His death was a major blow to Japanese fortunes.

During three months in mid-1943, 1, 2 and 3 Wireless Units monitored messages indicating the arrival of hundreds of new Japanese Army aircraft into northern New Guinea. Acting on this intelligence, United States and RAAF aircraft destroyed over 400 of these planes on the ground before the Japanese could use them.

A further enemy attempt in early 1944 to build up Japanese aircraft numbers in western New Guinea, was also detected by wireless units, resulting in surprise Allied air raids on Hollandia, which destroyed 288 Japanese aircraft on the ground. This action forced the Japanese air forces to retire from New Guinea and retreat ever closer to their homeland. After the capture of Finschhafen, wireless unit intercepts assisted in General MacArthur's decision to bypass the Japanese stronghold at Wewak, Hansa Bay in northern New Guinea and leapfrog to Hollandia.

By early 1944 the main thrust of the War had moved north-west, leaving New Guinea behind and heading through Dutch New Guinea towards the Philippines. United States Generals G.C. Kenney and S.B. Akin (Chief Signals Officer South-West Pacific Area), realising the expertise of the RAAF wireless unit 'kana' interceptors, requested RAAF Command permission for wireless unit personnel to accompany the American forces wherever they went. These two generals, not inhibited by nationalistic constraints, clearly preferred the Australian 'kana' operators to their own personnel. RAAF Command, in a historic decision, reluctantly agreed.

This decision saw wireless unit personnel operating with American forces at Owi, Biak and Morotai in 1944. When General Headquarters planned General MacArthur's return to the Philippines, 1 Wireless Unit was once again (at MacArthur's command) ordered to provide the intercept cover for American troops at the invasion of Leyte on 20 October 1944.

A detachment of 'kana' operators sailed to Leyte in General Akin's communications vessel, landed with the invading troops, and were dubbed 'The Foreign Legion' by American war correspondents. These operators were the only foreign land troops at that action. Further wireless unit personnel landed in Leyte on the following days and the unit was designated 6 Wireless Unit.

6 Wireless Unit performed extremely well and was credited by United States forces with the sinking of 17 Japanese naval ships and transports and assistance in the destruction of hundreds of Japanese aircraft during

the Leyte campaign. 4, 5 and 6 Wireless Units continued serving with United States forces in the Philippines until the end of the War.

Not all the wireless unit operations were as spectacular as those described; many messages intercepted were purely routine. However all the intercepted messages taken by the Allied intercept units in the South-West Pacific Area contributed to the post-war statement, by General Willoughby (G2, United States Army), that 'Signal Intelligence chopped two years off the war in the Pacific'.

RAAF 'kana' interceptors were highly regarded by the Allied General Headquarters. Signal intelligence, by its very nature, cannot claim high distinctions or military awards. However, General Kenney, Commander in Chief of the United States 5th Air Force, forwarded several glowing Unit Commendations to each of the RAAF wireless units during the Pacific war. Probably the highest acknowledgment received was given by United States General S.B. Akin in November 1944 to members of the 6 Wireless Unit invasion team which landed with him on Leyte on 20 October 1944. General Akin arranged for photographs of the 24 members of 6 Wireless Unit. When presenting a copy to each of them, General Akin personally wrote, on the reverse of each photograph: 'In appreciation of your fine work, S B Akin, Major General, US Army'.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bleakley, J., *The Eavesdroppers*, AGPS Press, Canberra, 1992.

# SIGNALS UNITS

## NARRATIVE

The function of signals units was to provide for the installation, maintenance and administration of communication facilities for units in a particular area. Detachments from these units were sent to various locations, in Australia and New Guinea, to install communications equipment such as switchboards and telephone lines, telex and teleprinter facilities, as well as cypher facilities and ground-to-air communications for squadrons.

### **10 Signals Unit**

10 Signals Unit was formed on 10 September 1942, and took over the premises and operations previously covered by Moresby Wireless Transmitting Station, situated in the Konedobu area of Port Moresby.

While a rear echelon remained at Townsville, the main party arrived at Port Moresby on 12 December 1942, and set up a temporary camp under canvas on the golf links. At this time, the Unit comprised Headquarters, Moresby Wireless Transmitting Station and Milne Bay Wireless Transmitting Station. This establishment changed on 28 May 1943, when Moresby Wireless Transmitting Station was withdrawn.

An advance party of operational personnel from 10 Signals Unit Headquarters arrived at Milne Bay on 9 June 1943, and in July of that year, a second transmitting station was brought into operation at Milne Bay.

During March 1944, work was carried out by signals installation and repair parties at Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Goodenough Island, Dobodura and Kiriwina. The last diary entry for this Unit was in June 1944, with personnel preparing for a projected move to Madang.

#### *Commanding Officers*

10 September 1942 —Wing Commander R.H. Cunningham

15 November 1943 —Squadron Leader S.A.F. Westwood

### **11 Signals Unit**

Formation of this Unit was promulgated at Air Force Headquarters on 6 December 1942, but in reality only gave practical effect to the status of the mobile W/T and land line section, which functioned as part of North-West Area Headquarters. An advance party left Air Force Headquarters

on 6 January 1943, arriving at its destination of 57½ Mile, in the vicinity of Advanced Headquarters North-West Area, on 21 January 1943, with the rear party arriving on 5 February.

On 8 February, a party of 10 went to 52 Operational Base Unit and Berrimah to move the signals, cypher and operations rooms to the administration building at the base unit. A party of 11 proceeded to 11 Mile Transmitting Station and the civil aerodrome at Darwin to procure masts for a transmitting station at 58 Mile for the use of North-West Area Headquarters.

The first shipment of equipment and personnel left by air for Groote Eylandt on 23 August 1943, followed by more equipment on 31 August. The land line party returned from this location at the end of November. A calibration and locality survey of the Cox Peninsula was completed on 8 September and, later in the month, advice was received from RAAF Command that transmission of plain language by W/T was to cease.

Unit personnel moved to Fenton on 1 December 1943. The Unit also had parties at Batchelor, Gove, Truscott, Coomalie, Tindal, Gorrie and Darwin, erecting buildings and installing radio equipment, cable and aerial systems.

11 Signals Unit ceased to function on 22 August 1944.

#### *Commanding Officer*

22 December 1942 —Flight Lieutenant R.D. Austin

#### **12 Signals Unit**

This Unit was formed from the signals staff of Headquarters North-Eastern Area, and all personnel from Townsville W/T Station, under the temporary command of Flight Lieutenant M.H. Meyers. On 19 February 1943, the Unit took over part of St Patrick's College, the Strand, Townsville, as WAAAF barracks. All the Unit's WAAAF personnel were housed in adjacent buildings—St Rita's, St Patrick's and the Little Flower Academy.

On 8 March 1943, the first telephone conversation between Horn Island and Melbourne took place, with the standard of communication most satisfactory. During April, detachments from the Unit were sent to Charters Towers and Augusta, and installation parties to Augustus Downs and Merauke.

Karumba aeradio station was taken over by the RAAF on 30 June 1943, to provide all facilities for ground-to-air communications previously supplied by the Department of Civil Aviation. The W/T station

at Charters Towers was formed as a separate Unit on 15 October 1943. Horn Island aeradio facilities were taken over by the RAAF from AWA on 29 December 1943, to provide both W/T and R/T communications to aircraft on travel flights.

An advance party proceeded to Higgins Field on 22 April 1944, for H/F and D/F installation. By 12 September, R/T ground-to-air communications were available at CR D/F stations at Garbutt, Cooktown, Cloncurry, Karumba and Charters Towers.

The last diary entry for 12 Signals Unit was September 1944.

*Commanding Officer*

1 February 1943 —Squadron Leader N.W. Simmons

### **13 Signals Unit**

This Unit was formed at Mt Druitt on 22 November 1943. On 3 December, all personnel proceeded to Bradfield Park to be medically examined and tropically kitted. On 7 December, an advance party left for Strathpine, where unit headquarters was established the following day with 19 officers and 294 airmen on strength.

On 27 December, an advance party of 36 personnel proceeded to New Guinea, followed by an advance signals installation unit on 4 January 1944, and an advance party for cypher duties on 12 January. The Unit arrived at Lae on 28 January, proceeding to Nadzab, where a camp was established the following day. The wireless transmitting station was fully operational by 25 February, and the switchboard installed and working on 28 February.

Instructions were received on 11 March for the Unit to prepare for a move by air and sea to Cape Gloucester. Personnel departed for this location on 12, 14 and 16 March as 2, 4 and 5 Detachments respectively. During April, Unit personnel took part in the 'Persecution' (Aitape) operation, and 7 Detachment left by air for 'Red Herring' (Finschhafen). A detachment moved with equipment from Cape Gloucester to Tadjil on 11 May, followed by parties from Nadzab over the next month or so.

On 30 June 1944, 13 Signals Unit was disbanded, to be reformed as 4 Radio Installation Maintenance Unit which prepared to proceed to Noemfoor.

*Commanding Officer*

30 November 1943—Squadron Leader J.M. Brennan

## 20 Signals Unit

This Unit was formed on 21 December 1942, and set up a new camp at Rowe's Bay, Pallarenda, Townsville, shortly afterwards on 1 January 1943. Headquarters and six sections were formed—these sections were to be known as 1 to 6 Mobile Wireless Transmitting Stations. The Unit came under the temporary command of Flight Lieutenants W.J. Bull, R.L. Stewart and H.R. Amor, until the arrival on 22 February 1944 of the appointed Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant S.G. Edwards.

Sections 7, 8 and 9 were formed on 30 January 1943, and the name of the Unit was changed to 1 Signals Task Unit in September of that year. The Unit moved to a new location four miles from Fanning on 7 February 1944. On 21 March, parties of personnel from the Unit went to the site of a Beaufort aircraft, A9-452, which had crashed 5 miles south of the camp site, and transported crew members to hospital at Charters Towers.

Four signals task sections were formed on 19 May 1944. These sections were completely self-contained mobile signals sections, and their aim was to provide interim communications facilities quickly. They were equipped to be moved by plane or small craft to a recently captured locality. Signals task sections operated successfully at Goodenough Island, Kiriwina, Bulolo, Salamaua, Lae and Nadzab.

1 Signals Task Unit ceased to function on 31 August 1944, with disbandment to be completed approximately two weeks after that date.

### *Commanding Officer*

22 February 1944 —Flight Lieutenant S.G. Edwards

# VOLUNTEER AIR OBSERVERS CORPS

## NARRATIVE

The Volunteer Air Observers Corps was devised by the RAAF Directorate of Intelligence during the latter months of 1941, with the purpose of sighting and reporting enemy aircraft over Australian territory. On 22 December 1941, the Air Board ordered that the Volunteer Air Observers Corps be organised and the first observation station became operational at Bairnsdale, Victoria, on 25 December 1941.

Formal Cabinet approval for the establishment of the new organisation was given on 31 December 1941, and the organisation covered a 150-mile band inland from Port Douglas, Queensland, to Port Lincoln, South Australia, and from Albany to Northampton, Western Australia. Tasmania was covered by the establishment of observation posts in a 50–100 mile radius around industrial centres. The organisation was extended later to Daru Island (south of New Guinea), Darwin, Geraldton in the west, and an air raid warning system was established around Charleville, North Queensland.

Observation posts were manned by observers, under the control of a chief observer, and linked to control posts under a civilian commandant. Control posts used existing Civil Defence and Volunteer Defence Force facilities wherever possible. These fed data direct to the main control posts in the State capital cities.

Communications were effected by the 'Airflash' priority system through the normal telephone system, backed up by B-3 radios between the control and main centres. Using 'Airflash', a sighting could be transmitted to the control post within one to three minutes. Fire, flood and technical problems did cause longer delays, and the radio link was not without initial teething problems. For example, the link between Newcastle and Sydney exhibited reception difficulties during daylight hours. For communications in northern Australia, 150 pedal radios were utilised.

Volunteer Air Observer Corps personnel were controlled by the RAAF and recruited from local areas—persons not required for military service, of British nationality by birth, of good repute, and able to pass the basic hearing and eyesight test. The 'British nationality' criterion



could be waived by the Air Board. Members were entitled to wear an armband and were issued with the 'Observer' or 'Chief Observer' badges after undergoing the required aircraft recognition training. Aborigines were also employed in northern Australia.

There were initial procedural problems, with confusion existing at posts as to their responsibility for reporting aircraft movements. Number 2 Volunteer Air Observer Unit in Sydney complained in writing on 10 February 1942 about the lack of information on Allied aircraft movements. These problems were resolved, and reporting arrangements promulgated.

Not all problems were procedural. Members of the Wollongong Observation Post threatened mass resignation on 25 August 1942, claiming that the RAAF had not shown sufficient interest in their problems. A visit by a responsible officer from Sydney two days later resulted in a new Commandant being appointed and £20 (\$40) being donated by the members to improve the post.

The organisation was proving its worth. On 17 July 1942, the Goulburn Control Post tracked an aircraft which had been unable to land at Canberra. After landing at Goulburn, the passengers, Air Vice Marshal G. Jones, Admiral Sir Guy Rolfe and General Vernon Sturdee and 'other generals and cabinet ministers' were able to meet General MacArthur and the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, for talks later in the day.

By mid-August 1942, 13 control posts had been established. One of these was at Moruya on the southern New South Wales coast, which was established on 9 January, and became the centre of considerable activity. After the midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour, unusual sounds were heard, twinkling lights reported, shipping movements monitored and aircraft plotted. On 22 July the *William Dawes* was torpedoed off Tathra Heads. Four boats were sighted leaving the burning vessel and a launch was despatched from Moruya to assist two trawlers in rescuing the survivors. On 3 August the *SS Durrandee* was shelled off Moruya Heads and the control post organised the rescue of the survivors.

For security, and to facilitate liaison with Fighter Sector Stations and Main Control Post, the Air Board approved the control posts coming under direct RAAF control on 28 March 1942.

28 December 1942 was an overcast day with a 500-foot cloud ceiling, at Millaa Millaa, North Queensland. A lone B-17 Flying Fortress appeared above the observation post, and the Chief Observer, using his electric torch, signalled the name of the town to the circling aircraft and

then gave directions by which it landed safely at Mareeba. By August 1945, 340 observation posts had been issued with Lucas signalling lamps to meet such an eventuality.

1943 saw increasing pressure on the enemy, and the Volunteer Air Observer Corps function reflected the low probability of incursion by enemy aircraft over most of Australia. The Corps had taken over the coast watching role from the Army and, on 12 October 1943, the Air Board increased the organisation's responsibilities in air defence procedures when it agreed to members being employed in all zone filter stations in State fighter sectors south of the Tropic of Capricorn during the hours of darkness. The volunteers were to be supervised by experienced RAAF personnel. By August 1944, 600 volunteers had been trained, releasing servicemen for duty in the war zone.

The tradition of assisting those that flew was not neglected. On 9 March 1943, Sergeant George Gear flew a 1 Operational Training Unit Beaufort on low-level flying training. At 5.45 p.m., the observer at Paynesville, Mrs P. James, reported that the aircraft had crashed into Lake Victoria, 3 miles away. Together with her husband, she rowed to the wreck, where they assisted W. Robinson and L. Greer to extricate the unconscious pilot from the aircraft and bring him ashore. First aid was administered before the seriously injured Gear was transferred to Bairnsdale hospital.

The Corps peaked in manpower in 1944, with approximately 24 000 members manning 2656 observation posts and 39 control posts. From this time forward, numbers dropped. Unit 3 (Queensland), 4 (North Queensland) and 6 (South Australia) lost their unit status on 21 January 1944, to become sections of the relevant Air Defence Headquarters.

On 17 September 1944 a de Havilland DH-89 Dragon Rapide, VH-UXZ, bound from Rockhampton to Kingaroy, Queensland, met severe weather conditions. At 7 p.m. the aircraft was sighted at an observation post at Gympie, Queensland, with landing lights illuminated and intimating that a forced landing was imminent. Mr R. Behmer, the observer, organised for the local showground to be lit by vehicle headlights. The aircraft landed, short of fuel, on the improvised landing ground, with only minor damage.

Another incident occurred on 30 May 1944, when a Lakes Entrance, Victoria, observer reported an Anson from the General Reconnaissance School at Bairnsdale crashing 12 miles offshore. Within 30 minutes, John, Norman and Graeme Gray were aboard the *Lily G*, determined to brave

the strong westerly wind which had closed the port for the previous 12 days, to attempt to rescue the crew of the Anson. Flight Sergeants R.H. Stinton and K.J. Horn, Flight Lieutenant H. Gowing and Pilot Officer J.E. Goodwood were pulled aboard and returned to Lakes Entrance. For their bravery, the crew of the *Lily G* were awarded the Bronze Medallion by the Royal Humane Society.

Several units and sections (5 (Western Australia) and 4 (North Queensland)) were disbanded on 21 January 1945. On 31 August 1945, 2521 observation posts still existed, linked to 36 control posts. Only 14 310 volunteers remained active.

Between January 1943 and August 1945, the organisation had 'definitely' saved 78 aircraft, 'substantially' aided 710 and 'assisted' a further 1098. Assistance given ranged from supplying tea and biscuits to downed airmen, to advising their bases of their whereabouts and guarding the aircraft. Some 304 forced landing grounds were established throughout Australia which could be marked with a 30-foot triangle by local Volunteer Air Observer Corps members. When one adds the ship spotting, weather reporting and naval co-operation tasks, the Corps has an honourable record.

On 11 December 1945, the Secretary, Department of Air (Mr M.C. Langslow) recommended that the organisation be placed on a nucleus basis and on 10 April 1946 it was recommended that the Volunteer Air Observers Corps be disbanded forthwith.

# WOMEN'S ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

## NARRATIVE

The Australian airwoman came into being during World War II with the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in 1941. External pressure from Australian women who wanted to contribute to the war effort, coupled with internal pressure from the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett (RAF), who firmly believed that both men and women were needed to operate the RAAF, forced Cabinet to admit a few women on 12 months contracts. Approval was given on 4 February 1941 to enrol 320 women, mainly to fill shortages in the signals musterings.

This shortage was expected to be temporary but the need to release men for operational duties became critical and by mid-1942 the strength of the WAAAF had grown to 12 500 airwomen and 350 officers, ultimately increasing to a total of 18 038 in October 1944. The airwomen and officers were employed in 73 different musterings as diverse as fabric worker to photographer, clerk to cook and meteorological charter to motor transport driver. The main areas of employment were communications, transport, medical, logistics, technical and clerical—all support, non-combatant positions on mainland Australia. Women were employed 'only for the duration of the War', and were to be replaced by men when they became available.

During the war years, WAAAF members proved themselves and won high praise. Many regularly attend WAAAF reunions throughout Australia. Their fiftieth anniversary was celebrated at RAAF Williams in 1991, and over 1000 ex-members attended the two-day celebrations.

Australia decided to disband all the women's services (except the nursing services) at the end of World War II. But less than three years after the last members of the WAAAF were demobilised in 1947, an announcement was made in parliament by the Governor-General in February 1950 intimating the Government's intention to re-introduce a Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF).

In July 1950, Cabinet approved the re-establishment, in principle, of a women's air force, and in August came recognition that women were essential to the armed forces, in peace and in war. RAAF Headquarters

wrote to several ex-WAAAF officers inviting them to rejoin and assist in the formation of the new women's air force. No longer an auxiliary, the proposed new service was regarded as a branch of the Permanent Air Force, known as the WAAF. In November 1950, the Minister for Air announced the adoption of the title 'Women's Royal Australian Air Force' (WRAAF).

The size of the WRAAF was limited to an establishment of 30 officers and 832 airwomen who were to form a well-trained nucleus which could be quickly and efficiently expanded in an emergency. From the very beginning, members were to engage in productive duties to ease acute shortages of staff in certain trades (such as clerical and signals mustering) and release members of the RAAF for other work.

It had been an early intention to let the Service grow slowly and limit initial recruiting mainly to ex-servicewomen already trained in skilled mustering. Enlistments were delayed while Treasury sorted out problems involving relations between the three women's Services, but there was no lack of interest. Scores of enquiries had been received by June 1950, and by October, more than 2000 women had applied to join the WRAAF.

The first group of applicants were X-rayed and aptitude tested at Laverton on 12 December 1950. On 30 January 1951, the date accepted as the WRAAF birthday, 16 trainees from Victoria and seven from South Australia commenced No. 1 Recruit Course at Laverton. On the same day 27 recruits from New South Wales began No. 2 Recruit Course at Richmond. Other recruit courses followed in quick succession and training was conducted at Point Cook and Pearce.

Courses were later confined to Richmond and Laverton and ceased in 1952 and 1953 respectively. Under the new command structure WRAAF recruit training was transferred to Point Cook. In 1956 the WRAAF Recruit Training Section became a squadron at 1 Recruit Training Unit at RAAF Edinburgh. Courses were increased from four and a half weeks to five weeks in 1970. In January 1976 the WRAAF Training Flight was re-located to 1 Stores Depot at Tottenham, Victoria, as the decision had been taken to divorce the training of women from that of their male counterparts. In 1977, due to an intended increase of recruiting for WRAAF recruits, the flight was re-located to Laverton where the support infrastructure was better able to cope with the expected dramatic increase in numbers. On 10 January 1977, the flight was reformed at WRAAF

Training Unit under the command of the first female Commanding Officer.

Conditions of service for WRAAF were similar to those for airmen but an airwoman's pay was considerably less than the male rate in the early days. The Allison Committee in 1958 determined WRAAF rates of pay as 75 per cent of the basic wage,  $66\frac{2}{3}$  male margin for rank, 100 per cent male margin for skill, plus a special service loading and uniform allowance, minus a clothing saving deduction and value of rations and quarters. The National Wage Case of 1969 established the principle of gradual introduction of equal pay for identical work. In 1970 this principle was applied to airwomen who, in step with female civilians, gradually achieved 100 per cent of the basic wage by 1972. Non-commissioned officers, however, only received  $66\frac{2}{3}$  of the male margin granted for rank, which increased to 80 per cent in 1971. WRAAF officers, prior to 1970, received between  $66\frac{2}{3}$  and 68 per cent of male officer rates; this percentage was increased to 76–78 per cent from December 1970.

Promotion for section officers from 1951 to 1963 depended on vacancies with the result that some members were promoted in two years where others equally capable waited over five years before a vacancy occurred. In 1963 a new policy was effected whereby section officers were promoted after three years, subject to satisfactory service and their Commanding Officer's recommendation.

From the beginning the WRAAF was part of, but distinct from, the Permanent Air Force. WRAAF officers had limited command and control over airmen. Over the next 20 years there were some additions to the jobs airwomen could do and the geographical areas in which they could be employed, such as Townsville and Darwin. The first WRAAFs to serve overseas took part in a combined Australian and New Zealand exercise in 1967, but such milestones were reached slowly. The next major achievement occurred in 1972 with the promotion of three WRAAF officers against three RAAF posts. During the same year pay for aircraftwomen and leading aircraftwomen rose to 100 per cent of the male rate.

A change of policy in 1969 permitted a member of the WRAAF to continue serving after marriage if she elected before marriage to do so and undertook to meet in full the normal service requirements expected of unmarried members. In 1974 pregnant women were permitted to remain in the Service—a great breakthrough considering the former

practice of sending pregnant single WRAAF members to homes for unmarried mothers and then discharging them.

In 1975 a review of servicewomen's employment recommended substantial changes. Many non-traditional areas were opened up to women. That year saw the first female engineering cadet accepted, the first female radio technician and the first female accountant enlisted. Eventually the way opened for women to be recruited directly into the RAAF.

The first of these women was an education officer, appointed in February 1977, closely followed by an accountant, administrative officers, air traffic control and equipment officers. Their appointments were viewed with a mixture of excitement, as these new areas were opened to women, and considerable consternation as these women had all the authority of a RAAF officer, with command and control over airmen, whilst the members of the WRAAF were still constrained by the limitation of that Service. Finally, in 1977, all the officers and airwomen in the WRAAF (with the exception of two officers who elected to remain and retire at age 50) were transferred to the RAAF.

At the time of the transfer, although the type of employment for airwomen was wide ranging, there was still a perception that many areas remained closed to women. The situation did not seem clear until the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* necessitated a second major review of employment for women, which resulted in only those positions classed as combat or combat-related being closed to women. Over the next six years there was one small, but significant change. In 1987 the first female pilot was recruited. However, like women radio technicians who could never serve in an operational squadron, women pilots are limited to non-combat aircraft, such as special transport.

In May 1990, Australian Defence Force policy toward employment of women changed with the lifting of the caveat on combat-related positions. For airwomen, this meant that almost all positions were open to women in equal competition with the men. Apart from surface finisher and electroplater, which are closed for health reasons associated with embryo-toxicity, the only positions which are still closed to women are those in the ground defence officer category and the airfield defence guard mustering.







ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE 1921-1996

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



**ANSETT AUSTRALIA**  
One of the world's great airlines.



**BRITISH AEROSPACE  
AUSTRALIA**

**LOCKHEED MARTIN**  
Aeronautical Systems

**MCDONNELL  
DOUGLAS**

Principal sponsors of Anniversary activities



9 780644 427920

A51613 Cat. No. 94 3130 3



AGPS