

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

No 100 SQUADRON RAAF AND
BEAUFORT BOMBER OPERATIONS

SECOND EDITION

COLIN M. KING



Air Power Development Centre



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FOREWORD

From the darkest days in 1941 to the last bombing raid of the war in the Pacific, Australian-made Beaufort bombers were taking the fight to the enemy. Over 700 of these aircraft were built, for reconnaissance, torpedo strike and bombing missions from bases in Australia and the South-West Pacific islands. More than 450 crew members were killed in RAAF Beaufort operations and training.

The surviving Beaufort people, who still get together through their Association, have generously established a Foundation as a lasting memorial to the unswerving efforts of those who built, flew and supported these ubiquitous aircraft. Their selfless gesture will lead to a substantial financial prize being awarded to a senior cadet at the Australian Defence Force Academy each year.

I wish the Beaufort Bomber Foundation enduring success, as a wonderful way of keeping the deeds of the past alive for future generations.

Geoff Shepherd, AO
Air Marshal
Chief of Air Force

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ACS = Australian Corps of Signals	JK = John Kessey Collection
AG = Allan Gardner Collection	JI = Jack Infield Collection
ArG = Arthur Goodall Collection	JM = Jim Macnaughton Collection
AWA = AWA Ltd	JP = Jim Prendergast
BB = Bill Barlow Collection	KB = Kym Bonython Collection
BT = Bob Thomsen Collection	PB = Patricia Berry Collection
BW = Bill Ewing Collection	PI = Peter Irvine Collection
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IM = Ivan Morris Collection	SG = Sid Grantham
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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

*This is the place. Stand still, my steed,
Let me review the scene,
And summon from the shadowy past
The forms that once have been.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *A Gleam of Sunshine*

This is the history of the first Australian Beaufort Squadron, told amid the overall setting of the war against the Japanese in the South-West Pacific Area, 1941–1945.

From its inception, the squadron had a colourful career. Originating from a close connection to No 100 Squadron RAF in Malaya, to its final strike on the last day of the war against the enemy in New Guinea, the squadron upheld the proud traditions of courage and determination of the RAAF. Being the first of ten Australian Beaufort Squadrons, it pioneered training methods and torpedo techniques for Beaufort crews. It also had to initiate and develop skills to cope with varying techniques at sea, and to provide close support to ground troops.

The story that follows is primarily about the Beaufort aircrews in No 71 Wing, RAAF, and particularly of No 100 Squadron. However, we must not forget the other half of the team, those unsung heroes—the ground crews—who kept the planes flying. These men laboured in the steamy tropical heat of insect-infested jungles, or out in the blazing sun, to repair, refuel, rearm and guard the Beauforts. There were also many others who provided support: doctors, nurses, engineers, drivers, cooks and clerks, to name but a few.

No 100 Squadron history has been gleaned from RAAF Operations Record Books (Forms A.50), Unit History Sheets (Forms A.51), the Australian War Memorial archives, newspapers, photographic records and collective memories of members of the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association Inc. The story then comes to life through the voices of the flyers and the ground crews of the squadron. Anecdotes from the flyers and ground crew are reported in good faith, having been verified wherever possible. The history is well supported by more than 100 illustrations, the majority of which have not previously been published. Maps have also been included to assist in recreating scenes, and the narrative has been written in a manner so as to keep the non-military reader in mind. For the benefit of those closely associated with 100 Squadron, a nominal listing of those who served with the squadron is included, together with a roll call of aircrews and support staff.

Confronting an enemy in an operational squadron tests one's courage, and of such service no-one can have an armchair opinion. It increases the awareness of life for those who survive, and their experiences can be analysed for survival techniques. When reading the names of those who were lost, faces return as young and bright and smiling as ever they were. That is their legacy, while ours has been to grow old remembering. Stories of courage prevail throughout the history of 100 Squadron and also in the other Beaufort Squadrons. This book is dedicated to each and every one who served in Beauforts, especially those who did not return.

Memories crystallise in our minds as surely as we use a telescope or magnifying glass to view objects. We sift through memories from time to time to choose which are to be archived and which are to be discarded altogether. Some recollections can torment us all our lifetime, while others massage the ego by reminding us of accomplishments. Different people can also interpret memories of the same event somewhat individually. It seems that we choose what to remember; we carefully preserve some memories that we consider important, and which we are inclined to embellish over the years!

So dear reader, be tolerant if my interpretation and recollection of events of this crucial time in history are seen through a slightly different glass to yours.

EDITOR'S PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

The Second Edition of *Song of the Beauforts* has been published by the Air Power Development Centre as part of its commitment to Air Force history and to promoting a greater understanding of the evolution of the RAAF and the role of air power.

While it is essentially the same as the First Edition, published in 2004, it contains some minor changes and corrections, primarily identified by Colin King himself and by Kim Fawkes, Bill Henderson and John Macnaughtan. The layout of the book also has been changed to a more contemporary appearance.

Every effort has been made to ensure the correct spelling of people's names and placenames; however, given the time period since these events took place, it has not been possible to double-check every name mentioned herein. Further compounding the problem is the fact that some names are misspelt in official records of the period, such as Unit History Sheets. In addition, there are often several spelling variations for placenames, particularly those in Papua New Guinea.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The buck stops here.

Harry S. Truman, President USA

During my three years and five months service in the RAAF, while flying in two Beaufort squadrons, I gathered and retained a great deal of oral history and traditions. During my time with No 100 Squadron, I was captivated with the history of its formation and its traditions. In more recent times, my close connection with the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association Inc, together with a thirst for research, has enabled me to gather a vast amount of information on 100 Squadron and on Beauforts generally.

In choosing the history of 100 Squadron as the basis for this book, I drew on two sources of inspiration. No 100 Squadron was the first of the RAAF Beaufort squadrons, and consequently had experienced the most active service of any of the Beaufort squadrons. It also provided a framework for progressively describing one of Australia's greatest achievements—the building, flying and servicing of the Beauforts.

The dire straits that Australia was experiencing in 1941, prior to the formation of 100 Squadron RAAF, needed to be emphasised to set the scene. Associated world events and military operations provided a backdrop, in time and scale, to the deployment of further RAAF Beaufort squadrons and their missions.

In researching events of World War II, I have drawn information from many sources, as indicated in the listed material recommended for further reading. In recording the integrated history of 100 Squadron, the brief histories and synopses of the squadron, compiled by writers, such as David Vincent, Kim Fawkes, Daniel Hall, Bill Ewing, Ron Munro, John Kessey, and Herb Plenty, have been particularly helpful. On-line material, available through the Internet, from the RAAF Historical Section,¹ the Australian War Memorial archives, together with their photographic database, and the World War II roll of RAAF servicemen, have also been valuable aids. Diaries, photographs and recollections from 100 Squadron fliers, ground crew and support staff have all contributed to reveal the full squadron history, which has lain quiescent for so long, yet for so long has burned within me.

Official Operations Record Books and Unit History Sheets have been invaluable, and for Alan Storr's assistance with Forms A.50 and A.51, I am most grateful. The Nominal Roll of members, who variously served with 100 Squadron during the five years of its existence, was painstakingly extracted from RAAF records by John and Mary Macnaughtan. The 100 Squadron Roll Call listing came from members of

the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association Inc, Association newsletters, the paper *Goodenough Guts*, squadron and group photographs, and members' memories.

Those colleagues who have significantly played a part by so generously sharing their experiences, anecdotes, photographs and humour include John Snewin, Kym Bonython, Bill Ewing, Phil Harrison, Ron Munro, Arthur Brasnett, John Kessey, George Lewis, Tony Booth, Jim Prendergast, George Adamson, Ivan Morris, Alan Gardner, Stan Damman, Cliff Scott, Harry Clegg, John Macnaughtan (son of Colin), John Baker, Bill Barlow, John Caddy, Kevin Taskis and Reg Worgan.

My sincere thanks go out to all who have contributed material and supported my endeavours over the past four years. These valued friends and colleagues have enabled me to bring to light the history of 100 Squadron and 71 Wing after more than 60 years.

Special thanks are directed to my understanding family, particularly to my wife Betty, and daughter Sandra, for their encouragement and support. I have also appreciated the help of our close friend, Jill Ford.

I am indeed grateful to my confidant, Air Commodore John Macnaughtan (Ret'd), for his sanity check of the raw material, and to Wing Commander Keith Brent for his editing, dedicated proof reading and assistance in ensuring a standardised terminology throughout the Second Edition of this history.





THE STORY

SETTING THE SCENE

*There is a time in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current where it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*

Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

By 1941, militarism in Japan had long been a part of the country's tradition. The Samurai warrior was revered. War and conquests were the highest achievement of man. In the *Bushido* code, Japanese soldiers were required to fight to the death. To surrender was a disgrace, which justified committing *harakiri*. Propaganda in the press and schools, together with the State religion, educated the people to support military aggression. Preparation for war included the same concentration on physical training and indoctrination as in Nazi Germany.

When Japan seized the Chinese Province of Manchuria in 1931, and renamed it Manchukuo, the League of Nations quickly condemned the seizure. Many historians consider this act to be the actual start of World War II. Japan tried to justify the invasion by claiming that Manchukuo would solve their economic problems, and that Japan would be 'The Guardian of Peace in the Pacific'. Japan subsequently withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933. Shortly afterwards, the government became a military dictatorship, and 'Patriotic Societies' were established to foster aggression.

In 1936, Japan signed an anti-Communist treaty with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, as Japanese troops pressed further into China. By the close of 1938, the Japanese Army had overrun the whole of the Yangtze Valley. When Nanking was seized, almost 200 000 Chinese were massacred, and tens of thousands brutalised.

There was worldwide sympathy for the Chinese, but the only aid came from the USA, who extended credit to China and placed a 'moral embargo' on exporting aircraft to Japan. When Japan continued its aggression and occupied Indochina in 1940, the USA stopped shipping gasoline, iron, steel and rubber to Japan, and froze all Japanese assets in America. The Axis countries of the 1936 treaty then turned to Latin America for war materials, and in 1941, the USA prohibited American companies from doing business with German, Italian and Japanese firms in Latin America.

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With the fall of the Konoye Government in Japan on 17 October 1941, General Hideki Tojo was completely in charge. On 7 December 1941, Japanese bombers attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and, within hours, struck at American bases on Guam, Midway and Wake Island, as well as attacking Manila and Singapore. On 10 December, Japanese troops landed on Luzon in the Philippines.

At that time we knew very little about the Japanese. They were generally thought of as short, bespectacled, yellow men with cameras, capable only of making inferior copies of western goods. The attack on Pearl Harbor changed that perspective forever, and set the Americans and Australians on a steep learning curve. In December 1941, we had to come to terms with the aggression of the Japanese and the desperate need to defend our country.

BIRTH OF NO 100 SQUADRON RAAF

*But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe,
'Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?'*

Thomas Babington Macauley,
Lays of Ancient Rome – Horatius

With the threat of war with Japan becoming apparent, the British established gun batteries comprising heavy 15 inch guns, medium guns, and lighter 6 inch guns to defend Singapore. Popular opinion has it that the guns could only protect Singapore from a sea attack. However, the guns, except for one battery, were able to traverse and fire on a 360 degree track. The British colonial outpost was considered to be impregnable! Further, there was the air defence with two RAF squadrons of Vickers Vildebeeste torpedo bombers—Nos 36 and 100 Squadrons, with a total of 24 aircraft. They had been stationed at RAF Seletar, at the mouth of the Seletar River, Singapore Island, since 1934.

Following the Japanese invasion of China and subsequent push deep into French Indochina, the British and Australian Governments discussed the defence of Singapore and of Australia. Britain needed to bolster her defence of Singapore, and Australia had a vast coastline to defend. In particular, Britain needed to replace the obsolete Vildebeeste biplanes with state-of-the-art bombers.

Agreement was reached for Australia to develop its aircraft industry, and to build general reconnaissance bombers for both the RAF and RAAF. The new Bristol Beaufort, designed by Bristol's Les Frise, and recognised, at that time, as the fastest medium bomber in the world, was the natural choice.

The Department of Aircraft Production (DAP)² was established in Australia, with assembly and testing plants at Mascot, Sydney and also at Fishermen's Bend, Melbourne. As a pattern, a Beaufort, in kit form, was shipped out from England. After this aircraft (No L4448) was assembled and flown at Laverton on 5 May 1941, the DAP went into production of the bombers in earnest.

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When the first Beaufort, No T9540, came off the assembly line at Fishermen's Bend, it was successfully flown on 22 August 1941 by chief test pilot, Captain Tom Young. As additional Beauforts were completed and ready for testing, a second test pilot, Harold 'Slim' Shelton, shared the testing with Young.

Test flights often revealed problems that had to be corrected, such as propellers out of balance, hydraulic failures and faulty instruments. On one occasion, 'Slim' Shelton reckons that he nearly broke the sound barrier in a Beaufort during a steep dive from 24 000 feet:

The engines just ran away, the propellers went into fine pitch. You couldn't believe the noise. It must have been doing about 600 mph (960 km/h). The airspeed clock went around a second time. I managed to pull it out using all my strength at about 7000 feet. When I got down, the engine cowls, the oil cooler fairings, the wing fairings and tailplane fairings had all torn off. It looked like a plucked duck!

By this time, the Japanese had occupied the whole of Indochina and were a threat to Thailand and Malaya. No 1 Squadron RAAF, with Hudson aircraft at Kota Bharu, on the north-eastern tip of the Malay Peninsula adjacent to the Thailand border, had been placed on alert. RAAF No 8 Hudson Squadron and No 21 Squadron, equipped with Wirraways, were also monitoring the threatening situation from their base at Sembawang on Singapore Island. Other RAAF personnel were being posted to RAF No 100 Squadron. Wireless/air gunner Jim Barnes takes up the story:

We boarded the *Marella* for Singapore. It was a real pleasure cruise, with good food, good company and good weather. On arrival, John Blunt and I were transported to Seletar to join 100 Squadron RAF. Imagine our horror on discovering that our aircraft were Vickers Vildebeeste—a 1929 vintage biplane with three open cockpits, fixed undercarriage and a top speed of 130 mph. I was assigned to crew with Pilot Officer Basil Gotto, RAF and Sergeant Brian Toohey, RAAF navigator.

The first six Beauforts to come off the assembly line were allocated for evaluation by 100 Squadron RAF operating out of Seletar airfield. During July, in anticipation of receiving the Beauforts, which would replace the Vildebeestes, the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander R.N. McKern, took an advance party of six pilots and ground staff with him to Australia. By the end of November, the six aircraft were ready for delivery, and the RAF pilots and ground staff had been suitably trained.

In the early hours of 2 December 1941, the six Beauforts, Mk II with Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp engines, were ferried from Fishermen's Bend to Laverton, and readied for the flight to Singapore. The aircraft, Serial Numbers T9541 to T9545 and number T9547, were being ferried by a combination of RAF, RAAF and DAP aircrews.

The RAF contributed five of the six pilots, namely Wing Commander R.N. McKern, Squadron Leaders C. Lumsden and J.T.B. Rowlands, who had assisted with testing, and Flight Lieutenants John Burton and Peter Mitchell. The RAAF sent Pilot Officer Peter Gibbs,³ a former civil airline captain, navigator Flying Officer Stan Jaffer, who was on posting to 100 Squadron RAF, and wireless operators Flying Officers Eddy Dyring, John Chambers and Keith Neighbours, who were on posting to No 1 Hudson Squadron. The DAP contributed test pilot Captain Tom Young.⁴

Peter Gibbs recounts, 'As a way of travelling to Malaya, I was ordered to act as a copilot in one of the Beauforts, which departed Laverton on Thursday 4 December. This aircraft was unarmed, had no gun turret and was intended for evaluation by the RAF in Singapore.'



Beauforts Arrive in Singapore

The first stop for the flight of Beauforts was Alice Springs, and the next day they touched down at Batchelor aerodrome, just south of Darwin. Leaving Batchelor, the flight reached Surabaya,⁵ Java, and then continued on to Seletar, to arrive at 1500 hours on 6 December. In the haste to deliver the Beauforts to the RAF, the aircraft lacked any bomb or torpedo racks, and all, except one, were unarmed. Because of other deficiencies, only one Beaufort, T9543, was recognised by the RAF as operational. The remaining Beauforts had to be returned to Australia as unacceptable. The list of deficiencies and defects included inefficient fuel systems for operations in the tropics, airscrew problems, inadequate brakes and lack of armaments. In the meantime, two

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more Beauforts, T9548 and T9549, intended for the RAF, had reached Batchelor; but these two were recalled.

On 7 December, (the day before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on the eastern side of the International Date Line), a Hudson crew from No 1 Squadron RAAF sighted a Japanese convoy of one battleship, five cruisers, seven destroyers and twenty-two transports heading towards South Thailand or Malaya. Flight Lieutenant Mitchell (RAF) and Flying Officer Stumm (RAAF), in the one operational Beaufort, T9543, were sent to photograph the convoy, but the operation had to be curtailed because of bad weather. That night, Japanese troops began attacking Kota Bharu near the Thailand border.

Another reconnaissance flight was called, and Flight Lieutenant Peter Mitchell, with Sergeants Jack Gibson and 'Tiny' Barcroft, who had flown with him in Vildebeestes, set off in the Beaufort for a second attempt to take photographs.

Flying at 20 000 feet, Mitchell located the invasion fleet about 30 miles offshore. He switched on the camera installed in the aircraft and began taking photographs. The navigator, Jack Gibson, then sighted six Zeros taking off from an aircraft carrier. Mitchell continues:

After the first pass, as I went into a steep turn, the intensity of the barrage increased. Then the port engine was hit and the Beaufort rolled on her back and we started to spin. We got out of the spin at about 10 000 feet and headed for a cloud. The Zeros then attacked the Beaufort with concentrated firepower while Barcroft in the turret valiantly responded with the single Vickers machine gun. Our rear gunner was wounded but he hit one Zero, which he thought he had shot down.

By dodging in and out of cloud, Mitchell shook off the attackers and managed to coax the damaged Beaufort to Kota Bharu. He landed the aircraft safely, despite the airfield being under a strafing attack. Attempts to repair the aircraft were thwarted by continual strafing until, finally, she caught fire and was burnt out. So ended the short life of Beaufort T9543, on the first operational sortie by an Australian-made aircraft.

The camera, complete with the film, had been removed from the aircraft, and arrangements were quickly made for Mitchell and his film to be rushed to Seletar in a Buffalo aircraft. The film confirmed that Japanese ships were landing troops on the Singora-Pattani seafront in Thailand. It also revealed that there were sixty Japanese aircraft on Singora airfield, 120 miles north-east of Kota Bharu.

The first bombing raid on Singapore took place on 8 December, with further raids in the days following. When Butterworth and Kuantan on the east coast⁶ were evacuated and fell to the enemy, the raids on Singapore became more frequent. Then,

on Thursday 18 December, a reconnaissance Catalina from 205 Squadron found even more Japanese invaders on the Malay Peninsula.



Map – Malay Peninsula

RAAF navigator, Bill Ewing, on that mission, continues:

When the crew reported to the Operations Room for debriefing, I was instructed to report immediately to Squadron Leader A.W.D. Miller of 100 Squadron RAF. He informed me that I would be navigating in one of the four Beauforts leaving for Australia the next day. The fifth Beaufort was to follow within a few days when it was serviceable. We were to comprise 'Q' Flight of 100 Squadron RAF. We were to assemble and train crews (including ourselves presumably) on Beauforts, on which certain modifications would be carried out. We were expected to be back in Singapore fairly soon. To this end we were allowed to carry with us little more than a couple of clean shirts and a toothbrush. Some of our complement would be from 100 Squadron but the rest, like me, would be aircrew personnel from various other RAF, RAAF and RNZAF units in Malaya. I am uncertain of all the manning of the four aeroplanes, which left Seletar on 19 December 1941 but the nucleus was:

Squadron Leader A.W.D. Miller with Pilot Officer S.R. Jaffer (Nav), and Sergeant W. Davies (WAG) in Beaufort T9542.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Wing Commander R.N. McKern and Pilot Officer navigators L.H. Ophel and E.D. Suter flying in T9544.

Squadron Leader J.G. Kerby with Sergeants D. Wehl (Nav) and J.R. Axon (WAG) in T9547.

Flight Lieutenant John Burton, DFC with Sergeants W.J.M. Ewing (Nav), A.D. Buchanan and E.W. Sweetman (WAGs), and Eric Seaton (electrician) in T9545.

Warrant Officer 'Buck' Taylor (engineering officer), Flight Sergeant Peter Hinsman (fitter), Michael Britten and Sergeants Bertie Diss, Frank Lane, Moss and Skelton would have also filled up those aeroplanes.

Beaufort T9541 with Flight Lieutenant Peter Mitchell, Pilot Officer C.W. Wray (Nav) and Sergeant Stan Mars (WAG) left Seletar on 22 December.

The 4½-hour flight to Surabaya was without incident, but, on landing there, the first mishap occurred. T9544 ground-looped and damaged the undercarriage. It was late January 1942 before it was repaired, and it is not known who flew the plane back to Australia. By that time, Wing Commander McKern had left 'Q' Flight, but his crew, Len Ophel and Ted Suter, had rejoined the flight.

Bill Ewing takes up the story again:

On 20 December the 8-hour flight from Surabaya to Darwin, particularly over the Timor sea, was not without incident. In order to encourage an appropriate, if indeed not essential, flow of petrol, the navigator of T9545 was required to work the wobble pump for about 1½ hours. During that time Flight Lieutenant John Burton, DFC carried on a blistering monologue about the shortcomings of the Beaufort. As it happened, the petrol ran out and the engines shut down as we were taxiing after the landing.

I don't know why we landed at Tennant Creek instead of doing the extra 1½ hours to Alice Springs. Perhaps the reason may be found in a memo, 'Beaufort return from Seletar', of 24 December. Captain Thomas R. Young, Chief Test Pilot of the Aircraft Production Commission, reported that 'One machine was landed owing to one propeller going into coarse pitch. When landing, with one propeller in coarse pitch and the other in fine pitch, the machine swung badly and the undercarriage collapsed.' That would certainly explain why we diverted to Tennant Creek and why Squadron Leader Kerby ground-looped T9547 on landing there. Later that aircraft was repaired with parts cannibalised from T9549, which Harry Purvis and John Hampshire had pranged at Batchelor on the way to Singapore.

After an interesting night at Tennant Creek's solitary, and somewhat less than sumptuous, hotel, which somehow accommodated 15 travel-worn airmen, we left for Alice Springs. Then on Christmas Eve it was off to Fishermen's Bend without further incident, other than another workout on the wobble pump of T9545.

On arrival, DAP Captain Tom Young was annoyed and concerned at the way the two pilots treated the Beauforts on the ground. 'Instead of taxiing round the runways, Squadron Leader Miller taxied in a direct line from the southern end of the aerodrome over rough ground towards our hangars. Flight Lieutenant Burton was taxiing much too fast down the runway and did a 90 degree right-hand turn at well over 20 mph ... taxied onto the apron where his speed was too high as he jammed on his brakes and swung the machine round 180 degrees.'

Of this hastening to park the Beauforts, Bill Ewing says:

Speaking for myself and the other occupants of T9545, I empathised wholeheartedly with Flight Lieutenant Burton, DFC. He was no more eager than the rest of us to switch off the engines of the temperamental aircraft and terminate our exhilarating excursion. It was 3 o'clock on Christmas Eve when we clambered out of the aircraft after the 6½-hour flight from Alice Springs, grateful indeed to be on the ground and in Australia.

Then followed another incident, which, in different circumstances, might have been described as a formality. Across the tarmac, entourage respectfully in tow, strode Mr John Storey (later Sir John). He was an executive of the Aircraft Production Committee, and shortly to become the Director of the Beaufort Division of the DAP. He probably did not mean to be pompous or sound egotistical as he approached Flight Lieutenant Burton, DFC, 'And what do you think of our Australian-built Beaufort?' Well, the fearless aviator was in no mood to be provoked. He told him tersely, emphatically and rudely what he could do with T9545 and all the other Australian-built Beauforts. Bill Ewing recalls the episode well, 'While John Storey stood there dumbfounded, Flight Lieutenant Burton, DFC, stalked off, with his crew sniggering in his wake'.

Coinciding with the return of the Beauforts to Australia, the remaining RAAF aircrews in Seletar were recalled to train on Beauforts, with the intention of flying them back to Malaya. On 27 December, RAAF aircrew serving in 100 Squadron RAF (John Birtwistle, Ken Holmes, Eric Bastrup, Charlie Patterson, Doug Hacker, Geoff Brokenshire and George Gibbons), together with 100 Squadron RAF support staff, left Singapore on an Empire Flying Boat for Surabaya, Java. This was the last civil airline flight out of Singapore. Two days later, they boarded a Qantas Flying Boat for Sydney.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Squadron Leader A.W.D. Miller took command of 'Q' Flight at Nhill, Victoria. His task was to establish operational training facilities for his Beauforts, but he was far from satisfied with the situation. There were only three Beauforts on strength, and he considered the inland town of Nhill as less than ideal for torpedo training. Miller sought additional aircraft and a move to a station near the coast. On 1 January 1942, 'Q' Flight moved to Point Cook, with the view that 100 Squadron RAF Flight would quickly train and return to Singapore.

Meantime, Singapore continued to suffer frequent night raids. Then, in a desperate attempt to halt an invasion at Endau in north-eastern Malaya, eight Hurricanes, four Buffaloes, and nine Vildebeestes from 36 and 100 Squadrons, together with three Albacores, engaged the enemy.

The Allied aircraft met a large number of Japanese Zeros as they pressed on with the strike. Although hits were made on enemy transport, the whole operation was futile. All the Albacores, eight Vildebeestes and one Hurricane were shot down. The Officers in Command were among those killed, and many of the surviving crews were wounded. One of the Vildebeeste pilots to be killed that day was Neil Gill of the RAAF. The Vildebeeste and Albacore Squadrons had been decimated.

RAAF air gunner, Jim Barnes, flying with 100 Squadron RAF on an earlier Endau raid, reports:

We flew night missions against the Japanese and then we did a daylight raid on a Jap seaborne force at Endau. After dive-bombing a ship we set off for home and were attacked by a Zero. My Lewis gun jammed after firing only six rounds. Our pilot, Paul Gotto, took evasive action and we managed to return to base. Not so fortunate were four other Vildebeeste aircraft. In the next sortie, of twelve planes to go out and attack, we lost eight. A sad day.

Jim Barnes, along with some 200 other RAAF men, mostly ground staff, were captured shortly afterwards and taken to Japan, where, due to disgraceful abuse, a third of them perished. Barnes, however, was one of the fortunate ones to survive.

On receiving news of this latest tragedy, Squadron Leader Miller sought to move the 'Q' Flight from Point Cook to Singapore, as originally planned. However, the rapid sequence of events in Malaya had altered the agreement between the Australian Air Board and British Far East Air Headquarters, for Australia was now under very real threat. 'Q' Flight, now referred to as 100 Squadron RAF, would remain in Australia on loan to the RAAF.

Records show that T9558 had been allocated to the squadron on 24 December and T9552 on 21 January 1942, bringing the total strength to 8 aircraft. At that time the squadron continued to wear the code letters 'NK', which had been the 100 Squadron RAF Vildebeeste's code letters.

While the Japanese were advancing towards Singapore and into the Netherlands East Indies, they were also making a pincer movement from the Caroline and Marshall Islands to seize the whole of the South-West Pacific islands. Particularly targeted were New Britain and New Guinea. Rabaul, situated on the western tip of the Gazelle Peninsula in northern New Britain, was bombed for the first time on 6 January 1942. Pamphlet dropping followed, the pamphlets reading: 'Surrender at once and we will guarantee your life, treating you as a prisoner of war. Those who resist us will be killed, one and all.' Then on the morning of 20 January, more than 100 planes attacked Rabaul in several waves, leaving all the buildings in the town, the aerodrome and the harbour facilities severely damaged.

Wing Commander John M. Lerew, commanding 24 Squadron, had only four Hudsons and eight Wirraways to defend Rabaul. Seven Wirraway crews valiantly engaged the enemy, but the Wirraway training planes were no match for the Japanese armada. Six of the Wirraways were shot down or badly damaged and crashed. Next day, reduced to one Hudson and two Wirraways, Lerew was planning to evacuate when he received a signal from the Air Board, instructing him to remain and to keep the airfield open.

Then followed the order for all available aircraft to attack an enemy convoy heading for Rabaul. Lerew's classic reply to the Air Board, of the gladiator addressing Caesar before mortal combat, is now folklore: '*Morituri Salutamus*—We who are about to die salute you'.⁷ Whether the message was sent in pure Latin, or had the superfluous 'We' and 'you' included, is debatable, but the meaning was the same. The one and only Hudson took off to search for the convoy, but failed to find the ships.

When the Japanese took Rabaul on 23 January, it was to become the first major stronghold of the Japanese in the South-West Pacific and the headquarters of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Those who eventually escaped to safety from New Britain were few in number. Wing Commander Lerew and the remnants of the squadron were some of the few. Of those captured at Rabaul, prisoners of war—numbering about 300—appeared to be the more fortunate ones when put aboard the *Montevideo Maru* to be interned in Japan. Ironically, the ship never reached Japan, and the story persists that the American submarine *Sturgeon* torpedoed the *Montevideo*, which sank with the loss of all lives.

The capture of Singapore by the Japanese on 15 February 1942 was an even greater shock to the Allies, when a large force of British troops and 18 490 Australians of the 8th Division were taken captive. It was a humiliating defeat—just one week after the Japanese had sunk HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* off the coast of Malaya.

The relentless Japanese forces also penetrated deeply into the Netherlands East Indies, including Timor Island. RAAF No 13 Squadron Hudsons, stationed at Laha, Ambon, were ordered to return to Darwin at the end of January, and on 18 February, No 2 Squadron Hudsons vacated Koepang⁸ in South Timor.

The remnants of the battle-weary Hudson⁹ crews from Koepang barely had time to get a well-earned sleep when Japanese planes hit Darwin at 9.58 am on 19 February 1942. Naval Commander, Mitsuo Fuchida, the same pilot who caught Pearl Harbor unprepared, also found Darwin Harbour off guard, as he led his carrier-borne dive-bombers in the attack.

As fate would have it, 10 Kittyhawks of the United States 33 Pursuit Squadron, en route to Java, encountered bad weather and turned back to Darwin as the attack was taking place. Lieutenant R. Oestreicher immediately attacked and shot down one enemy plane, but eight of the Kittyhawks were destroyed either on the ground or before gaining combat altitude.

An hour and a half later, two formations of Helen and Betty¹⁰ Japanese bombers, from newly prepared airstrips in the Southern Celebes, pattern-bombed the RAAF base with devastating results. They met no resistance in the air, but the anti-aircraft gunners went into action and destroyed four, and possibly five, Japanese aircraft. The RAAF defenders included Wing Commander Arch Tindal, DFC, who was killed while manning a Vickers machine gun. He is remembered as one of the gallant few at Rabaul, New Britain, on 20 January. The RAAF Base at Tindal in the Northern Territory is named in his honour.

Darwin suffered severely from the February raid. The official casualty figures for the raids on 19 February show 241 people killed and 355 wounded. Three warships and five merchant vessels were sunk, and many more were set on fire. Among the casualties was the hospital ship *Manunda*. The runway, tarmac, hangars and most of the buildings at the aerodrome were demolished, together with 26 aircraft. The fearful public, however, were not to hear of the real extent of the damage or loss of life until years later, because Keith Murdoch, the newspaper magnate and the Government censor, complied with a request from Prime Minister John Curtin to withhold that information.

The bombing on 19 February was the first of 64 air raids on Darwin, and the question arises as to why the Japanese would expend so much effort on Darwin, which at that time lacked any effective strike capability? In retrospect, it can be seen that, after the fall of Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies, Darwin was the one and only base with the potential to threaten Japan's control of the oil fields in the Netherlands East Indies, and the enemy desperately needed that oil.

In those early months of 1942, the whole of Australia's vast coastline was vulnerable. Air raids in the north quickly followed Darwin's first raid. Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Milingimbi, Katherine, Port Hedland and Horn Island were bombed and strafed, and later minor bombing raids were carried out on Mossman and Townsville. Broome suffered Australia's second-worst attack on 3 March 1942, when 70 people were killed and 24 aircraft were destroyed, including 16 Catalinas.

The Japanese, at that time, seemed to be invincible, and Australia's Defence Chiefs were very concerned. Australia had never faced such dreadful odds. Douglas Gillison, in his book, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–1942*, points out that, about the time of the first Darwin raid, the Australian General Staff concluded that the north of Australia would inevitably be overrun by the Japanese military juggernaut.

Consequently, a contingency plan was drawn up to establish a defence line approximating the Tropic of Capricorn, a decision which the press embellished over time to call the 'Brisbane Line'. To confuse an enemy, signs were removed from railway stations and streets in the northern towns—even the names of hotels were removed if they identified a location. Evacuation plans were made to move women and children further south should the need arise. Key civilian sites, such as water and gas reservoirs, were earmarked for destruction. Beaches were fortified with tank traps and barbed wire. Sandbags shielded public buildings in all large towns and cities on the eastern seaboard, and air-raid shelters were hastily built. Anti-aircraft guns and searchlights were set up at strategic headlands, and anti-submarine cables were stretched across harbours. Even Bondi Beach in Sydney was protected with barbed wire.

During those weeks of crisis in January and February 1942, the officers and men of 100 Squadron RAF had been impatiently gathering their resources, and training on new Beauforts as they became available. By the end of January, 100 Squadron, on loan to the RAAF, was sufficiently trained to be usefully engaged on sea patrols, and it was moved from Point Cook to Richmond, NSW.¹¹

An entry in the Operations Record Book at RAAF Station, Richmond for 31 January shows:

At 1842 hours [31 January 1942] No. 100 BEAUFORT SQUADRON, R.A.F. arrived at RICHMOND, coming under control of Southern Area from the date of arrival to carry out training as well as operational flying during its stay at RICHMOND. The squadron included eight aircraft, ten officers and sixty airmen.

Then on 1 March 1942, following receipt of an official Air Force communiqué 24/42, the Richmond Operations Record Book stated:

On the authority of AFCO 24/42 dated 28th February 1942 No. 100 Squadron R.A.F. which had been employed as an operational training unit on loan to the R.A.A.F., became w.e.f. 25.2.42 No. 100 Squadron R.A.A.F. stationed at R.A.A.F. Station RICHMOND.

Wing Commander A.W.D. Miller still remained temporarily in charge, ably supported by Flight Lieutenant Peter Mitchell. However, Bill Ewing remembers that none of the

RAF or RNZAF personnel were officially transferred to the RAAF, even though they remained at Richmond with the new squadron for several weeks.

As of 7 March 1942, Squadron Leader J.G. Kerby assumed temporary command of the squadron upon Wing Commander Miller's posting to No 5 Fighter Sector Headquarters Darwin. By that time, 100 Squadron RAAF had 12 Beauforts of the original Bristol design to engage in a limited amount of operational training. Training, however, was hampered not only by the lack of serviceable aircraft, but also by having only one dual-cockpit aircraft available for pilot training. Beaufort T9642, fitted with dual control, was in use every day. No 30 Squadron Bristol Beaufighters (the fighter version of the Beaufort) was being formed at Richmond at the same time, and the training plane was used for training pilots for both squadrons.

Weekly reports on training methods and details of training carried out, together with general status reports of the new squadron, were submitted to Southern Area. Then on 13 March, Squadron Leader Kerby and Flight Lieutenant Peter Mitchell met with Wing Commander J.R. 'Sam' Balmer in Laverton to discuss these details. Three days later, all RAF and RNZAF personnel at Richmond were withdrawn from the new squadron and repatriated, or in some cases posted to Ceylon, and on 18 March 1942, Wing Commander Balmer was appointed Commanding Officer.

John Raeburn 'Sam' Balmer¹² was a regular airman, having enlisted in the peacetime Air Force in 1932 as an Air Cadet. By 1 March 1937 he held the rank of Flight Lieutenant. As the founding Commanding Officer of No 13 Squadron at Darwin on 1 June 1940, he was elevated to Squadron Leader. As a Wing Commander, he was posted to Headquarters at Darwin on 2 August 1941 to serve as a Liaison Officer. Then on 20 January 1942 Wing Commander Balmer took command of No 7 Squadron at Laverton, which was at that time virtually an Operational Training Unit. He had earned a name as a perfectionist in overcoming obstacles and getting things done. An incident in Sid Grantham's book, *The 13 Squadron Story*, illustrates Balmer's dry wit and scorn for obstacles. Jim Hepburn (then a flight commander in 13 Squadron) had made a forced landing in pouring rain on an inadequate strip on Bathurst Island. 'Despite having the brakes on full, the aircraft slid onwards at the strip's end and into a saltwater swamp. It slowly sank almost to its belly. I sent a signal to 'Sam' Balmer and back came the reply, "You got it in, you get it out." Five days later Hepburn flew it back to Darwin! Because of his professionalism, 'Sam' Balmer was the very man needed to establish and train the first squadron to be equipped with the Australian Beaufort bombers.

On arrival at the Richmond RAAF Base, Wing Commander Balmer met the recently appointed Commander, Group Captain F.R.W. Scherger, who was well known to him. He also discovered that the new Senior Flight Commander was a close friend, Squadron Leader Peter Parker.



No 100 Squadron Badge
The motto, in Malay, reads 'Do not disturb a hornet's nest'

On taking command of 100 Squadron, Balmer discussed with the senior officers the composition and of the squadron's RAF beginnings. He decided to acknowledge the valour of its predecessor RAF squadron by adopting the 100 Squadron RAF badge, with the skull and crossbones emblem, bearing a crown and Malayan proverb as its motto. The proverb, *Sarang Tebuan Jangan Dijolok*, translates freely to 'Do not stir up [disturb] a hornet's nest'. It carried a warning and a strong hint of retribution to would-be aggressors, and adequately described the spirit of both the 100 RAF and the 100 RAAF Squadrons. As a further association with the RAF squadron, the 'Q' from 'Q' Flight became part of the squadron identification letters, 'QH'.

Ron Munro recalls that the aircrews of 100 Squadron RAAF (in order of pilot, navigator and wireless/air gunners) were at that time:

- Wing Commander Balmer and Flight Sergeants Greenhill, Munro and Mahoney
- Squadron Leader Parker, a newcomer to the squadron, Pilot Officer Jaffer, and Sergeants Brokenshire and Redgrave
- Pilot Officer Mercer, Pilot Officer McKay, and Sergeants Buchanan and Axon
- Flying Officer Green, Pilot Officer McCarron and Sergeants Sweetnam and Watson
- Flying Officer Ross, Pilot Officer Gower, and Sergeants Powell and Everett

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- Flight Lieutenant Ryan, Pilot Officer Reid, Sergeant Birtwistle and Pilot Officer Sapwell
- Flying Officer Stumm, Pilot Officer Hendy and Sergeants Walker and Hale
- Pilot Officer Nicholas, Pilot Officer Wray, Sergeant Mars and Pilot Officer Fitzgerald
- Flight Lieutenant Bernard, Pilot Officer Ophel, and Sergeants Osborne and Daws
- Flying Officer Law-Smith, Pilot Officer McDonald; and Sergeants Whitford and Heagney
- Pilot Officer Elcoate, Pilot Officer Suter and Sergeants Shepley and McBean
- Flight Lieutenant Dey, Pilot Officer Waterhouse and Sergeants Norman and Solomon



**'Sam' Balmer and Crew at Richmond
(L-R: Max Mahoney, Al Greenhill, 'Sam' Balmer and Ron Munro)**

Posting of RAAF personnel to the new squadron commenced immediately. Flight Lieutenant Lloyd Douglas, Pilot Officer Harold O'Connor and NCOs Dudley Wehl, Ken Holmes, Eric Bastrup, Charlie Patterson, Charles Hucker, Jim Hatfield, Ted Jones, Stan Webber, Horrie Shying, George Gibbons and Bill Ewing were among the first postings.

Bill Ewing recalls:

Among the aircrew postings were six Sergeant pilots from Nhill—Ken Waters, Ken Dulling, Allan James, Dave Forrest, Bob Duncan and Jack Pittman. These newcomers were outnumbered and outranked by a vast bevy of senior flyers assembled by the new Commanding Officer. The CO's service number was 68 and his ten years of experience as a professional airman did not, at the time, include familiarity with products from the Empire Air Training Scheme. He looked first to other permanent RAAF officers, particularly those with experience in Malaya and Darwin.

The shortage of ground staff was also corrected, with postings to augment the 38 RAAF support staff from the original RAF squadron. Prior to these postings, RAAF personnel from No 2 Aircraft Depot, Richmond had assisted to a certain extent with aircraft maintenance. Then the subsequent arrival of Sergeant Harry Clegg did much to coordinate and improve the maintenance section. Clegg, a mechanical engineer, had been a lecturer at the RAAF Engineering School, Melbourne since joining up in 1940. He was keen to have first-class repair teams, and to have a minimum of unserviceable aircraft at any one time, an ideal to which the ground staff cheerfully responded. However, the lack of various spare parts continued to frustrate the maintenance crews.

For operational training purposes, a detachment known as 'C' Flight, led by Flight Lieutenant Cliff Bernard, was established at St Mary's, 10 miles south of Richmond, and for the next two months the squadron continued to consolidate. Wing Commander Balmer introduced a revised method of training to meet the needs of new pilots, observers (navigators) and wireless/air gunners being posted to the squadron. At one stage, a surplus of air gunners arrived on posting to the squadron, but the new Adjutant, Flying Officer Montague, was told to dispose of them quickly to other units—some went to No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale and others to Bostons in No 22 Squadron.

Training new pilots continued, but having only one dual-controlled Beaufort slowed down the procedure and limited the time spent with each trainee. Bob Duncan recalls, 'I was a sergeant pilot in those days and Flight Lieutenant Bernard taught me to fly the Beaufort. It was especially slow for sergeant pilots as their training came after the officers had completed their training.' Some of the officers in the training program included 'Smoky' Douglas, Bill Ross and Jimmy Ryan, who all had operational experience, and Chas Sage and Peter Parker, who had recently joined 100 Squadron.

Training was also continually interrupted because the squadron continued to carry out anti-submarine and shipping patrols, along with Hudson crews based at Richmond. The Richmond Operations Record Book for March 1942 shows that Beaufort Mk II - T9556 carried out the first armed operational patrol on 4 March. Then five aircraft were used with a rotation of crews to carry out 18 patrols during that month, averaging about four hours on each patrol. On at least two occasions, the crews completed their patrols and landed at the nearest RAAF station, which was Evans Head. Frequently there was a crew of five on these patrols, which probably served as a training exercise for newcomers to the squadron.

In April, the number of area, anti-submarine and convoy patrols increased to 52 for the month, as more serviceable aircraft became available. Perhaps the largest convoy requiring air escort patrols from Richmond took place for several days in April, when the anti-submarine chaser *Bingera*, light cruiser *Adelaide* and the corvette *Rockhampton* of the RAN were the guard vessels. Beaufort T9552, piloted by Flight

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Lieutenant Lloyd 'Smoky' Douglas, was involved in that escort patrol on 9 April for about five hours.

By the end of April 1942, 100 Squadron aircraft strength had increased to 18, and the number of personnel to 40 officers and 270 other ranks. At this stage, the Beaufort aircraft were still bearing the RAF serial numbers and continued to do so until 30 June 1942. The 'A9' coding for Beauforts was then introduced, and all existing Beauforts were reallocated that code. The first Beaufort, T9540, became A9-1 and T9552, for example, became A9-13.

FIRST STRIKE

*I'll sing you a song of the Beauforts,
From the mainland they flew to Papua,
To get close to the Nips, with their scrap metal ships,
And they're out for a scrap, nothing truer.*

H.M. Cummings

While 100 Squadron was engaged in sea patrols and operational training at Richmond, the Japanese continued their southern thrust. On 8 February 1942, their Navy bombarded the township of Lae as a prelude to landing their troops there and also at Salamaua on either side of the bay, at the mouth of the Markham River. The enemy, at the same time, was also consolidating its gains in Indonesia. Borneo was already occupied, as were parts of Sumatra and Bali.

One remarkable story of evading capture by the Japanese in Indonesia concerns Athol Snook, a navigator, who later joined 100 Squadron. Athol was one of a party of 12 airmen—eight RAAF and four RAF—led by Wing Commander Jeudwine, to set off in an open boat from Java at dusk on 7 March 1942 for Australia. As they began to get under way, a submarine surfaced about a mile from their boat. Wing Commander Jeudwine takes up the story:

Her conning tower opened and we saw a Japanese officer scrutinising us through binoculars. A rating stood forward at the breach of a six-pounder and another was standing by a machine gun. She came within about 50 yards of us, made a half circle, and then disappeared towards the east. I do not need to emphasise our reaction!

A month later a huge whale did the same thing. It surfaced and looked them over, much to their consternation, before submerging again. On short rations and little water in the stifling heat, they were swept by tropical storms and then becalmed for days on end. Bert Furler, who flew in Flying Officer Allan James' crew in 100 Squadron, adds that Athol assisted with the navigation for that epic voyage of 1500 miles in the open boat. After 45 days they landed on Fraser Island, WA at 0230 hours on 20 April, where they were rescued by a Catalina flying boat.

Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Balmer, was anxious to have 100 Squadron fully operational as soon as possible. He ensured that there was a continuous build-up of personnel and equipment. At the same time, a strict training program was arranged, including conversion training for some pilots, but all this had to be done

while regular surveillance of coastal waters continued. It was during this busy period that Group Captain F.R.W. Scherger, AFC¹³ paid a visit to the squadron on 5 May to see the training taking place in the Beauforts and to inspect the maintenance facilities in the workshops.

Shortly after this visit, 100 Squadron was officially described by the RAAF as a General Reconnaissance-Bomber-Torpedo Squadron, which resulted in moving the squadron closer to the theatre of war. On 11 May, Wing Commander Balmer set off with an advance party of 26 officers and 84 other ranks in 14 Beauforts for an Advanced Operational Base, three miles north of Cairns in North Queensland. 'Sam' Balmer's crew, in T9598 (A9-46), comprised navigator Stan Jaffer and wireless/air gunners Ron Munro and Max Mahoney. Armourer Bob Gow remembers flying with John Mercer's crew, while Ken McKay, Doug Shine, Les Giffin and Edgar White were some of the other ground crews in the same forward move.

Ron Munro describes the situation in Cairns, where news of the Coral Sea Battle three days earlier was still fresh in people's minds. The nearness of the enemy to Australia was further reinforced by a report of a submarine flotilla off the eastern coast:

When we arrived in Cairns, people were leaving the city in droves as there was fear of a Japanese invasion. Hundreds of cars were left at the railway station with keys still in the ignition switch.

There was no accommodation for us at the airport, so we moved into the empty nearby houses, many of which had been left with food still on the tables, clothes in the wardrobes, and abandoned pets were roaming about.

On the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, the author discussed the battle with six of the survivors from the aircraft carrier *Lexington*. They were Vincent Anderson, Marvyn Hansard, Scott West, Claude Stark, Richard Cooney and 'Curley' Elliott:

The American task force comprised aircraft carriers *Yorktown* and *Lexington*, two Australian cruisers,¹⁴ one American cruiser and three destroyers. The Japanese had three aircraft carriers, *Shokaku*, *Zuikaku* and *Shoho*, four heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, one destroyer and one seaplane tender. American Intelligence, having broken the Japanese codes only the previous month, were aware of Admiral Yamamoto's strategic plan to seize Tulagi in the Solomons and Port Moresby, which would give them control of the Coral Sea and cut the allied shipping lanes to Australia. The American Task Force, commanded by Rear Admiral Fletcher, intercepted the Japanese fleet commanded by Admiral Takagi heading for Port Moresby.

It was a unique sea battle and the first of the great sea battles of the Pacific. The ships were never within range to engage each other in combat. The battle was fought entirely by aircraft. American planes from their aircraft carriers,

augmented by allied planes stationed at Townsville, fought a pitched battle in attacking the Japanese fleet and the Japanese planes attacked the American fleet in the same manner. While there were similar losses on both sides, the Japanese fleet was forced to abandon plans to take Port Moresby.

The Battle of the Coral Sea was the turning point in the Japanese thrust southward. It not only staved off the invasion of Port Moresby but also saved Allied shipping and the Port of Townsville from heavy air raids. At that time the Port of Townsville was unable to cope with the arrival of a tremendous amount of war stores. Huge quantities of engineering and ordnance stores had arrived at such a rate that it had not been possible to stack them systematically. They were simply dumped en masse on the beach.¹⁵ In addition, North-Eastern Area RAAF Headquarters had been established in Townsville, and Garbutt airfield was being expanded to three 5000 feet runways. Allied armed forces filled the town. It was, by far, the most overcrowded place in Australia.



Townsville, 1942
War stores dumped on the beach

Wing Commander Balmer was dissatisfied with the limitations of the aerodrome at Cairns, which was subject to partial flooding of the gravel airstrip, as it was only five feet above sea level. He wasted no time in investigating existing airport facilities further north. Conditions on Groote Eylandt, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, were too primitive, so his next consideration was Milngimbi, in Arnhem Land. This outpost was supposed to be one of Australia's northern defences. However, on landing on the

gravel airstrip at Milingimbi, the aircrew found the place deserted. There were no buildings at all—only a batch of about 100 drums of fuel stashed near one end of the airstrip. Refuelling had to be carried out by using a hand pump from one of the 44-gallon drums.

Accordingly, the temporary arrangements at Cairns continued for another 11 days, during which time daily anti-submarine patrols were carried out. A new Air Operations Base was then completed at Mareeba on the Atherton Tablelands, and Balmer immediately moved operations to the new station. No 100 Squadron was the first unit to take up residence there on 22 May 1942.

However, the squadron was not complete, as four of the Beauforts and a number of aircrew and ground staff remained temporarily at Richmond, under the command of Squadron Leader Charles Sage, aided by the Adjutant, Flying Officer A. Montague.

The aircrews had to complete their conversion course and operational training before they were to be moved to Mareeba, and there were still administrative matters to be finalised at Richmond station. Flying Officer Davidson and his Fairey Battle aircraft, allotted to the squadron earlier, for drogue-towing gunnery training, were therefore also retained at Richmond.

When Richmond Station heard the news of the midget submarine attack in Sydney Harbour, Squadron Leader Sage and crew carried out an armed search eastwards from Sydney in T9561 (A9-22) on 1 June, but reported no sighting of Japanese submarines or other vessels. The St Mary's satellite station (Richmond area) was then closed, and Flying Officer E. Dale, with the assistance of the Squadron Adjutant, Pilot Officer J. Lovell, organised the movement of squadron personnel and equipment from Richmond to Mareeba by train. It took five days to complete the tedious train trip.

The Mareeba aerodrome was situated near the Barron River, some 25 miles south-west of Cairns, but elevated at 1200 feet above sea level. The airstrip was unsealed and very dusty. Legend has it that the ship bringing bitumen to seal the runway and tarmac had been sunk. Experiments with substitute materials to combat the dust problem resulted in a mixture of molasses covered with sand being used. The squadron's immediate role was still to provide convoy escorts and to continue with anti-submarine patrols.

When the squadron had settled into a routine at Mareeba, 'Sam' Balmer was eager to test the Beaufort in an operational environment. He asked Squadron Leader Peter Parker, who joined the squadron shortly after Balmer took command, to accompany him to Port Moresby on 26 May.

Port Moresby was quickly becoming a large Allied military base. It was the nerve centre for operations and a staging depot for Army and Air Force activities. All European civilians had been evacuated after the first bombing raid.

At that time there was only the one airstrip at Port Moresby, and conditions were primitive, with a few timber buildings, thatched with the local kunai grass, for administration, while all servicemen were housed in tents. All maintenance work was carried out in the blazing sun or in a tropical downpour, and toilet facilities were multi-hole arrangements surrounded by one hessian screen. Black Americans, working with a bulldozer, were kept busy piling up wreckage of aircraft and vehicles on each side of the airstrip after bombing raids.

Bomb craters were then filled, and a steamroller rolled the gravel airstrip back to serviceability. It was the dry season and the sun beat down mercilessly. Inside the tea and pie shop operated by the 'Salvos' at one end of the strip, the humidity was stifling. Its four walls and skillion roof of galvanised iron would collapse if a bomb landed anywhere near it but, as soon as the 'all clear' sounded, the 'Red Shield' hut could be pushed back up again in about 10 minutes.

As Balmer made his approach towards the airfield, an American ack-ack battery began firing, and puffs of brown smoke burst high in the air and erupted into black hands with long fingers. Ron Munro in Balmer's crew takes up the story:

Max Mahoney, our gunner, called on the intercom, 'there's flak up here and we are right in line with it'. Then seconds later, 'Zero on our tail, 6 o'clock, 600 yards', but before Max could open fire, Sam took evasive action by flying into the only patch of cloud in the sky. I contacted the control tower on the radio and told the operator we were in an Australian Beaufort. We were then given an 'all clear to land'. On landing, the Americans ran over and apologised, 'We fired because we've never seen a Goddamn aircraft like that before'.

That night we slept in an American transit camp, but about midnight I was awoken by three quick gunshots, which was the signal for an air raid. I had slept fully dressed and, dragging on my flying boots, I raced through the bush following a group of about 20 Americans, who jumped into a large slit trench covered with palm logs, which left a narrow opening of about 2 feet. The bombs began to drop quite close and the air was filled with fumes. Suddenly an American officer, who was near the entrance to the trench, picked up a handful of dirt and on smelling it shouted, 'Geraniums—they're dropping Mustard Gas'. Everyone, except me, donned their gas masks—mine was back in Cairns. Before I had time to reflect on my predicament, pandemonium broke loose and there was a mad exit from the trench as the Americans ran screaming into the bush.

I stood up for a moment and, realising that gas was heavier than air, I decided that my only chance was to climb a tree. I literally flew up a coconut palm for about 30 feet and hung on for dear life, while the concussion from the bombs swayed the tree. By now I noticed that blood was flowing down my legs into my flying boots because the bark of the palm tree is razor sharp.

I was exhausted and although the air raid was still on, I said to myself, 'Death where is thy sting. I will climb down and die as I can't last much longer up

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here'. When I reached the ground, I saw an Australian NCO, who in response to my concern about gas said, 'Rubbish, the smell is only cordite fumes and the fog is caused by dust from the bombs'. Although the bombs were still falling, I made my way back to the camp and fell into bed exhausted.

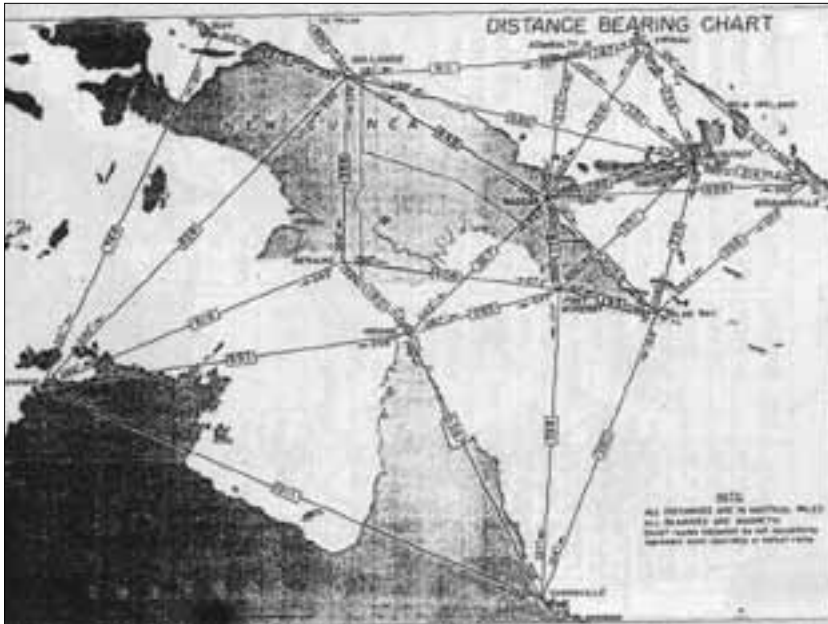
Next day, 27 May, Balmer with his crew, and Parker with navigator Flight Sergeant Greenhill, and wireless/air gunners Geoff Brokenshire and Bill Osborne set off for an armed reconnaissance of Deboyne Island. The island was situated at 10° 45' S 152° 25' E in the Louisiade Archipelago about 110 miles east of the southern tip of Milne Bay. It was a Japanese seaplane base. The seaplane tender *Kamikawa Maru*, which had been involved in the Coral Sea Battle, had established a base there.

Ron Munro, flying with 'Sam' Balmer in T9583 (A9-31), tells that, when they arrived at the target, they saw three float planes drawn up on the beach in front of some buildings; otherwise the place seemed deserted. The two crews bombed a fuel dump, then thoroughly strafed the planes and buildings. The Japanese ran out of the huts to fire at them with their Meiji rifles before they too were on the receiving end in a strafing run. This was the first offensive strike against the Japanese in New Guinea by Beauforts.

On returning to Mareeba, operational training continued for new Beaufort crews joining the squadron, while the more experienced crews carried out shipping escort duties in the Coral Sea. A total of 94 anti-submarine and area patrols were carried out during April and May, without incident. Then on 1 June, T9564 (A9-25) experienced an engine failure but managed to reach Cairns for a forced landing.

On 5 June, T9602 (A9-50) crashed at Mareeba. On touching down after a brief test flight, the aircraft veered off the runway and headed towards the other 100 Squadron planes. The pilot, Barry Schlank, attempted to fly off again, but failed to gain enough height and crashed into some trees. The pilot and the crew, 'Doug' Thomas and Dudley Wehl, and eight somewhat scared ground staff on board escaped with only minor injuries. On the same day, A9-40 was returning from an anti-submarine patrol, when the starboard motor cut out, and the aircraft pranged on landing at Coen. The crew was unhurt.

It was on another anti-submarine patrol on 12 June, that T9608 (A9-56) disappeared without any prior radio signal being received. The missing crew were John Pittman, pilot, Charlie Hucker, navigator, and wireless/air gunners Horrie Shying and Ted Jones. What happened will always remain a mystery. Could it have been an elevator trim problem?¹⁶ Was it carbon monoxide poisoning, or were they shot down? Or was it from some other cause? Six Beaufort crews searched the area but no trace was found of the missing aircraft. A later search of the beaches and reefs in the area also failed to find any trace of T9608.



Map – Bearing and Distance Chart

When Air Commodore F.W.F. Lukis, OBE, Air Officer Commanding the North-Eastern Area, visited the squadron on 13 June, he announced the allocation of new serial numbers for Beaufort aircraft. The A9 series replaced the old T9 series. He also discussed with Wing Commander Balmer the logic of moving the squadron even closer to the theatre of war. They discussed the strategic situation in the South-West Pacific, revealing that the Japanese had established bases extending in a huge arc from Singapore to the Solomon Islands. The Japanese held Buna, Salamaua and Lae along the north coast of New Guinea and were threatening Milne Bay at the eastern tip. In New Ireland, they had a base at Kavieng on the north of the island, and in New Britain they were well established at Rabaul and Gasmata. Buka Island and Kieta in east Bougainville, and Faisi and Buin in the Shortland Islands were also occupied, as was Tulagi in the Solomon Islands.¹⁷

The Air Commodore spoke to Balmer about the need to defend the Torres Strait area, and suggested that perhaps the squadron could move to Horn Island. This idea, however, was met with stony silence. The lengthy hours on patrols often required the crews to stop overnight to refuel at Horn Island, and they would not be impressed at all with the thought of being based there. It was a desolate place adjacent to Thursday Island and there was an acute shortage of water on the island. Ron Munro recalls there was only one way to get a shower. 'About 2 am each morning there was usually a short sharp shower of rain so we jumped out of bed and sat under the water splashes from the tent fly to hastily soap ourselves and to have a brief shower.'

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Three days later, Wing Commander Balmer sent a flight of four Beauforts led by Chas Sage on a training exercise to inspect aerodromes from which 100 Squadron might operate successfully. Jim Cahir, John Mercer and Bob Duncan assisted Squadron Leader Sage in assessing the facilities at Coen, Horn Island, Groote Eylandt, Augustus Downs, Cloncurry and Charters Towers. Only the latter two airfields received favourable reports, but they could not compare with the more suitable location of the Mareeba aerodrome.



Map – South-West Pacific Area

While 100 Squadron had been busy with convoy patrols between Cairns and Port Moresby, further afield the Americans fought the epic Battle of Midway. Although Admiral Takagi was persuaded to postpone the landing of an invasion force at Port Moresby because of the Coral Sea Battle, Admiral Yamamoto decided to proceed with plans to strike at the Midway Islands. He was short of two aircraft carriers for his intended invasion fleet as a result of the Coral Sea Battle, but pressed on regardless—a costly mistake. The Japanese not only lost all their aircraft carriers, 322 planes and 3500 men, but they also lost a great many of their best pilots. Most historians agree

that this battle broke Japan's naval superiority and marked a turning point in the war in favour of the Allies.

The Governor-General, Lord Gowrie, VC, made a surprise low key visit to the squadron on 22 June, accompanied by Air Commodore Lukis. Lord Gowrie was well acquainted with the production of the Beaufort and wished to see it in service. He had followed the progress of Australia's military aircraft industry from the inception of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation in 1936, when he became Governor-General.

That same night, as Lord Gowrie slept, Balmer led Sage and Cliff Bernard on a searchlight cooperation exercise with the American anti-aircraft defences to enable them to calibrate their new radar system.

The whole squadron was disappointed and frustrated at the news that, instead of moving closer to the war zone, they were to move to Laverton by the end of the month. Confirmation of the move came quickly with the arrival of Flight Lieutenant Church from North-Eastern Area. He was there to supervise the collection of transport, tentage and barracks equipment to be delivered by motor transport to the railway station at Townsville.

Squadron duties, however, continued for the time being, and shipping patrols frequently made it necessary to have a detachment of two or three Beauforts stationed at the Seven Mile airstrip, five and a half miles north-east of Moresby. Fairfax Harbour at Port Moresby, sheltered by a coral reef, was far busier than usual, early on Wednesday morning 24 June. Two vessels had loaded supplies and soldiers and had departed, escorted by the corvette HMAS *Ballarat* and sloop HMAS *Warrego*. The convoy proceeded past the wreck of the MV *Macdhui*, sunk by Japanese bombers the previous week, and set a south-west course for Milne Bay. Shortly afterwards, 'Smoky' Douglas and crew in Beaufort A9-54 appeared overhead to provide surveillance for the next five and a half hours.

Port Moresby aerodrome¹⁸ was also busy at the Laloki airstrip on 24 June. The Americans had begun to fly in two squadrons of Airacobras, to relieve the RAAF 75 Squadron Kittyhawks. The American Fortresses based at Mareeba were also staging through Moresby on their way to bombing Rabaul.

The Kittyhawk pilots of 75 Squadron had been superbly led by Squadron Leader 'Old John' Jackson, who had formerly served in Syria and Libya and had been in the thick of the fighting during raids on Moresby. In the previous three months, the Kittyhawks had been involved in unrelenting daily combat. The squadron's exceptional bravery for such a sustained period against greater numbers had cost them dearly. Twelve pilots were lost, together with their Commanding Officer and 22 aircraft.



Map – Port Moresby Airfields

Because Australia was very short of fighter aircraft, Britain had diverted its 'lend-lease'¹⁹ Kittyhawks, due for delivery to the Middle East, to 75 Squadron. Seventy-five of these machines were delivered in March 1942, and were pressed into service in the same month. Without the British contribution, which came at a time when they too were sorely pressed, the outcome in New Guinea could well have been very different.

The Japanese raided the airstrip, the town and the harbour regularly, sometimes two or three times in the one day. Mostly the bombing was designed to cause as much damage as possible. At times they also used anti-personnel type bombs, commonly called 'daisy cutters', which had rod extensions to explode the bomb above ground level.

Prior to one of these raids on Port Moresby, a lone Japanese Aichi D3A Val dive-bomber approached in level flight at about 7000 feet, as the anti-aircraft guns opened up. The shells seemed to be exploding well clear of the plane, when suddenly the strangest thing happened. The whole port wing fell off the plane! The aircraft went into a dive and crashed into the sea, while the wing floated down like a falling leaf.

The constant enemy bombing brought the Allies together in adversity. A very popular clearing, just out of Port Moresby, was Gunn's Gully. Thousands of Yanks and Aussies mingled there to play craps and two-up. The Americans often loaned vehicles to the Australians, and the Australians frequently serviced American planes. Those ground crews were truly dedicated men. They worked long hours under dreadful conditions to keep the planes flying. The Americans, however, described the Beauforts as tired old bombers, because of the slowness of the aircraft in climbing with a full bombload over the 'Hump', as that part of the Owen Stanley Range was called.

In midmorning of 25 June, 15 Zeros were sighted in the cloudless but drab sky, heading towards Port Moresby. Five Airacobras immediately took off at 30 second intervals from Laloki airstrip²⁰ to intercept them. So much dust was stirred up by the planes that the fifth Airacobra drifted off the strip on take-off and hit a tree before crashing into the Laloki River in flames. A jeep loaded with ground staff rushed to the crash site. They watched helplessly as the plane burnt and its ammunition exploded.

Perhaps it was the huge brown cloud of dust hanging in the still air obscuring the airstrip that caused the Japanese to pass by overhead. They would not be aware that seven Beaufort bombers from 100 Squadron had arrived at Port Moresby in preparation for a night assault. Five of the Beauforts had flown the three hours' flight from Mareeba that morning to meet with A9-52 and A9-54, which were already in Moresby on shipping escort duties. While still flying in formation on approaching the town, they encountered anti-aircraft batteries which opened up and then, just as quickly, ceased firing. Fortunately, someone must have recognised the Beauforts as being 'friendly'.

A Japanese ship had been reported sailing towards Lae, laden with military supplies. It was identified as the 4000 tons *Tenyo Maru*. The vessel's estimated time of arrival at Lae was calculated to be about midnight. The plan for the Beauforts involved flying over the Owen Stanley Range and using Cape Ward Hunt as a datum point to fly into the throat of the Huon Gulf. One flight of three Beauforts was to first attack Salamaua as a diversion, and the other four Beauforts were to proceed to Lae Harbour and attack the *Tenyo Maru*. An alternative target was to be the heavily fortified Lae airfield. The nomination of this target immediately brought back memories to the Beaufort crews of the US Fifth Air Force's tragic loss of six out of eight Mitchells on the last raid on Lae.

There was a good weather report for the area, which would show up shipping in the moonlight and also aid in identifying the target at Salamaua.

Ron Munro, a WAG, by this time flying with Lloyd Douglas, adds to the story:

We were informed that 100 Flying Fortresses were flying in from Townsville that evening for a major strike. The crews of the seven Beauforts were invited to join the American crews for a briefing. The American Colonel announced that the prime targets were shipping in Lae harbour, the Japanese base at Lae

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and the wireless station at Salamaua Isthmus. Fifty Fortresses would go to Lae and fifty to Salamaua. He concluded the briefing by saying that seven Beaufort crews were present and that they intended to raid Salamaua and shipping at Lae. He advised that it was too risky but as they had insisted on going he had advised them to take off an hour after the Fortresses because if they got to the targets they would find all opposition wiped out. Everyone laughed except us, and Sam Balmer was furious.

The Beauforts had been fuelled and armed at the almost completed Seven Mile strip.²¹ This airstrip had Marsden steel matting and a flare path for night landings. Shortly before 2100 hours local time, the crews boarded their planes and called, 'Rooster tower ready for take-off'. Balmer with his crew led the way in A9-46.

Once the flaps and wheels of the aircraft had been withdrawn, Balmer checked his instruments as he continued to climb, while navigator Stan Jaffer moved from his seat beside the pilot to the navigator's position in the nose of the aircraft. Wireless/air gunner, 'Birtie' Birtwistle, adjusted his earphones and throat microphone as he sat at the radio desk and checked the intercom system with the crew. Both these crew members, like several others on this mission, were veterans of 'Q' Flight following their service in Malaya and Singapore.

Meanwhile wireless/air gunner 'Scotty' Jansen had left his position in the vestibule, and had climbed into the turret. He called the pilot on the intercom to have hydraulic power switched to the turret. 'Scotty' was an experienced gunner, who had served with 8 Squadron Hudsons at Kuantan, where he had shot down a Zero on the first day of the war, 8 December 1941.

The two other crews making up the Lae Harbour flight to attack the ship with Balmer comprised Dick Thompson in A9-38 with 'Lofty' Wray, Stan Mars and Brian 'Fitzy' Fitzgerald; and Cliff Bernard in A9-31 with Len Ophel, Colin MacDonald and Bill Osborne.

Once airborne they climbed steadily to an altitude of 14 000 feet to get through the pass on the Owen Stanley Range, described as 'that mountain backbone of New Guinea, where capricious weather rolls in on turbulent cumulus'. Usually in the dry season, once the range was cleared, flying over the marshy coastal plains was smooth going. On this occasion, however, with the sudden wind gusts lifting the fully laden Beauforts from time to time, there was no thought of flying in close formation.

The second flight, heading for Salamaua, had Charles Sage in A9-52 with Joe Wormald, Chas Patterson and Doug Desmond; 'Smoky' Douglas in A9-54 with 'Kanga' Shetliffe, 'Darby' Munro and Max Mahoney; Jimmy Ryan in A9-42 with Bob Reid, 'Jock' Bremner and Len Sapwell; and Terry Elcoate in A9-48 with Dudley Wehl, Chas Redgrave and Jimmy Axon.

Wing Commander Balmer found the ship—a two-masted one-funnel vessel of 4000 tons. On the way to his target, he reasoned that the captain of the Japanese vessel

would observe that Salamaua was being attacked and would feel that the ship was safer away from Lae. He thought the vessel would probably make for the coast to the east of Lae. Estimating the speed of the ship at eight knots, Balmer along with Jaffer, his navigator, pinpointed the probable position as being 30 miles east of Lae. His logic had paid off. The *Tenyo Maru* was exactly where he had predicted it would be. Balmer turned to keep the ship in the moonlight and opened the bomb-bay doors, while Jaffer took up his position at the bombsight.

They made a run across the target at 50 feet, but the bomb release mechanism failed to operate. As Balmer turned the aircraft, they came in for a second attempt, but again the navigator could not release the bombs. Despite the concentrated anti-aircraft fire from each end of the ship, Balmer made a third run at 100 feet. This time he was able to jettison the four 500 lb bombs, but not before the ship's anti-aircraft gunners caught the aircraft. One shell exploded beside the turret, tearing a large hole in the port fuselage and blasting Jansen's tin helmet from his head. As the aircraft turned and climbed, Jansen reported seeing two large flashes on the ship, while he raked the ship's deck with the turret guns. Jaffer then gave Birtwistle the position of the ship, which 'Birtie' radioed to base at 2250 hours.

Dick Thompson in A9-38, on learning of the position, headed directly for it. The ship had been stopped in its course—apparently Balmer's bombs had caused some damage.

While on the receiving end of intense anti-aircraft fire from the ship, Thompson's aircraft made a bone-tightening turn to make a successful attack. Brian Fitzgerald in the turret reported, 'One of the stick of four bombs hit the freighter and blew its stern end away'.

Ten minutes later Cliff Bernard in A9-31 arrived on the scene. He made a bombing run at mast height through a hail of gunfire and scored a direct hit amidships, but his Beaufort was severely damaged. Len Ophel, in the nose of the aircraft, had been extremely lucky not to be hit. Some of the cockpit instruments were damaged, including the hydraulics switch, which prevented the operation of the flaps, wheels and turret. Bernard, along with the crew, had grave doubts that they would make it back home, but he skilfully flew the wounded Beaufort along the New Guinea coast and then over the hills, to make a very good bellylanding at Moresby. The crew climbed out shaken but unscathed and, on surveying the damage, they realised how very fortunate they were to get back to Moresby.

Meanwhile, Ron Munro reported on the Salamaua flight:

Over the Owen Stanleys we ran into a violent electrical storm and I remember St. Elmo's fire dancing along the wings.²² When we were over Salamaua the whole place was in darkness, and 'Smoky' decided to go in low. When we started strafing, the Japs replied with some machine-gun fire but we went up and down the Isthmus firing into every building we could see. We then

turned and bombed the radio masts sending them toppling and we took flare photographs to confirm our success. Before leaving Moresby, we had scrounged another .303 machine gun from a wrecked aircraft, together with a long belt of ammunition. On our last run down the Isthmus, I fired off the entire belt into the buildings and I can clearly recall that the gun kicked like hell. In addition we took with us a number of beer bottles into which we had inserted a razor blade in the necks. We threw these from the open hatch. They emitted a high pitch whistle when falling, which would sound like bombs to the Japs.

When we got back to Port Moresby, the Yanks said, 'Where have you been, none of our Fortresses reached their targets as the weather was too bad and they have returned to Townsville'. It was not until our photos of Salamaua were developed that the Americans were convinced that we had actually reached our targets.

Terry Elcoate and Jimmy Ryan attacked the secondary target at Lae. Flying in at 1000 feet, they bombed a string of ack-ack positions at a location known as the 'Terrace'. The Japanese were taken by surprise. By the time they could retaliate, the Beauforts were leaving the scene of destruction. Both crews returned safely to Moresby.

Unfortunately, A9-52 with Charles Sage and crew, who had raided Salamaua with Flight Lieutenant 'Smoky' Douglas and his crew, did not return. At 3.44 am local time on 26 June, the aircraft was heard asking for a bearing, with the operator then holding down his morse key to give a continuous signal so that ground operator could take a bearing. Moresby base station logged and acknowledged the call and placed the aircraft at 319 degrees (north-west) of the town.

Fourteen minutes later another bearing placed the Beaufort west of the town over the sea. The transmission of this bearing was not acknowledged, and nothing further was heard at Moresby base. Later, when the pilot asked for searchlights to be displayed to aid him, Moresby radar was unable to locate the aircraft. The request for searchlights was the last contact with the aircraft. Four American Airacobra fighters conducted one search and 'Smoky' Douglas and John Mercer conducted a separate search, but no trace of the aircraft was found.

In January 1987, however, A9-52 was found in thick jungle, at an altitude of 7000 feet, on a mountainside in the Tapini area, north-west of Port Moresby. The crew members were buried with full military honours at the Lae Military Cemetery. Charles Sage was a 27-year-old regular Air Force officer from Fitzroy, Victoria. Joe Wormald was from Vaucluse, Sydney. He was 23 and a salesman before joining the RAAF. Chas Patterson was born in Calcutta in 1918 and had worked as a clerk in Brighton, Victoria prior to the war. Doug Desmond was the youngest of the crew, being 19 years old. He came from Toowoomba and was working as a clerk in Brisbane before entering the RAAF. A9-52 was the first Beaufort to be lost in action in New Guinea.

While the attacks on the ship and on Salamaua were taking place, A9-36, on returning from an anti-submarine patrol, with Jim Cahir, Tom Smith, Les Schwartz and

Sergeant Borserini, crash-landed at Mount Mulligan, 35 miles north-north-west of Mareeba. They had completed a lengthy anti-submarine search and were returning to base in the early hours of the morning, when they apparently became lost. The pilot landed the plane at Chinaman's Flats, the only piece of level ground in a treacherously wooded and very hilly countryside. Fortunately none of the crew was injured.

The two days, 25–26 June, had been a busy time for 'Smoky' Douglas and crew. They flew on an anti-submarine patrol for 6 hours 10 minutes, took part in the Salamaua raid, and then searched for the missing aircraft. That same day, the Beaufort crews flew back to Mareeba, knowing that the sinking of the 5000 ton *Tenyo Maru*²³ was confirmed. Its hulk could be seen partly out of the water, in line with the end of the main runway at Lae. However, the crew of the damaged A9-31 remained behind to arrange the salvage of their aircraft.

On arriving at Mareeba, the crews found preparations were well under way for the move to Laverton. A number of the ground staff had already entrained at Townsville for Laverton, with the Adjutant, Flying Officer J.H. Lovell, in charge.

In unfavourable weather on 28 June, all 14 of the squadron aircraft with their crews and equipment departed Mareeba individually for the long trip to Laverton, via Charleville and Richmond. When the weather deteriorated, the crews were forced to remain overnight at Charleville. By the time they reached Richmond the next day, the weather was worse than ever, and again grounded the crews. The bad weather continued, but a party of 10 Beauforts led by Wing Commander Balmer, who had just now been awarded the OBE for his outstanding leadership, set off on Thursday 2 July for Laverton. Flying conditions became worse and only eight of the flight landed at Laverton to join the main party, who had travelled by train from Mareeba.

In the meantime A9-42 landed at Albury and A9-32 returned to Richmond. It was not until 8 July that the other Beauforts landed at Laverton, and the rear party of 26, with Sergeant H.H. Baker in charge, arrived by motor transport to complete the move. The strength of the squadron at that time was assessed as 51 officers and 400 other ranks.

The new role for the aircrews would be to confront the submarine menace in Bass Strait and the Tasman Sea.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

TO SINK A SUBMARINE

*The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.*

Samuel Coleridge, *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*

No 100 Squadron had settled in at Laverton and, by 8 July 1942, monotonous but necessary anti-submarine patrols were undertaken on a rostered basis over Bass Strait and over the Tasman Sea. One of the new crews included in the roster comprised Flight Lieutenant H.R. Kym Bonython, DFC, Flight Sergeants David 'Doug' Thomas, Geoff Brokenshire and John 'Schoe' Schofield.

Kym Bonython had earned the DFC while serving with No 2 Squadron Hudsons operating out of Koepang in the Netherlands East Indies and then out of Darwin, where he experienced the first air raid.

If not engaged in searching for submarines, convoy duties were the order of the day. The Beauforts operated not only out of Laverton, but alternatively from Bairnsdale, Yanakie and Mallacoota in Victoria, from Cambridge and Currie in Tasmania, from Mount Gambier in South Australia and Moruya in New South Wales.

It was during this period that many of the aircrews settled down to fly regularly with the same pilot, instead of pilots' selecting whatever navigators or other aircrew that were available at the time.

From all accounts, the local hotel at Mallacoota was a popular stay-over for the crews. The proprietor had two pretty daughters, and the crews would readily volunteer to do the washing up so as to rendezvous with the girls! Another attractive young lady, who lived across the lake, would row across to Mallacoota when the Air Force was in town. 'Buck' Buchanan, from Johnny Mercer's crew took an interest in her, but there was always the dilemma when it was time to take her home. After rowing her across the lake, he then faced a walk of at least three miles around the lake back to the hotel.

The pleasant times were shattered when A9-64, after an anti-submarine patrol, crashed into the side of Arthur's Seat, between Rosebud and Dromana on Mornington Peninsula on Sunday 12 July. On this fateful day, Terry Elcoate, pilot, Dudley Wehl, navigator, and wireless/air gunners, Jimmy Axon and Chas Redgrave, were killed.

In retrospect, one wonders how such an experienced crew met such a fate. Was it an elevator trim control problem, was it pilot error or was it carbon monoxide poisoning?

When Flight Lieutenant G.N. Reeve, DFC, and crew in A9-303 dived vertically into a swamp at East Sale on 13 September 1943, Victorian Government analyst, Charles A. Taylor conducted tests on blood and liver samples from the remains of one of the bodies. He found that the airman had been poisoned by carbon monoxide. Taylor's report stated:

Deadly carbon monoxide gas has been seeping back into many of the Beaufort aircraft. Those who breathed it lost the power to use their arms and legs. Monoxide removed their willpower completely and immediately and made it impossible for them to function normally. The ventilators near the nose in many of these aircraft are not suitable, when the aircraft is subject to cross winds and when the two engines have been running richly. I am confident that my finding in these RAAF cases is positive and conclusive.

While his report was generally accepted, his sweeping statement that it was the cause of all similar accidents, based on samples tested from one airman, was accepted neither by the Air Board nor the RAAF. However, special instructions were issued, warning all operating and maintenance personnel, particularly pilots, of the danger of exhaust fumes causing a concentration of carbon monoxide in the cockpit. Adequate precautions were to be taken when operating the engines. Ground crews were also instructed to check for gas leaks during engine maintenance.

The report was passed on to the Beaufort manufacturers in Australia and Britain, and even more attention was paid to ensure there were no exhaust gas leakages. While carbon monoxide was probably a contributing factor in the case of A9-303, and may also have been the cause of some other fatal crashes, later events revealed that a faulty elevator trim control was more lethal.²⁴

Monotonous daylight patrols continued without seeing any sign of enemy activity. It was the practice of a submarine to stay mostly submerged during daylight and to surface at night for the recharging of batteries, and particularly to use the wireless. Any disturbance in the water, however, was investigated, and sometimes a crew would mistakenly prepare to attack, only to find their quarry was a whale! There were a few reports of whales being bombed by mistake, but it was a rare event.

On 27 July, the SS *Coolana* signalled that the ship was being shelled at the eastern approach to Bass Strait. Don Stumm, with navigator Ken Hendy and wireless/air gunners Arthur 'Bluey' Walker and Cec Hale in A9-62 were sent to assist. On reaching the ship, they found no obvious damage to it, nor any trace of the submarine. Perhaps the submarine could only fire on the *Coolana* with its cannon because it had run out of torpedoes. Whatever the reason, it was now safely out of sight in the wide expanse of billowing dark blue water.

Postwar records show that both Japanese and German submarines were active in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and in the Coral and Tasman Seas. Their aim was to isolate

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The most brazen attack took place, when three midget submarines, launched from a convoy of mother submarines on 31 May 1942, entered Sydney Harbour. They sank the naval barracks ship *Kuttabul*, with the loss of 21 seamen, before the six enemy submariners were killed. Subsequently on 8 June, enemy submarines shelled suburbs of Sydney and Newcastle.

Anti-submarine patrols continued throughout July without incident, until a submarine was sighted one night in the Tasman Sea. Wing Commander Balmer directed one Beaufort at Laverton to assist two Beaufort crews staging out of Mallacoota to search the area east from Twofold Bay to Cape Howe.

Sergeant Harry Clegg, the engineer in charge of 'B' Flight, takes up the story:

Taxiing out to the runway on an extremely wet night loaded with bombs, A9-42 hit a stump, which damaged the left propeller. Now, the overhaul book explicitly stated that on no account was a propeller to be straightened after damage because any damage weakened the molecular construction. As engineer, I had to make the decision whether to straighten the blade and risk being put on a charge, or stop the aircraft from proceeding on the search. I could see that the aluminium alloy propeller was weakened, but armed with a large hammer and a piece of wood I straightened the blade and Flying Officer Avery took off for Mallacoota.

Clegg's decision to repair the propeller was not that of a brash young engineer. Aged 30, and having worked with a gold dredging outfit in remote areas of Papua New Guinea, he was confident he could safely repair the propeller.

On Wednesday morning, 29 July 1942, the two Beauforts from Mallacoota, and the one from Laverton, set off to carry out a creeping line head search. Doug Avery and crew in A9-42 had been flying at 1400 feet for almost an hour, when, at 0355 hours local time, the navigator, Doug Bell, sighted what could be a submarine disturbing the surface of the moonlit sea about five miles away. As Avery approached the object, he could see it was a large submarine. He was later to describe it as much larger than the German submarines he had seen while serving in the Middle East and patrolling the Mediterranean Sea. Keeping the target silhouetted against the moon, he estimated its speed to be about seven knots and heading due south, and Doug Bell logged the position as 18 miles due east of Cape Howe.

Avery alerted the crew that he was to make a bombing attack, and the wireless operator, Bill McBean, informed Laverton base in morse code of the situation. However, as the aircraft made an attack at about 400 feet, the bomb-bay doors failed to open in time. Avery made a tight turn to starboard and climbed back to 1400 feet. Turning again towards the target on a heading of 200 degrees, and with the bomb-bay doors wide open, he focused his gunsight on the conning tower. As the submarine attempted to crash-dive, Avery unleashed all six 250 lb bombs, which included the two wing

bombs. The stick of bombs straddled the target, but the Beaufort crew felt a severe blast from the explosion and realised they had also suffered some damage to the aircraft.

Pulling out of the diving attack at 300 feet over the submarine, the aircraft had squashed another 100 feet towards the sea, before the exploding bombs blasted the plane severely and forced the pilot to struggle with the controls. However, Les Schwartz in the turret saw at least one bomb make a direct hit amidships, just in front of the wake of the conning tower as the submarine was diving. As the aircraft circled the area, the crew could see a large oil patch spreading on the undulating sea and causing a refraction of the moonlight into its colour spectrum. Bill McBean sent off a morse code message in plain language to Laverton to say the submarine had been successfully attacked and had sunk. Back at Mallacoota, an inspection of the aircraft revealed one large hole in the starboard wing, another in the tailplane and some minor shrapnel pitting to the fuselage.

At the debriefing, it was agreed that the crew had indeed sunk a large enemy submarine, and the report would be endorsed as confirmation of the sinking. A Japanese report, however, while confirming submarine No 1-11 of 2900 tons had been attacked and sustained some damage, denied that it had been sunk. Interestingly, it would be 10 months before the Melbourne *Age* newspaper reported that RAAF Headquarters had advised that a Japanese submarine had been sunk many months previously off the coast of Mallacoota.

Only a week before the sinking of the submarine near Eden, there had been another submarine incident. Beaufort A9-20, stationed at Nowra Torpedo Base, had dropped depth charges on a submarine. Although an oil patch was reported where the submarine had dived, the verdict by the intelligence officers from the Navy was that a whale had been mistaken for a submarine. The pilot was Squadron Leader A. Gadd, DFC, and the crew comprised Flight Lieutenant D. Dey and Flying Officer G.R. 'Barry' Schlank as navigator. This very experienced crew was surprised at the intelligence assessment.

The aircrew had seen the sailors abandon the stricken cargo ship which the submarine had attacked, and they reasoned that the captain of the submarine would stay in the vicinity until the ship finally sank, so they watched and waited. When the submarine/whale broke the surface of the calm sea, the pilot rushed A9-20 to the site and dropped the depth charges. Gadd was a former RAF Coastal Command pilot, and Dey and Schlank had served in Malaya before escaping together through Sumatra. Both David Dey and Barry Schlank were shortly to serve in 100 Squadron.

During July the squadron had carried out 93 tedious sea patrols. It was, therefore, a welcome announcement that all crews would take their turn at Nowra for training in torpedo operations. The first five crews in four Beauforts, under Wing Commander Balmer, flew to the Base Torpedo Unit (BTU) at Nowra to attend the first Torpedo Training Course on 4 August 1942.

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While the Beaufort crews were training at Nowra/Jervis Bay, four Ansons, led by Flight Lieutenant R.H. Ross from No 67 Reserve Squadron at Mallala, arrived at Laverton to assist in maintaining the regular anti-submarine patrols. Their first assignment was to search for an enemy submarine suspected of launching small Glen float planes being used for reconnaissance in Bass Strait. The Beauforts and Ansons then interchanged to conduct creeping line head searches for submarines, and convoy duties.

Electrical fitter, John Luxton, tells of the early days at the RAAF base, some five miles south-west of Nowra, and the RAN satellite station at Jervis Bay, 20 miles south-south-east of Nowra:

Some of the two-storey barrack buildings housed the BTU staff and the Marine Section. The barracks were all named and I was upstairs in 'Westward Ho'. Two of the double-storey buildings were hotels, the 'Naval' and 'Foley's'. We had a canteen and picture show. Aborigines, from the settlement at Wreck Bay, could come to the pictures but had to sit up the front in roped off seats. There were several masonite huts on the south side of the airfield for stores and NCO's offices.

As well as a red light on Nowra Hill that we would switch on for night landings, we would switch on a big reflector light on a tripod, called a 'Beach Searchlight', to light up the end of the sealed runway. It was fascinating to see an aircraft landing with a torpedo about 20 feet above the strip! It came down with an almighty thump. Consequently, the tail struts suffered and the tail would be jacked up on a 44-gallon drum for repairs. This was happening so frequently that the joke went around that a petrol drum was designed to accommodate the tail of a Beaufort.

At the concentrated two week Torpedo Training Course, the aircrews were taught warship identification, and were introduced to the intricacies of the torpedo. Then followed the theory of a satisfactory torpedo drop. The pilots and navigators took note that the angle of entry into the water for a torpedo needed to be as near as possible to 20 degrees for a successful launch. The speed and height to drop the torpedo was therefore crucial to a successful subsequent trajectory into the water—too steep and it would plunge too deep, too flat and it would bellyflop.

There was no point in the Beaufort diving from a relatively safe height and then flattening out for a torpedo attack, which was the tactic used by slow flying torpedo aircraft, such as the Vildebeeste or the Swordfish. The speed developed by a diving Beaufort would exceed the recommended 150 knots to launch a torpedo. The Beaufort was committed to exactly the opposite approach. The tactic was to fly as low as possible above the water in an attempt to remain undetected by radar, and then to rise to 180 feet to launch the torpedo at 150 knots.

Crews then undertook a series of practice runs, flying at 150 knots and 150 to 200 feet above the water for about 1200 feet, to give a pretend torpedo what seemed to be an ideal trajectory. The opportunity was also taken to make simulated attacks on pre-warned shipping that happened to be in the area. A series of simulated torpedo attacks, recorded by a camera mounted in the nose of the Beaufort, was then studied to ascertain whether the torpedoes would have been successfully launched. Sighting for a torpedo attack, however, was experimental for there was no specific aiming device available.

When it came to actually launching a torpedo, a concrete substitute had to suffice, as at first there were no practice torpedoes available. When practice torpedoes, which looked like the real thing, arrived, the exercises were taken more seriously. The practice torpedoes were filled with compressed air and set at a depth to pass beneath the keel of the target ship. When the torpedoes came to the surface a couple of miles away, the RAAF Marine Section motor boat retrieved them.

A launched aerial torpedo had to have its compressed air motor operating to drive it through the water. This was accomplished by means of a steel wire attachment between the torpedo and the aircraft, which started the compressed air motor as the torpedo dropped. Another important role of the wire attachment was to pull the torpedo tail up slightly, to ensure the torpedo nose would enter the water. In attacking enemy shipping, a torpedo travelling through the water allowed an armament vane at the rear of the torpedo to spin and thus arm the warhead. There were no live torpedoes, however, used in training.

Although a training exercise, the procedure was still a risky business. Three planes would normally fly in tight formation, so as to have the best chance of at least one torpedo scoring a hit. The Beaufort was not an easy plane to fly when laden with a torpedo. At 150 knots, it tended to wallow in the air and required a firm hand on the control column at all times. Correct flight rigging and balance on the Beaufort were essential, and this was achieved by sliding heavy lead discs into position along two shafts in the rear fuselage. If this procedure was not done correctly, much elevator trim was required, causing unnecessary drag. Flying very low and slow in tight formation, therefore, required the pilots to have very focused concentration indeed. The crews were therefore on a steep learning curve. They had no time to spend in the local hotel, to travel into Nowra for a mixed grill at the Greek cafe, or to attend the dance that was always held on the first Saturday night of each month.

There were no fatalities on these very early courses, but Corporal John Starky, fitter 2A, reported, 'Due to the deceptive nature of some of the whitest sand in Australia, pilots found it very difficult to judge the height above the water. Several of the aircraft crashed and had to be recovered from the Bay.' In April of the following year, there was a tragic accident, when A9-27 and A9-268 collided during filming, by Movietone News, of an attack on the target ship HMAS *Burra Bra*, with the numbing

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loss of both crews. To make matters worse, wives and friends, who were present during the passing-out parade, watched in abject horror as the scene unfolded.

The crews comprised Ray 'Grassy' Green, Maurice Hoban, Will Sweetnam Albert Bailey, David Dey, Jack Norman, Rex Solomon and Hugh Richardson. Ray Green and Dave Dey, together with Will Sweetnam, Jack Norman and Rex Solomon had already completed an operational tour with 100 Squadron prior to their posting to Nowra.

When the first of the trained crews resumed sea patrols on 16 August at the completion of the first pioneering Torpedo Training Course, six more crews, led by Flight Lieutenant L.A. 'Smoky' Douglas, were sent to Nowra. Three days later, two Beauforts and three more crews, led by Flight Lieutenant Cliff Bernard, also proceeded to Nowra for training. Sergeants Ken Waters and Bob Duncan and their crews followed a few days later.

When the second course of torpedo training had been completed, the crews from No 1 Course returned to Nowra to join with No 2 Course for three days of simulated attacks on HMAS *Deloraine*.

It was quite unexpected when six crews of the squadron received orders on Friday 4 September to assemble immediately at Laverton. The crews knew that this heralded something more important than continuing sea patrols, and they were not disappointed. At a briefing session, Wing Commander Balmer, OBE, informed them that Japanese troops had landed at Milne Bay about 10 miles from the Gili Gili wharves on 25 August, and that the squadron was to move to Milne Bay immediately. He explained that 100 Squadron would come under the command of North-Eastern Area and that the code name for their operation was *Fall River*.

The captains of the crews to accompany Wing Commander Balmer were Flight Lieutenants Kym Bonython and 'Smoky' Douglas, Flying Officers Don Stumm and Reg Green, and Pilot Officer Johnny Mercer. They were to proceed to Nowra to arm with torpedoes, and then continue on to Milne Bay via the Bohle River airstrip at Townsville. There was no time to collect tropical gear and the crews set off in their blue serge uniforms.

Arriving at Nowra late afternoon, the crews discovered that there were no aerial torpedoes available and that American Navy torpedoes, fitted with tailplanes to stabilise them while airborne, would have to suffice. These heavy monsters, when loaded, hung well below the open bomb-bay doors. It is not surprising that the crews did not sleep well that night, knowing that the extra weight and drag from the new torpedoes would slow the planes, use more fuel and make them more cumbersome to fly.

They took off at first light the next day, refuelled at Charleville and arrived at the Bohle River, Townsville, as the sun was setting. Before retiring that night, the aircrews assisted in loading additional equipment and ammunition on their respective aircraft.

Before dawn the next day, 'Sam' Balmer brought the crews up to date on the situation at Milne Bay. 'The enemy has taken Gili Gili and the Australian troops have taken up positions on high ground at a new airstrip being constructed by the Americans, known as Number 3 airstrip.' He warned the crews to ensure that they had the correct recognition signals from the ground before attempting to land at No 1 airstrip. By sun-up the six Beauforts were on their way to Milne Bay.

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TORPEDO BOMBERS

*Courage is the price that life extracts for granting peace.
The soul that knows it not, knows no release from little things;
Knows not the loneliness of fear,
Nor mountain heights where bitter joy can hear the sound of wings.*

Amelia Earhart

While the Beaufort crews were engaged in coastal surveillance, and also training as a torpedo squadron, the stage was being set in New Guinea for two crucial battles. One would take place in the highlands, north-west of Port Moresby, and the other at Milne Bay, situated on the eastern tip of Papua.

The geographical importance of Milne Bay had been recognised by both the Allied strategists and the Japanese. The Japanese planned to use the facilities of Milne Bay to capture Port Moresby, by executing a pincer movement, involving Milne Bay and Buna on the north-east Papuan coast. The Allies' plan was to establish a base, with airfields and shipping facilities at Milne Bay, to dominate the vital sea lanes between Australia and Port Moresby. An airfield at Milne Bay would also enable the Allies to launch a counteroffensive against the Japanese over the Solomon Sea to Rabaul, thus saving the steep climb over the Owen Stanley Range from Port Moresby.

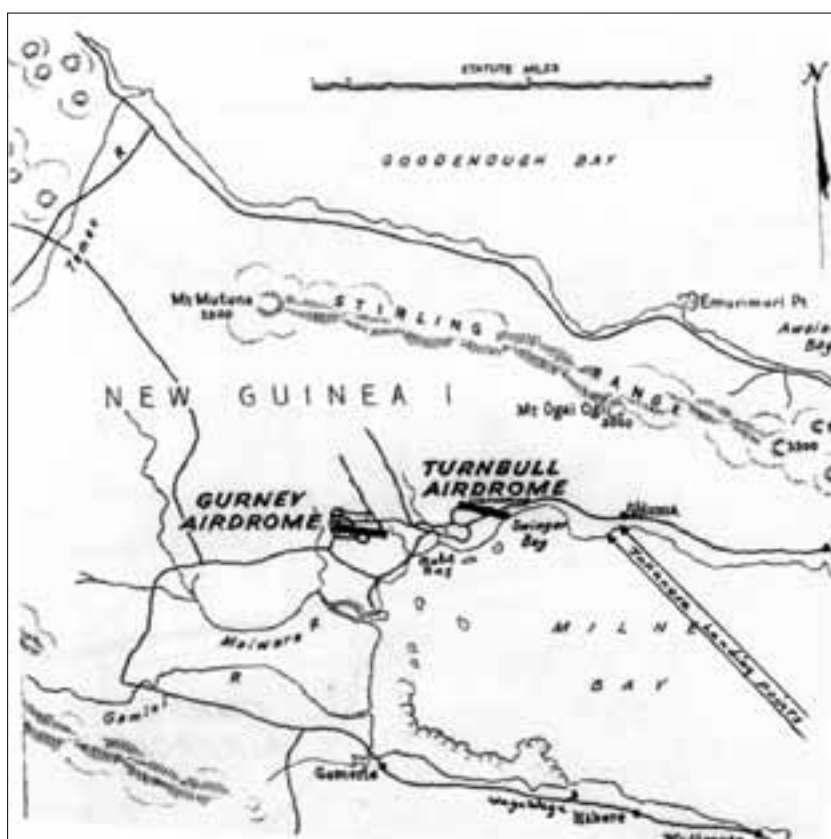
Milne Bay itself is especially beautiful, but in 1942 it was one of the most sodden, humid places on earth. Torrential rain during August had turned the area into a quagmire, and the sultry weather had brought with it insects, flies, spiders and other jungle pests to make life miserable. Furthermore, the most dangerous insect, the anopheles mosquito, carrying the malaria parasite, was there to prey on the unwary. Reefs and small islands protected the bay, but there was a deep channel, which came within 12 metres of the shoreline, called China Strait. At the western end of the 30 kilometre sweep of the bay, many small rivers cut the shoreline. These rivers were fed by water from nearby steep hills, and also from the Stirling Range further inland.

Allied engineers began constructing an airstrip five miles to the west of Gili Gili on 25 June 1942, by clearing a portion of one of the coconut palm plantations just east of Kalohi Creek. It was known as No 1 airstrip but later named Gurney after Squadron Leader Charles R. 'Bob' Gurney, AFC, of 33 Squadron. He was killed in May 1942 after his Marauder B-26, in which he was a special navigator, was damaged over Rabaul and crashed. Gurney Tower was situated at latitude 10° 18' S and longitude 150° 20' 20" E.

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When only about 300 feet of Marsden steel matting had been laid, Group Captain W. 'Bull' Garing, DFC,²⁷ landed a Tiger Moth on the matting strip. Having a 1930s vintage aircraft land at Milne Bay was most unexpected, and it certainly surprised the American construction workers. As the Senior Air Staff Officer, North-Eastern Area Headquarters, Garing had flown from Townsville via Horn and Kerrima Islands and Port Moresby to arrive on 19 July—quite an adventurous feat in a single-engine biplane.

By 25 July, the airstrip was 5100 feet long and 80 feet wide, when RAAF Kittyhawks from 75 and 76 Squadron used it for the first time, even though it was underwater! As the Kittyhawks attempted to land on the steel matting surface, they aquaplaned to the end of the strip.



Map – Milne Bay Area

The matting was so slippery that it was even hazardous to walk on. The perforated steel planks that could be joined by a hook and eye method to form an airstrip in muddy swamp lands, or on sand, was an American invention. Because airstrips could

be quickly established, this invention undoubtedly played a very important role in winning the war. It was, however, noisy and very wearing on aircraft tyres.

Attempts to build another airstrip in a swampy area at Waigani, about three miles west of No 1 airstrip, had also commenced. Due to construction difficulties, however, it had been abandoned in favour of a No 3 airstrip²⁸ at Kilarbo on higher ground, about 2½ miles to the east of No 1 airstrip.

Initially, the Japanese had intended to capture Samarai Island and build a seaplane base there, to control the strategic entrance to Milne Bay. However, when aerial reconnaissance revealed Allied works progressing on an airstrip near Gili Gili, the enemy refocused their attention on Milne Bay. On 4 August at 1300 hours local time, two Val dive-bombers and two Zeros came in at low level over the bay and strafed No 1 airstrip (Gurney). One of the Kittyhawks was destroyed on the ground. There had been no warning, as No 37 Radar Station was yet to become operational. However, eight Kittyhawks of 76 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull, had been on patrol and they arrived in time to engage the enemy, shooting down one of the dive-bombers.

Gradually the primitive conditions gave way to a more permanent base, but it would never be a safe airfield. High tropical temperatures, consistently high rainfall and humidity, low cloud base, poor visibility and a background of mountains all compounded to make flying in the vicinity of Milne Bay a hazardous operation.

On 6 August, a handful of 32 Squadron Hudsons, led by Squadron Leader Deryck Kingwell,²⁹ arrived, followed by a flight of 6 Squadron Hudsons from Horn Island. Kingwell immediately merged the two units under his command. George Adamson, wireless/air gunner of 6 Squadron, recalls the bumpy landing at Gurney: 'We got used to the slight rise in the middle of the airstrip and we referred to it as the "Gurney camel". Of course, without the metal matting covering the mud there'd be no chance of a safe landing at all.'

Of particular support to the Allies, in gaining more time to establish the base at Milne Bay, was the splendid contribution by the American Marines in their struggle with the Japanese at Guadalcanal commencing on 7 August. Major General Kawaguchi's 124th Infantry Regiment had been ordered to lead a seaborne assault on Milne Bay, but he had been diverted to Guadalcanal, where the regiment was defeated with heavy casualties. Subsequently, Admiral Mikawa, one of Japan's greatest tacticians, was then selected to take Milne Bay.

Meanwhile, the other arm of the enemy pincer movement was progressing to plan. General Horii's 18th Army had landed at both Gona and Buna³⁰ on 22 July, bringing with them 1000 slaves from Rabaul. The two forces then linked up to establish a base at Sanananda. General Horii had a well-balanced and experienced fighting group of about 10 000 men. It was Horii's intention to take half the force with him and traverse

the Kokoda Track to take Port Moresby, in concert with a thrust from Japanese forces operating out of Milne Bay.

Kokoda, perched high on a plateau overlooking Buna in the distance, was a government outpost with a light aircraft landing field. The Kokoda garrison, comprising two companies from the 39th and 53rd Australian Battalions, was no match for the strength of the Japanese Army. Fighting a rearguard action against overwhelming odds, the Militia eventually made a stand at Isurava to await reinforcements.

When Brigadier Arnold Potts, DSO, MC, with the 21st Brigade, reached Isurava on 23 August, the defenders were so exhausted they scarcely raised a cheer. It was at Isurava that Private Bruce Kingsbury was awarded the Victoria Cross for leading a daring charge, and firing a Bren gun from the hip, to drive back wave after wave of frenetic enemy attacks. Potts called for reinforcements, but was refused because the Japanese had landed at Milne Bay, and Port Moresby was threatened.

At the same time as the courageous defenders were desperately holding on at Isurava on the Kokoda Track, the enemy stormed ashore, under cover of naval gunfire, at Ahima and Wahahuba beaches of Milne Bay. It was shortly before midnight on Tuesday 25 August and the rain was pelting down. There were no coastal guns, searchlights or barbed wire to deter the landings. Japanese documents, discovered post-war, reveal that the battle for Rabi, referred not only to the Rabi settlement, but also the entire Milne Bay base. They show too that the Japanese came ashore seven miles east of their intended landing place with 2045 troops. This navigational error forced the Japanese to build a jetty for unloading, which slowed down their intended advance towards the aerodrome.

As the enemy established a beachhead and then penetrated inland, many of the villagers in the area suffered very badly at the hands of the Japanese. They were mercilessly tortured for information, raped, mutilated and killed. Several Australian soldiers captured by the Japanese suffered a similar fate.

The Japanese pressed on to capture Koeabule Mission (KB Mission), and to advance, in the rain and through the mud, towards No 3 airstrip (Turnbull). Major General Cyril Clowes, Commander of the Milne Bay Combined Force, had anticipated this move and prepared his defence at No 3 airstrip well. The 7th Brigade, whose 61st Battalion had withstood the first attack by the Japanese shortly after they landed, was in position beside the airstrip. The 18th Brigade AIF, who had fought with distinction during the siege of Tobruk, was drawn up in another strategic position, diagonally opposite the militia unit. Acting on an intelligence report that 750 Japanese Marines had arrived in a second convoy, Clowes moved the RAAF camps to safer ground near the main Army camp at Wehuria River,³¹ which was west of No 3 (Turnbull) airstrip.

Group Captain Garing arrived at this time to take control of the RAAF, and particularly to coordinate the activities of the support units. Prior to his arrival, the Squadrons,

the Repair and Salvage Unit from Port Moresby, and the Sea Rescue Group had been acting under individual authority. This situation had developed because there was no Station Officer, Adjutant, Equipment Officer or clerical staff to handle the administrative functions.

On Sunday evening 30 August, Padre George Nash from 76 Squadron held an ecumenical church parade, which was crowded. It was conducted entirely in the dark, as a total blackout was being observed. Fortunately, the Padre had excellent recall, and recited the whole 14 verses of Psalm 27, which begins 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?' There were no hymns sung, as these might have disclosed the whereabouts of the congregation to the enemy. The address was on the theme of 'courage', on which the Padre dwelt in his concluding prayer.

With the words of the Padre still fresh in their minds, the defenders did not have long to wait. Well before dawn on 31 August, the Japanese forces launched a naval bombardment prior to a sustained military attack on the airstrip. The Australians and a small force of American engineers repelled the attack, using mainly artillery and Thompson submachine guns.

The lull that followed was the calm before the storm, for, on the following night, the noise of a large force approaching alerted the Australians to take up their positions. The defenders fired a red Verey light as well as flares in the direction of the noise, to reveal several hundred of the enemy grouped at the eastern side of the airstrip preparing to attack with the aid of a field gun. Artillery, mortar fire and machine guns cut the Japanese to pieces. Three times the enemy regrouped and launched furious attacks from other directions, and each time they fell in a hail of withering gunfire. Finally, just before dawn a Japanese bugler sounded the retreat.

Following relentless opposition and attacks by the combined brigades on all fronts, including vicious bayonet clashes near the Cameron Plateau, the enemy was severely depleted. It was in one skirmish, just east of KB Mission, that Corporal John French single-handedly destroyed three machine-gun nests before being killed at the third machine gun. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

The invading Japanese force had lost the battle for Milne Bay. Suffering atrocious losses, the wounded and those otherwise unfit for combat were evacuated under cover of darkness on 5 September 1942. It was the first time in the military history of the Japanese Marines that they had ever been defeated.

General Tomitaro Horii,³² in the meantime, had heard and was stunned by the news that the Japanese Marines had failed to take Milne Bay. Then, at that crucial moment, Admiral Mikawa ordered him to withdraw his troops and retreat to reinforce Buna. Six hundred Australians lost their lives in the Kokoda Campaign, but their stand, at Isurava³³ in particular, was one of the most heroic land battles in the history of World War II.

While the Americans publicise their battles, Australians are far too reticent. Australians should be proud to boast of the tremendous importance the battles of Kokoda and Milne Bay were in repelling the Japanese offensive for the first time in the South-West Pacific theatre of the war.

Just after noon local time (1200K) on 6 September, the flight of six 100 Squadron Beauforts, that had left Laverton two days earlier, arrived over Milne Bay during a break in the weather. As Wing Commander Balmer landed at the No 1 airstrip, the wheels, on touching down, squirted mud up through the holes in the steel matting, which coated the underneath of the wings and fuselage. To add insult to the situation, the rain began yet again, and Flight Lieutenant Bonython, DFC,³⁴ claimed, 'the downpour was so heavy you could almost swim through it'. Two of the Beauforts slid off the steel matting and sank axle deep into the mud. As arrangements were being made to tow the aircraft out of the bog, the whispering sound of approaching aircraft was heard. It was the welcome sound of three Bristol Beaufighters of 30 Squadron arriving. They had also flown from the Bohle River airstrip near Townsville, each with a ground crew passenger.

All aircrews were ordered to report immediately to the Operations Room. An enemy convoy, which included a cruiser and destroyer, had been sighted in the vicinity of Kitava Island. All available aircraft took off but failed to locate the enemy and, as the Kittyhawks were low on fuel, all aircraft returned to base. The dog-tired Beaufort crews were relieved to settle into a native hut, built of bamboo and covered with plaited palm leaves. At last they were out of the heavy rain, but the sodden, earthen floor oozed mud up to their ankles. Sandfly nets were available but they were so closely woven that airflow was greatly reduced, and so were discarded.

There was no bedding at all on the double-decker bunks, but the men were so tired they slept in their clothes on the bare bamboo mattresses.

That night, in torrential rain, enemy ships intending to rescue the remainder of the Japanese invasion force, entered the Bay at 2200K (10 pm local time). During a shelling of the harbour, several small ships and the armed merchant ship *Anshun*³⁵ at the Gili Gili wharf were sunk. However the fully illuminated 9000 tons hospital ship *Manunda* was not hit. (With the bombing in Darwin in February fresh in their memory, the crew and medical staff fully expected the ship to be shelled, and were surprised that it was spared.) Raising their gunsights slightly, the enemy ships poured shells into the camps and airstrips for the next four hours.

Ron 'Darby' Munro, from one of the Beaufort crews, describes the bombardment:

We threw ourselves into the slit trenches, and the black mud covered us from head to foot. Our clothes were soon peeled off and we were down to our underpants. The shells, making a swishing noise, were landing about 100 yards beyond us before hitting into the mud and exploding, sending up vast geysers of mud laced with shrapnel.

There were a number of casualties but, fortunately, Munro was not one of them.

Midmorning the following day, four more Beauforts, carrying torpedoes, arrived from Townsville, piloted by Cliff Bernard, Jim Ryan, Bill Ross and Les Chippendale. Each aircraft was fully crewed and also had one or two ground staff on board. The first two aircraft made smooth landings but, as Bill Ross touched down, the torpedo dropped from the Beaufort, causing everybody to duck for cover. The torpedo bounced end over end, throwing off sparks from the metal matting, as its motor revved itself to pieces, until it bounded off the side of the airstrip and came to rest in the mud.

Warrant Officer Ted Bambridge, an armourer from 76 Squadron, saw it happen and, although knowing very little about torpedoes, in true Aussie style, calmly disarmed it.

In the meantime, Bill Ross had aborted the landing and had gone around again to land safely. Jack Franklin, an aircraft electrician, who was flying with Bill Ross at that time, recalls the incident and also that the torpedo lay beside the Marsden matting airstrip for ages afterwards.

That afternoon, all aircrews were called to the Operations Room to be briefed on a plan to find and attack the Japanese warships. Before proceeding on any mission, the crews were always given a summary of the enemy disposition, the weather conditions and the flight plan. A Hudson had found the cruiser and escorting destroyer, and was providing position reports at 30-minute intervals. The weather was reported as good, but with an approaching tropical storm.

The Air Officer Commanding, Group Captain Garing, DFC, explained the flight plan. Three Hudsons were to bomb from 10 000 feet. The two squadrons of Kittyhawks and three Beaufighters would then follow up by strafing the decks of both ships to divert attention from the six approaching Beauforts of 100 Squadron. The Beauforts, armed with torpedoes, were to fly the last 10 miles almost at sea level and then rise to 150 feet to release the torpedoes from 1000 yards.

An Army truck took the Beaufort crews on a slippery ride through mud to the airstrip. The airmen then climbed into their respective planes, using the retractable ladders, and quickly settled into position to check that all equipment was working. The engines roared to life and each pilot taxied his aircraft out to the airstrip. Waiting in the plane to take off was the hottest time, when the aircrew sweated profusely, which in turn chilled them for some time after becoming airborne. Actually, becoming airborne was the most critical time for the aircrew. As a Beaufort gathered speed down the metal runway at 50 to 60 knots, the pilot concentrated on keeping the plane centred on the runway. Full power from both motors was required to lift off. At 90 knots the aircraft could become airborne and the undercarriage could be retracted. At 120 knots (approximately 220 kph) it was safe to climb.

When an engine coughed on take-off, all on board expected the worst, for the loss of a motor at that critical time was almost certain to result in a prang. One of the

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Beaufighters, A19-13, had a problem at take-off that day. It swerved on the slippery steel matting and careered across the strip into a parked Hudson, severely damaging both aircraft. Fortunately, the crew was not injured. A common hazard in such a humid climate as Milne Bay was the condensation of moisture from the air into the petrol. Small amounts of water had to be drained regularly from the fuel tanks, a procedure in which the ground crews were meticulous.

Another feature of the humid conditions was displayed as the pilot opened the throttles of the Beaufort. The propellers would literally tear the moisture out of the air, and the aircraft would have a faint misty shower curtain extending back from the propellers.

The Beauforts were airborne at 1630K on 7 September 1942 with 'Sam' Balmer leading. They arrived in the target area to see bombs from the Hudsons landing in the water, some perhaps near enough to cause some damage, but there were no direct hits on the cruiser. The strafing by eight Kittyhawks, led by Squadron Leader 'Bluey' Truscott, raked the bridge and deck of the cruiser, while the two Beaufighters simultaneously hit the bridge with their cannons. However this tactic, which was intended to distract attention from the Beauforts, did not fool the Japanese. While concentrating on fighter planes with 20 mm cannon and 7 mm machine guns, they turned their naval guns on the approaching Beauforts (the attack is depicted in Drew Harrison's painting 'Combined Strike').



'Combined Strike' – Painting by Drew Harrison
On 7 September 1942, six torpedo bombers from 100 Squadron
attacked a Japanese cruiser and destroyer out from Milne Bay



**'Sam' Balmer, 'Bluey' Truscott and Les Jackson
(In order left to right)**

Shells were exploding and hitting the water in front of the aircraft, causing huge waterspouts. Kym Bonython said:

It was the kind of day you dream about for a holiday. Visibility was good. The air was dead still. The sea was an oily mirror. For a torpedo attack it was a nightmare. The enemy began shooting at us when we were still 10 miles away. By the time we were three miles away, barely skimming the surface, we were dodging through great fountains of water thrown up by everything the cruiser and destroyer could fling at us. When we reached dropping range, which was supposed to be 1000 yards, we seemed to be flying through a solid mass of bursting shell, incendiary bullets, cannon shells and foaming explosions. We dropped the torpedo on course, only a few hundred yards from the target and made frantic left-hand turns, almost over the enemy's bows.

Violent evasive action had to be taken. The pilots made corkscrew turns, climbing and diving, and constantly changing height and direction to confound the enemy gunners.

Max Mahoney, the turret gunner with 'Smoky' Douglas, adds more to the experience of that mission:

Rounds from the Jap pom-pom guns were hitting the water on either side of our Beaufort and made it look like we were flying along a roadway. Then their

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shells were coming more accurately at us. We were flying in two flights of three, in right echelon formation. The Kittyhawks on their strafing runs would come pretty close to the cruiser's masts. They pulled out and the two Beaufighters looked as if they were on fire, as they fired their four cannons. The recoil action made the aircraft appear to move slightly backwards during each burst.

Somehow the barrage and the water explosions failed to bring down any of the Beauforts as they came in to launch their torpedoes. All the Beauforts broke away from the bows in each case, and came through the flak with only minor damage—some with more bullet or shrapnel holes than the others.

Back at Milne Bay, one of the Beauforts was found to have had the camouflage paint stripped from underneath the wings, probably from the proximity of an exploding shell from the big guns. One great safety assurance was that, when bullets hit a Beaufort petrol tank, the tank would not explode or catch fire. The tanks were coated with neoprene, a substance containing horsehide and glue, and heat from a bullet piercing a tank caused the hole to seal immediately.

This was the first time that Australian aircraft had used torpedoes against the Japanese Navy. Both ships suffered superficial damage, but the mission could not be described as successful. Nevertheless, to carry untried American heavyweight torpedoes from Nowra to Milne Bay (3000 kilometres) and go straight into action without loss is a remarkable feat.

Kym Bonython makes an important point about that raid on 7 September 1942:

Although no hits were recorded, the hitherto regular Japanese Navy attacks, at night in Milne Bay, on our land forces were abandoned due to the presence of the Beauforts. The enemy land forces were left to their fate from that date onwards.

The following afternoon, 8 September, nine Mitsubishi G4M1 Type 1 Betty bombers, with an escort of five Zeros, bombed the No 1 airstrip (Gurney). There was only moderate damage to the landing strip, but two RAAF guards and four American engineers were killed when their tent was demolished. The radar operators and anti-aircraft gunners were taken completely by surprise and no retaliation was offered.

Rain continued to frustrate efforts to restore the base, the airstrip, and the wharf at Gili Gili to full operational requirements, but typical Australian humour prevailed. On the wall of the Operations Room was a sketch depicting an Operations chap, looking down from his window onto a soldier, up to his chin in mud, saying, 'Sorry to see you up to your neck in mud'. To which the soldier is replying, 'Don't worry about me sport, feel sorry for my horse!'

Life in camp reflected few of the comforts of home. Meals were far from appetising. There were alternatively beans or asparagus, dehydrated potatoes, 'goldfish' (tinned

salmon—often full of roe), bully beef, and bread, which was toasted to kill the weevils. All this was washed down with tepid tea made with heavily chlorinated water. At the evening meal, the tea also helped when taking a salt tablet to counter the loss of sweat, and quinine to counter malaria. Fresh fruit was a luxury, but could be bought occasionally or bartered from the natives.

Some members of the squadron still found it hard to sleep. They had not become used to the dank smell of the tropics, the heavy atmosphere and the claustrophobic green oblong mosquito nets enclosing them. Eventually they would drift off into an uneasy sleep, aided by the steady rain. There were still a number of Japanese stragglers in the jungle, and at night they would creep into the camp to steal food and clothing. The aircrews would sleep with their Smith and Wesson pistols handy, which was a problem for the guards if they had to awaken the fliers for an early patrol. To avoid being shot, a guard would use a long length of bamboo to prod the sleeper.

Meantime, the remainder of the squadron was moving from Laverton to the Bohle River airstrip, seven miles west of Townsville. This was the new assigned base for 100 Squadron. The gravel-surfaced, all-weather airstrip was situated on the flat coastal plain, but was only 15 feet above sea level. By 14 September, crews were conducting anti-submarine patrols and convoy surveillance duties north from Townsville to Port Moresby or Milne Bay. The Beauforts, temporarily based at Milne Bay, were also engaged in sea patrols interchanging with the others at Townsville.

The move to Bohle River was complete when the main party, with Flight Lieutenant A.R. Root in charge, arrived by train on 24 September.

Next day, Beauforts A9-2 and A9-26, flown by Squadron Leader Ralph Wiley and Flying Officer Doug Avery, arrived at Gurney airstrip after the normal four-hour flight from the Bohle River. They had both completed the torpedo course and had been conducting shipping patrols from Townsville.

Ralph Wiley, who had joined the squadron at Laverton, was known as an 'early bird' because, like a number of other early RAAF pilots, he had been flying prior to the outbreak of the war. On arrival, in shorts and sleeveless shirt, the crews found that there was no accommodation arranged, which seemed to be a common occurrence in the early days at Milne Bay. They commandeered a spare tent, but, without nets or mosquito repellent, they spent a restless night. Next day, they were mustered to take part with six other Beaufort crews on a strike in the Buna area, but a rendezvous with fighter support did not eventuate and Balmer cancelled the strike.

On 28 September, the squadron lost A9-89 when the crew encountered a particularly severe tropical storm on a flight from Port Moresby to Milne Bay. The aircraft crash-landed near Wapagai, in a mangrove swamp between Hood Lagoon and Keppel Point. The pilot, Squadron Leader Cliff Bernard, navigator, Flying Officer Len Ophel, and wireless/air gunner, Pilot Officer Colin MacDonald, were killed. Wireless/air gunner Flight Sergeant George Daws, and auxiliary crew member, Sergeant Osborne, suffered

burns and abrasions, but survived. A rescue team took them to 30 Squadron Sick Quarters at Milne Bay, where their condition was reported as *Satisfactory*.³⁶

Although 100 Squadron, which at the end of September had 39 officers and 403 other ranks, came under the administration of RAAF North-Eastern Area, it became part of No 9 Operational Group, attached to the newly formed American Fifth Air Force. At this time General Douglas MacArthur, as Supreme Commander, was directing the strategy of the Allied Forces from his Headquarters in Brisbane. The Chief of Allied Air Forces on his staff was Lieutenant General George Kenney, who headed up USAAF/RAAF operations in the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA). When the Fifth Air Force was formed on 3 September, it included RAAF No 9 Operational Group commanded by Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt. The Group comprised No 100 Squadron Beauforts, a flight of No 6 Squadron Hudsons, and Nos 75 and 76 Squadrons with Kittyhawks at Milne Bay, while No 6 Squadron, No 30 Squadron Beaufighters, No 22 Squadron Bostons and No 4 Squadron Wirraways were at Port Moresby.

Members of the Fifth Air Force were very generous to RAAF personnel. They had a far greater range of supplies than the Australians and frequently shared what they had. A permanent loan of a jeep or two for squadron transport was a common example of their generosity.

In the meantime, the War Cabinet decision of April 1942, to separate operational and administrative functions in the RAAF, had created a problem. Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, as Operational Commander of the RAAF in the South-West Pacific Area, and Air Vice-Marshal Jones, Chief of the Air Staff, who provided the administrative support and supply to the operational squadrons, could not agree on their division of powers. These officers, together with many others at Allied Headquarters, adversely criticised the dual system of control. Indeed, suggestions were even made to appoint an Air Officer Commanding RAAF, and abolish the Air Board,³⁷ but nothing came of the recommendation. Not surprisingly, the division of command caused friction between these two officers, and this lack of harmony became well known within the RAAF.

On 1 October 1942, Hewitt issued the following order:

Instruction No 12, assigns to the RAAF general reconnaissance, bomber and torpedo Squadrons, the responsibility for keeping open the sea lanes to New Guinea: for 'effecting the maximum possible dislocation' of Japanese shipping, supply lines and sea communications; and for maintaining constant reconnaissance of 'all hostile sea approaches to New Guinea' within range.

The burden of this new task rested with No 6 Squadron Hudsons and No 100 Squadron Beauforts. Armed reconnaissance sorties to search for enemy shipping were to be added to the busy schedule of the two squadrons. No 100 Squadron was already

engaged daily in conducting anti-submarine patrols for Allied shipping convoys or striking at the enemy on land. Flying these additional long-range reconnaissance missions, in tropical storms with very limited navigational facilities, significantly increased the stress on aircrews.

On 3 October, the most enterprising and challenging venture by 100 Squadron up to that time took place. Wing Commander Balmer and crew in A9-46 led a flight of ten Beauforts in a night attack on shipping in the Faisi-Buin area of the Shortland Islands, off the southernmost tip of Bougainville Island.

The round trip from Milne Bay to the target area was 950 nautical miles (1758 kilometres). The captains of the Beauforts involved were Squadron Leader Ralph Wiley, Flight Lieutenants Kym Bonython, 'Smoky' Douglas and Don Stumm, Flying Officers Johnny Mercer, Bill Ross, Jimmy Ryan, Doug Avery and Les Chippendale.

Ralph Wiley in A9-29 tells the story:

It was 0100 local time when we took off with our torp, after stripping the plane of all surplus gear. Wing Commander Balmer, OBE, led the way for the Beauforts, while Warrant Officer Greenhill, once with 100 Squadron in the early days and now on loan from 30 Squadron Beaufighters, was the flight navigator. Balmer was to later congratulate Greenhill for his 'spot-on' navigation to the target area.

It is interesting to note that many of the navigators have since said that they quickly learned not to rely on the accuracy of the magnetic compass bearing on long flights. There appeared to be a relatively strong magnetic influence from the retracted undercarriage wheels, so that the compass corrections were often quite inconsistent.

On long trips, use of the astro compass and frequent drift sightings were considered essential, but, in the tropics, star sights were frequently impossible. Unlike the European theatre of war, flying to raid the enemy in the SWPA frequently meant flying over open sea for hundreds of miles. Consequently, there was no navigational help from the wireless operator in securing D/F bearings from radio broadcasting stations or beacons.³⁸ Additionally, weather conditions were always a major problem.

Tropical thunderstorms in the monsoon season were dramatic. Flying in anvil-headed cumuli, which could extend for many miles and commence at an altitude of 50 to 100 feet and rise to tens of thousands of feet, was avoided wherever possible. Fierce convection currents could throw a fully laden Beaufort around like a leaf, and electrical discharges would interfere with radio reception. Lightning strikes were always a concern. Wireless operators were warned not to use a trailing aerial during an electrical storm, following a report of a trailing aerial being burnt off at the fuselage by a lightning strike. It was generally assumed in those days that an aircraft would never survive a direct lightning strike.³⁹

Ralph Wiley continues:

On the way, we encountered a storm, which forced us to open up formation and we lost sight of two of the planes. We arrived in the Shortland Islands area and found the Japanese ships nearer Buin on Bougainville Island. It was a long harbour backed by a mountain range. The moon was obscured by cloud and visibility was poor, but I could see three cruisers and another twenty, or perhaps more, vessels in the harbour. We made a low-level attack and released our torpedo on one of the cruisers. The Japanese were taken completely by surprise and, as we swept across the stern of the cruiser, the ack-ack came too late to worry us. By getting in close to drop the torpedo it is unlikely that we missed our target. However, we did not see any explosion.

Navigator, Bill Ewing, in Ken Waters' plane, confirmed losing sight of two of the planes and adds, '... the remaining eight split into two flights of four—one flight to approach from the east and the other from the west. Each pilot was to select his target and make an individual attack.'

Ron Munro, with 'Smoky' Douglas in A9-82, also gives his account of the raid after Wiley's attack:

We reached Buin-Faisi, which was shaded by the mountains and cloud cover, and the place was in darkness. As we flew to the head of the bay at about five hundred feet, we could see a long line of about thirty ships and they all seemed to start firing at once. Then ack-ack guns on the hillsides began firing. 'Smoky' dived to sea level and weaved the aircraft between two of the warships, which reduced their firing to avoid hitting each other. I saw this shell coming towards us and I was sure it was going to hit me. I folded up my radio table and put my arms over my face. There was a deafening thud and smoke came up through the floor but that was all. A cruiser loomed up directly ahead and we dropped our torpedo. As we flew through a hail of fire from the cruiser, Max in the turret reported that he had seen an explosion.

The return trip was uneventful until we had to climb above dense black rain clouds. On nearing our estimated time of arrival (ETA), 'Smoky' asked the navigator where we were, and Doug Shetliffe said that he thought we were over the sea outside Milne Bay. 'Smoky' said he had only ten minutes of fuel left, so he'd better be right, and with that, we dived almost vertically through the cloud, to pull out a few hundred feet above the water. Full marks to Doug as he had not been able to get a star shot and there was no radio beacon at Milne Bay for me to get a bearing. On landing, we inspected the aircraft and found a dent where a shell had hit us but had not exploded.

Meanwhile, Doug Avery in A9-37 had made his attack on a light cruiser. Flying at 150 feet, he had a steady track as the torpedo was released at a distance of about 1000 yards. He said that it couldn't miss, but in the commotion of taking evasive action

from some late ack-ack, neither Les Schwartz in the turret nor other members of the crew saw the result.

When Flying Officer Chippendale and crew landed back at Gurney at 0755K, it was realised that time was running out for the return of A9-60, with Flight Lieutenant Don Stumm and crew. As time elapsed, it became evident that A9-60 was a casualty of the mission. Don Stumm, Ken Hendy, the navigator, and Cecil Hale and Arthur Walker as wireless/air gunners were reported as missing.

At the debriefing session, Wing Commander Balmer reported that the surprise attack had allowed the raid to proceed without any fighter interception, and that the raid was well under way before the enemy responded. Eight aircraft had entered the target area, seven had sighted enemy ships at which they launched their torpedoes at short range. Balmer's torpedo and two other torpedoes had been seen to be on track for three light cruisers, and two torpedoes on track towards two motor vessels. Although no positive results were observed, it was unlikely the torpedoes had completely missed. As there were no direct hits, the result of the mission was disappointing.

Kym Bonython, who was flying A9-75, was convinced that the American torpedoes were faulty: 'the torpedoes were inclined to be unstable in the air even before diving into the water'. One of the Beaufighter pilots agreed, and suggested that they were made in Japan, as they went anywhere but at the target!

North-Eastern Area Command, in analysing the raid, agreed that the poor result was probably due to defective torpedoes, but that further training would also benefit the squadron. Subsequently, the detachment at Milne Bay was withdrawn and the squadron was united at Bohle River.

It was disconcerting to discover, at a later date, that the American torpedoes, with their box-like air tails, had continued in use when the Americans knew that they were ineffective! Clay Blair reports in his book, *Silent Victory*, that after American submarines had a string of missed targets, a test of the Mk 13 and Mk 14 torpedoes was requested:

On 20 June 1942, a test torpedo was set to run at a depth of 10 feet and fired near Fremantle, WA, under controlled conditions into a net. When it was recovered, its built-in depth recorder revealed that it had run at a depth of 25 feet! When the net was hauled up, there was a ragged hole punched in it at a depth of 25 feet.

US Admiral King ordered the American Bureau of Ordnance to conduct the same test. On 1 August, the US Navy at Newport conceded that the torpedo ran 10 feet deeper than set. Another six weeks elapsed, (i.e. about the middle of September) before the United States Navy admitted in a memo that the torpedo's depth control mechanism had been improperly designed and tested. Finally, instructions for modifying the

torpedo were issued, so that it could be trusted to run within three feet of the actual depth setting.

In mid-October, Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt, Commander No 9 Operational Group, also sought advice from torpedo experts. Consequently, Liaison Officers, Lieutenant G. Haynes, DSO,⁴⁰ of the Royal Australian Navy and Lieutenant Glueck from the United States Navy, together with Wing Commander O. Dibbs, Officer Commanding Torpedo Training Unit, Nowra, visited the squadron. The torpedo experts upheld the findings of the Mobile Torpedo Section, which had followed 100 Squadron to Milne Bay, and agreed that the lack of the squadron's success was due to the faulty torpedoes. They concluded that there was no evidence to show that the Buin-Faisi torpedo attack was a tactical failure.



No 100 Squadron and Torpedo

Back Row, L–R: Ron Munro, Max Mahoney, Noel Loveday, ‘Jake’ Jacobsen, Allan James, Arthur Brasnett, ‘Jock’ Bremner, Bob Duncan, Alex Heagney, Doug Shetliffe, David Forrest, John McKay, Jim Hatfield and Stan Jaffer

Front Row, L–R: Percy Clisdell, Bert Furler, Ted Boxall, ‘Birtie’ Birtwistle, ‘Doc’ Burgess, ‘Sam’ Balmer, ‘Smoky’ Douglas, John Mercer, Adjutant Bob Root, ‘Buck’ Buchanan and Ken Holmes

However, an interesting assessment was made that some of the pilots might have released their torpedoes too close to their targets. Subsequently, the two main requirements for the Torpedo Squadron were to conduct more training and to fit torpedo sights, rather than leaving the pilot solely to estimate the distance to the target. The newly developed torpedo sight consisted of a long, narrow, curved mirror,

calibrated in degrees and mounted in front of the pilot. This was to become the regular torpedo sight for Beauforts.

The crews practised torpedo and dive-bombing approaches on the wreck of the *City of Adelaide* in Cockle Bay, Magnetic Island near Townsville. It was during a formation dive-bombing exercise on 22 October that A9-26 clipped the mast of the wreck, and crashed into the sea, killing all crew. Those killed were Doug Avery, Douglas Bell, Leslie Schwartz and USN Liaison Officer, Lieutenant Glueck.

This unfortunate accident occurred while Wing Commander Balmer, flying A9-46, had Wing Commander Owen Dibbs and Lieutenant Gerald Haynes on board en route to Fishermen's Bend. The visit to Fishermen's Bend was to discuss proposed modifications to Beaufort aircraft. On returning to the squadron a few days later, 'Sam' Balmer was ordered to move permanently to Milne Bay.

An advance party, which included the squadron Medical Officer, Flight Lieutenant Stan Burgess, flew to Gurney airstrip to prepare a suitable campsite on 28 October. Next day, the engineering officer took 27 maintenance staff with him by air transport, to Gurney airstrip. Later the same day, seven Beauforts laden with men and equipment also flew to Milne Bay. The Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Root, reported to the CO that the strength of the squadron, although dispersed at the end of October, stood at 42 officers, 412 men and nine serviceable aircraft. Shortly afterwards Squadron Leader Peter Parker⁴¹ was recalled to Laverton.

Whether it was due to the upheaval in moving camp, or due to an administrative delay, a number of sergeants in the squadron were not told at the time that, as from 1 October, they had been elevated to commissioned rank. Among the promotions to Pilot Officer rank were pilots, Ken Waters, David Forrest, Bob Duncan and Allan James. Navigators, Ken Holmes and Bill Ewing, and wireless/air gunner George Daws had also been included in the promotions. These latter three newly appointed officers had served together in Malaya and in 'Q' Flight, before the creation of 100 Squadron RAAF. The customary celebration on being elevated to officer rank, and the privileges of the Officers Mess, were denied these men until they discovered their names on a list of the squadron's officers a few days before Christmas 1942.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

ACTION AT MILNE BAY

*In tropical regions, there's mozzies in legions
But none causes havoc completer
Than one little devil who's not on the level
It's Mike, the Malaria Moskeeter.*

*The world's aviation has yet no creation
Like Mike in his striped single-seater,
Bad trouble is comin' when you hear the hummin'
Of Mike, the Malaria Moskeeter.*

Mike the Malaria Moskeeter by NX116478

The move, from Bohle River to Gurney airstrip, Milne Bay, continued when eight officers and 213 other ranks, with Flight Lieutenant Root in charge, arrived by transport aircraft on 2 November 1942. The main party arrived a few days later on the SS *Tasman*. Neil Phelan noted in his diary:

The trip from Townsville lasted four and a half days. The scenery, on nearing Milne Bay, was very pretty, with numerous islands covered in trees and shrubs. It seems hard to credit that, only a little while back, the Japs made their landing near here. First impression—it is incredibly muddy. We were badly bogged on the way to the airstrip. Our camp is about 1½ miles from the strip. I walked down to the No 3 strip, which is a very unhygienic place. Japs were simply pushed into heaps and buried with a bulldozer, but many of them were still not buried.

At one end of the Gurney airstrip was the flight hut, where newcomers to the squadrons could get a bite to eat on arrival. Each party spent the first night at the Army staging camp before moving into their new campsite. Aircrews had been camping temporarily at the airstrip, and the maintenance crews in the dispersal area, until the main party arrived. All then travelled along Route 7 to settle into their new campsite.

Even while the squadron had been in the upheaval of moving, it continued on active service, when the weather permitted. Two proposed strikes on shipping on 1 November had been cancelled due to the bad weather. The next evening, all nine operational Beauforts set off just before midnight to attack shipping in the Buna area. However, the mission was abandoned when the Beaufighters, which were to provide fighter protection, failed to rendezvous at Cape Nelson.

To search in the Solomon Sea for enemy shipping, in accordance with Air Commodore Hewitt's Operations Instruction of October 1942, reconnaissance patrols were assigned particular areas. Area 'A' was north to New Britain and included the Trobriand Islands; Area 'B' was to the east and included Woodlark Island; southward to include the Louisiade Archipelago was labelled Area 'C'; and the immediate Milne Bay was Area 'D'. Reconnaissance further afield was also carried out as required.

Returning from an armed reconnaissance mission to Huon Gulf in A9-87, Ralph Wiley had an indication that he had no brakes. It did not unduly concern him for, before the war, he had flown in aircraft that had no brakes at all. He called Gurney Tower to advise the situation, throttled back with maximum flap and landed safely. The Americans, however, did not have his confidence, and had hastily evacuated jeeps and personnel from around the airstrip.

During the monotonous reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols, aircrews often encountered tropical storms, which tossed the planes about and reduced visibility. Without radar, the planes were virtually flying blind for some of the time. There was nothing exciting in searching a vast expanse of ocean for hours on end under normal conditions and, in stormy weather, it was irksome and hazardous.

The crew of A9-18 welcomed a change from these lonesome patrols on 16 November, when ordered to provide added protection for a ship laden with supplies for Port Moresby. While the HMAS *Stuart* was escorting the vessel from Milne Bay, the crew searched for enemy submarines, but the voyage was uneventful.

Shortly after the brakes on A9-87 had been repaired, Ralph Wiley recalls an anti-submarine patrol in Ward Hunt Strait on one black night:

The weather deteriorated to such an extent that our navigator became disoriented. The wireless operator could not help, due to constant heavy static on the radio receiver, and not having radar installed. I had a vague idea of the direction back to New Guinea and at last picked out white-topped waves indicating breakers and eventually we identified Cape Vogel. I then followed the coast south to arrive back at the Gurney strip.

Meanwhile, there was still a rear party with equipment, stores and motor transport at Garbutt aerodrome, Townsville, and there were about 50 personnel on the mainland in hospital or on sick leave. Transport was eventually arranged, and the ship with Flying Officer Paine and the rear party arrived in pouring rain late on 18 November. Adding to the inconvenience of the wet weather, a temporary dump of stores and equipment had to be established near the airstrip, because the road along Route 7 to the campsite was impassable. A truck was hopelessly bogged and six more trucks were banked up behind it. A bulldozer was requisitioned and, with its blade behind the last truck, it pushed all seven trucks clear of the bog in one powerful effort.

All personnel—officers and airmen, aircrews, ground crews, medical, messing, stores and other support staff—were housed in the distinctive square American tents, with eight to each tent. As the tents were as hot as hell, because there were no tent flies, the sides were brailed.⁴²



No 100 Squadron Camp Milne Bay
(Officers' quarters in background and Airmen's Mess at the left)

At first, all meals were served *alfresco*, until the natives completed the officers', sergeants' and airmen's mess huts. Despite having to prepare and cook in temporary shelters with rations in short supply, the mess teams provided sound, steaming hot meals, which were appreciated. Much of the cooking was done over a petrol fire. A stove, contrived by cutting an empty fuel drum in half and filling it with sand, sodden with petrol, burned slowly but with plenty of heat. On numerous occasions, meals were served in the rain to hungry airmen, who hastily carried the meals to their tents to eat.

It rained incessantly, and the primitive living conditions, with subdued light and steaming, smelly mud, created a melancholy atmosphere. The whole area was drowned in a sea of mud, squelching and oozing underfoot. There was the smell of rotting vegetation everywhere, and in the more swampy areas there was a distinct sour smell.

Even more aggravating were the irritations caused by leeches and swarms of mosquitoes, flies, gnats and cockroaches. There was no chance of flying in pouring rain, so aircrews and ground crews alike played cards or chess, while others read whatever was available, wrote letters or simply 'spinebashed'. It was at such times that

Graham Robinson offered his services as a barber. He did quite well at one shilling a haircut, his improvised barber's seat any handy box or tin.



**No 100 Squadron Camp, Milne Bay
(Looking toward Transport Section)**

However, the despondency was not to last, for the new Padre, Chris Debenham, took stock of the situation and formed a social committee, which organised a concert. The performance was so well received that the 'Milne Bay Concert Party' was formed to continue with concerts. It was for those concerts that many of the squadron and Milne Bay songs were composed and sung,⁴³ as well as bawdy lyrics to popular tunes. One of the more amiable versions of *Bless 'em All* or the *Milne Bay Blues* is still sung to this day at many an Air Force or Army reunion.

Despite the bad weather, Milne Bay was being transformed. Gurney and the No 3 (Turnbull) airstrips were being developed as originally planned, and solid operations and messing huts were taking the place of the temporary ones.

No 9 Operational Group, by this time, had separated from the administrative control of North-Eastern Area and Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt now had complete control. The No 9 Group comprised seven squadrons under two subordinate wing headquarters. Under 71 Wing at Milne Bay, there were two fighter squadrons, Nos 75 and 77 with Kittyhawks, and two bomber squadrons, No 6 with Hudsons and No 100 with Beauforts, which was the only land-based torpedo squadron in the South-West Pacific Area. At Port Moresby, under 73 Wing, there were No 30 Squadron Beaufighters, No 22 Squadron Bostons and No 4 Squadron Wirraways. There was also an American Airacobra Squadron operating out of Milne Bay at this

time, and Liberators, Fortresses and Mitchells were regular visitors to Gurney, using the facilities as a staging base for their bombing raids.

The main camp was a good ten-minute ride in a truck or jeep from the airstrip, but still within the area that was once 'Lever Brothers' coconut plantation. Aircraft taking off flew over the camp towards the Bay, and ground crews inside their tents could identify each type of aircraft by its distinctive sound. Planes laden with bombs and fuel made noisy departures, but all agreed that the Liberator was the noisiest of them all.

After dark, the camp was illuminated by means of a petrol-driven motor-generator, which was switched off at 2100 hours. After lights out, on the rare occasions when it was not raining, some of the green bushes, particularly near the bomb dump, were often decorated with the little pulsating lights of fireflies. What a contrast—a delicate touch of nature against the metal of war!

When a Hudson crew on reconnaissance in the Huon Gulf reported a sighting of five Japanese destroyers on 24 November, a flight of Fortresses from the Fifth Air Force immediately attacked the flotilla in daylight. One destroyer was hit and set alight. Air Commodore Hewitt then called for a combined attack by 100 Squadron using bombs and torpedoes. Five aircraft carrying Mk 13 torpedoes, and four armed with 2 x 500 lb and 2 x 250 lb bombs, set off into the dark and turbulent night. The first of the nine Beauforts, A9-87, was airborne at 2036K (local time), and heading for the target area just north of Buna. The last to leave was A9-2 at 2137K.

By the time the Beauforts arrived in the target area, the flotilla had separated into two groups. Visibility was very limited, but 'Sam' Balmer and his navigator Stan Jaffer, in A9-46, sighted the burning destroyer with two others nearby. They made a torpedo run, which seemed to be on track, towards the already damaged destroyer, but the result was not observed. However, Ralph Wiley in A9-87 saw an explosion.

Dave Forrest in A9-29 then arrived on the scene. He made a torpedo run on the crippled destroyer, but again the result was not observed. Ken Waters and his crew in A9-42 also saw the burning destroyer in the distance and the two others standing by. Bill Ewing takes up the story:

The weather was absolutely atrocious, well nigh impassable, rain storms, thunder squalls, cloud down to the deck, and just to get through necessitated changes of course every five minutes or so; less than ideal for pilot and navigator alike. This was when the fierce determination and dedicated devotion to duty of Ken Waters was first manifest. We found the target and, after several abortive runs over the destroyer at masthead level, Ken dropped successfully. I can still feel the concussion from the ship's ack-ack, which led me to sit on my tin hat rather than wearing it. The sinking was later confirmed. That five and a half hours has to rank with the worst I can recall. It is beyond doubt that if the decision

to press on or not had been left to the three other crew members then A9-42 would have returned to base.

Bob Duncan in A9-2 had not sighted the destroyers and, while returning from the target area, experienced such adverse weather that the aircraft ran out of fuel, causing him to ditch in the sea in the early hours of the morning. Fortunately, there was time for the wireless operator, 'Jake' Jacobsen to send a message, 'Am force landing in sea Milne Bay'. The crew of A9-8 searched but found no trace of the aircraft. Then A9-75, also searching, received a message from Duncan through Air-Sea Rescue, 'Force landed Cape Vogel 0413Z/24.⁴⁴ All safe & uninjured. Proceeding Wanigela.'

The crew had escaped into their emergency dinghy as the Beaufort sank, and, with the assistance of some natives, managed to get ashore. Next day Bob Duncan, 'Jake' Jacobsen, John McKay the navigator, and Norman Mann the gunner returned to the squadron by air from Port Moresby.

Another aircraft, A9-82, should have also taken part in the raid but, when its engines were being started, it caught on fire. The fire spread quickly as the ground crew, led by Pilot Officer Temple, raced to the aircraft to remove the torpedo, which they did successfully. This exemplary effort earned a 'Mentioned in Despatches' award for each of the ground crew, and the imperial decoration, MBE, for the squadron's torpedo officer, Pilot Officer R.A.J. Temple. Two days later there was confirmation that the damaged destroyer *Hayashio* was torpedoed and sunk by A9-46, and that the *Hiyodori* had been hit with a 500 lb bomb and severely damaged by A9-42.

The air-raid siren sounded at 0300K on Sunday morning, 29 November, and within one minute, five Japanese Jake float planes commenced bombing Turnbull airstrip. Thirty-one bombs were dropped. Six of them hit the airstrip, two of which were found to be delayed-action detonating. Although the raid lasted some fifty minutes, poor visibility probably saved the establishment from further damage. In the skirmish, the anti-aircraft batteries shot down one of the aircraft. There were no Allied casualties.

Tropical diseases had begun taking their toll on, not only 100 Squadron personnel, but all serving at Milne Bay. Dysentery was also prevalent, and parasitic skin conditions such as dermatitis, ringworm and tinea were common. The field hospital was full of malaria (*malignant tertian*) and dengue fever cases too. Malaria, in particular, was a serious disease, carried by the anopheles mosquito, affecting both Caucasians and Japanese alike. It obviously played a significant part in the battle for Milne Bay and other battles in the South-West Pacific.

This was not the first time that malaria played a dramatic role in warfare. Recent scientific and archaeological evidence shows that, as far back as the fifth century, the pestilence that so weakened the Romans, as to be a significant cause in the fall of the Romans to the Vandals, was malaria. Nearly one third of 100 Squadron was incapacitated with malaria at Milne Bay at this time, and 'Doc' Burgess ordered

all personnel to take two quinine tablets a day. As the source of quinine dried up following the Japanese occupation of Java, the synthetic replacement drug, Atebrin,⁴⁵ was then prescribed, which in time turned one's skin as yellow as that of the Japanese. Even the whites of the eyes were jaundiced.

Air Commodore Hewitt was dismayed at the malaria casualties when he arrived in his DH-84 Dragon Communication Flight aircraft, and he ordered long-sleeved shirts and long trousers to be worn at all times, not just after sunset. Unfortunately, the Australian green shirts and trousers were not only uncomfortable in the heat and humidity, but the green dyes also aggravated any dermatitis. Boiling the clothes before wearing helped, but the dermatitis still thrived under the sweat-saturated clothing. Furthermore, the combination of sweat and mildew rotted the stitching, and in due course the clothes literally fell apart.

One of the casualties of malaria was the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Balmer, and on 30 November he was flown to the mainland for 21 days' sick leave. Squadron Leader Ralph Wiley was appointed temporary CO during Balmer's absence, and at that time the squadron establishment comprised 37 officers and 414 other ranks.

The incidence of malaria frequently required aircrews on duty to be made up with substitute crew members. Although the ground staffing was similarly affected, several of the staff not affected, particularly the armourers, volunteered and took over as substitute gunners. The Hudson Squadron was experiencing the same situation. Flight Lieutenant David Colquhoun⁴⁶ tells of having substitute gunners:

Several of the ground staff took their turn in the turret and almost fought over who was to go on the strike. On one mission, I was astounded to find after take off that instead of a crew of four, there were six in the Hudson. Three of them were substitute gunners from the maintenance crew!

In response to reported Japanese endeavours to reinforce Buna, Reg Green and crew in A9-38 set out on Tuesday morning, 1 December, to reconnoitre. They sighted a convoy of four destroyers in Area 'A' off the coast of New Britain at 06° 20' S 151° 28' E. The wireless report at 2352Z/30 (almost 10.00 am local time) also included the course of the convoy as being 250 degrees. Base operations at Gurney airstrip responded with orders to 'shadow to the limit of endurance and attack'. While keeping the destroyers under observation for the next two hours, Frank Nolan at the wireless desk heard a 'Mayday' call from a Flying Fortress, as it was attacked by Zeros and shot down, and wondered what chance a Beaufort would have against the Japanese fighters.

Frank Nolan recounts the events to follow:

Just as we had commenced our run in to bomb one of the destroyers at 1500 feet, Sergeant Norm Mann in the turret yelled, 'three enemy fighters to port'.

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I left the wireless position and, as I swung open the beam hatch to man the Vickers machine gun, the Zeros suddenly cruised up on the port side. I saw one pilot peering at us from only 40 yards away. He had an amazed look on his face. Australia's Beaufort had a similar profile to the Japanese Betty bomber. Then the three of them shot ahead.

Reg Green altered course and sped for a cloud, but the fighters banked and came at us head-on. Streams of tracer bullets swept above and below the wings as Pilot Officer Peter May in the nose of the plane gave them a gun burst before they flashed past. Norm Mann in the turret also gave them a short burst as they flashed by at a combined speed of about 500 mph. The fighters made a wide turn and came back again from both flanks. Mann fired the twin Vickers guns, hitting one, which dived away much sharper than the other. Meanwhile the other Zero made a beam approach towards me at the open hatch. As he closed I got away a five-second burst. Part of his wing blew off and most of the fuselage and the Zero spun out of control. The third fighter broke off the action and left.

The battle in the air had taken just under eight minutes, and was a fine example of teamwork, which makes a successful crew. Remarkably there was no damage to the Beaufort. As they were then low on fuel, Peter May gave the pilot a course to steer for home, while Frank Nolan wirelessly the position of the destroyers as 06° 25' S 151°20' E, on leaving the area. The crew arrived back safely at Gurney at 1348K, after being airborne for seven hours eight minutes.

The whole squadron rejoiced over the news of the air battle, and Athol Snook reflected their thoughts, 'For a Beaufort to knock down Zeros was a big morale boost. You have a bomber complex, you feel vulnerable against fighters. Reg's crew gave us the message—go back and attack them.' Each of the crew was Mentioned in Despatches, and it is also worth noting that Frank Nolan was a very skilled gunner. He had been using a gun every duck season since he had been 12 years old.

In regard to the mission itself, it seems incredible that anyone, sitting in an armchair back at base, should order a lone bomber to attack four destroyers, bristling with arms and having air support. It certainly takes fortitude and discipline to press on under such dire circumstances.

Reg Green credits the Japanese Zero pilots with saving his life. 'I doubt that we would have survived the encounter with the heavily defended warships'. The crew was credited with one probable Zero and one damaged, but postwar Japanese records revealed that the two Zeros were lost.

That same evening, No 9 Operational Group, comprising two Hudsons from 6 Squadron, three Bostons from 22 Squadron, six Beaufighters from 30 Squadron and six 100 Squadron Beauforts with torpedoes, made a well-coordinated attack on the same destroyers in the vicinity of Buna. One of the Hudsons illuminated the flotilla with flares, while the Beaufighters flew in at deck level to strafe.



**Zeros Attacking Beaufort – Painting by Athol Snook
 Depicting air-to-air combat between three Zeros and A9-38
 Reg Green and crew shot down two of the Zeros**

As the Beaufighters completed their sorties, the first Beaufort to make its torpedo run on one of the destroyers was A9-29, piloted by Dave Forrest. The torpedo was released from 200 feet at 1200 yards, but no effect was observed. Harry Birley in A9-42 sighted another destroyer and released his torpedo also from 200 feet at 2000 yards, but again the crew saw no result. One of the Beaufighter pilots, however, observed a huge explosion coinciding with Birley's attack, giving him a probable hit on the destroyer *Isonami*. John Smibert in A9-35 launched his torpedo from 1200 feet range at his target, but missed. He reported that this destroyer seemed to be unaware of the attack! Ron Munro, flying in A9-35 on this occasion reported, 'Destroyers had very heavy fire power and on this occasion we were surprised at the lack of gunnery from the destroyer and on getting in closer we found the decks and turrets were covered with troops in full kit. We circled round and gave them a pasting with our guns until we ran out of ammunition.' Nil sightings were reported by both Bob Ridgeway's and Len Parsons' crews, while Johnny Mercer's crew in A9-87 reported seeing flares and ack-ack fire in the distance. The Bostons also bombed the destroyers to record near misses, but no direct hits were observed.

Reconnaissance patrols in designated areas continued as weather permitted. During his search pattern in the Huon Gulf on 5 December, Ralph Wiley in A9-46 reported sighting a convoy in the Gulf on course for Lae at the mouth of the Markham River. The Beauforts scrambled for an immediate strike, but the weather deteriorated to such an extent that the flight was forced to abandon the mission and return to base.

No 9 Operational Group ordered the Beauforts and Hudsons to find and attack the convoy as soon as the weather permitted.

On 7 December, the weather improved sufficiently for five Beauforts and three Hudsons to fly in separate formations to Lae. The Beauforts arrived over the harbour at 2100K, and the crews sighted one ship near the wharf, and others stationary nearby. 'Smoky' Douglas in A9-182 made a successful bombing run to cause two explosions on the ship near the wharf. Johnny Mercer in A9-183 also made a successful bombing run on another ship, resulting in an explosion on its port side. Ralph Wiley in A9-87 and Allan James in A9-32 reported near misses, but all other attempts by both Beauforts and Hudsons were unsuccessful. A9-35 experienced some engine trouble on the return journey but made a successful landing.

About this time, the *Guinea Gold* Vol. 1, No. 1, an extraordinary newspaper printed in Port Moresby for the Allied forces, had the headlines 'Allies Closing In'. It went on to say, 'American troops closing in on Buna from the south and south-east while Australian units are still advancing along the main track from Wairopi'.⁴⁷ The article referred to a plan for the Australians to advance on Gona from Kokoda, which they had retaken on 2 November 1942, while the Americans were to take Buna.

The inexperienced Americans, plagued by dysentery and bogged down in swampy ground, suffered heavy losses from snipers. When General MacArthur heard that the Australians had taken Gona on 9 December, he was impatient for Buna to be taken, but when General Kenney told of the losses and the lack of the Americans' morale, he was angry. When one of his commanders called for reinforcements and asked for Australians to be sent, 'as they were great fighters', MacArthur considered this comment to be derogatory of the American soldiers, and became even more enraged. Putting Lieutenant General Eichelberger in charge, he brutally told him, 'Take Buna or don't come back alive'.

The Australians joined the Americans about 50 miles south of Buna, and together they fought the battle for Buna. Supplies were flown in for the battle from Port Moresby to Dobodura. Fifteen Hudson crews involved in this activity had been hurriedly arranged at No 1 Operational Training Unit, Bairnsdale, Victoria. They landed in Port Moresby on the morning of 13 December, and commenced flights over the Owen Stanley Range immediately.

One of the navigators in the Hudson detachment was Alex Stuart,⁴⁸ who was shortly to fly with 100 Squadron. Alex had a torrid time on one of those flights. Seven Zeros attacked his aircraft, and it was 15 minutes before the crew could escape into a cloud. During the melee, all the crew fired their guns, and Alex was credited with shooting down one enemy plane. For this incident he was Mentioned in Despatches.

Attacks and counterattacks in one of the bloodiest battles fought in New Guinea continued until 2 January 1943, when the combined forces of the Americans and Australian took Buna.

Meantime, 100 Squadron was engaged in regular sea patrols and, on returning from a patrol, the crews often took the opportunity to practise simulated torpedo runs against the local shipping. When A9-29 returned at midday on the 22 December, the sea was like glass, with not a breath of air to disturb one small ship at the wharf or another anchored in the Bay. Bob Duncan took the opportunity to make a practice torpedo run on the vessel at anchor, and edged down to what he judged to be 50 feet to make his approach. Unfortunately, the aircraft squashed into the sea.

The wireless operator, Nick Nicholson, launched the inflatable dinghy and Bob Duncan and navigator, Harry Thomas, scrambled into it before the plane sank. There was no sign of Bill Rabbisch, who apparently went down with the plane. The three survivors were rescued by the RAAF launch and, apart from bruising, abrasions and some signs of shock, they were unharmed.

Performances by the Milne Bay Concert Party continued to be very popular entertainment as the Christmas season approached, but everyone was delighted when Padre Debenham's social committee set up an open-air picture theatre. Everyone donned a waterproof ground sheet to watch the pictures, as it was frequently pouring with rain. The screen, set up between two coconut trees, reproduced the pictures from a projector mounted on the back of a truck. Viewing a screen through the rain reminded one of a butcher's shop window, where water cascaded down the shop window to attract attention to choice cuts of meat on display. At the first show, the audience saw the very topical film, *Target for Tonight*.

When Will Hanley's 'Fifth Divvy' Travelling Concert Party arrived in the area, the picture night was abandoned. The male cast was talented, and their performances were a tonic for everyone who attended. A portable stage opened out from the floor of their truck, and their props and costumes were all very cleverly designed. A female impersonator was so good that bets were taken as to whether *she* was indeed a she.

With the approach of Christmas, 100 Squadron was ready to celebrate after an eventful year. The hat went around to collect funds, and the Commanding Officer agreed to send an aircraft, due for its 240 hours overhaul, to Townsville. The crew could then buy up hams, turkeys and other Christmas fare, and fly back in a new, or recently overhauled, aircraft that had been allocated to the squadron. All went as planned, and A9-46 flew to Townsville. Laden with Christmas provisions packed in ice, the crew set off on their return trip, but the aircraft developed engine trouble and was forced to land at Coen. The ice melted, and all the meat went bad and had to be dumped. The crew was stranded there over Christmas, much to the dismay of the crew and the rest of 100 Squadron.

In contrast, 6 Squadron, laden with Christmas fare, arrived late in the afternoon on Christmas Eve from Horn Island. They were soon celebrating their reunion with the 6 Squadron detachment, which had been at Milne Bay since 6 August 1942.

With rain pelting down outside, the Christmas day program for 100 Squadron began with an ecumenical church service before lunch. The afternoon was free, and the officers and airmen sat down together to their Christmas dinner at about the time the sun set, although the sun had not really appeared all day. After an endeavour by the cooks to dress up the usual 'M & V' (meat and vegetables) course with some local spices, Christmas pudding miraculously appeared on the tables. Relatives and friends had sent much of it, although some of it had been cooked at the base kitchen from locally scrounged ingredients. The meal turned out to be quite an acceptable repast, after which everyone enjoyed singing popular songs of the time, interspersed with squadron ditties of the more risqué variety.

Parcels from the Australian Comfort Fund were opened, only to find that they contained mouldy cake, melted chocolate bars, woollen gloves and balaclavas! Some parcels had notes from the ladies who had packed the parcels (assuming they were going to the UK), 'wishing the boys a warm and comfortable Christmas!' Several Christmas cards on display in the Mess were from the local squadrons, and one was from John Storey, the director of the Beaufort builders at Fishermen's Bend.

The crews, rostered for sea patrols in Areas A, B, C and D, continued to fly, despite the bad weather. Ralph Wiley and Ken Waters, on the early morning patrols of 31 December, arrived back safely before the weather closed in completely with a tropical storm. Then all flying was cancelled.

Milne Bay was a long sweeping crescent guarded by steep hills covered with jungle, making landings a dangerous exercise for the unwary. The only safe approach was from the sea, and, in darkness and heavy rain, the airstrips were difficult to locate. Kym Bonython recommended, 'If unable to see either Gurney or Turnbull airstrips within ninety seconds of making your approach, make a tight turn out of there otherwise you'll run into the steep hills'. Needless to say, on returning from a mission with half an hour's fuel on board, landing anywhere else was out of the question.⁴⁹ Ron Munro also spoke realistically on the problem:

The real alternatives were to attempt a landing anyway, stay at height nearby while the fuel lasts, and hope the weather clears, or ditch in the sea, hoping to do so successfully, and launch the emergency dinghy. To bail out was really no option. The pilot and navigator might get out safely up at the front of the Beaufort if they didn't snag their parachute in getting out, but the wireless operator and air gunner diving out of the side hatch seemed certain to hit the tailplane. There were very few recorded successful mid-air evacuations from Beauforts. Anyway, if you fell in the sea, or in the jungle you would have practically no chance of surviving.

It was under similar adverse conditions in tropical rain that Harry Birley in A9-184 was searching for the Gurney airstrip on 1 January 1943. He and his crew were returning from patrolling Area 'A' and, being unable to get a good look at Gurney

strip, he attempted a landing at Turnbull airstrip. With the visibility so poor, it was no wonder he pranged, but fortunately no-one was injured. Eric Stuart and Bill Hamblin also returned from their respective patrols to land safely, despite the pouring rain. Shortly afterwards, Len Parsons in A9-186 found conditions so bad at Milne Bay that he was diverted to Port Moresby, as he had ample fuel on board. He landed safely at 8 pm (2000K).

Meantime, Geoff Megaw and crew in A9-182 had been watching over a convoy leaving Port Moresby, but weather conditions forced them to return after two hours. Phil Harrison in A9-8 tried again in the afternoon when the weather eased, and carried out the anti-submarine patrol for the next five hours until nightfall.

When 'Sam' Balmer returned to the squadron on 2 January, he immediately placed himself on full flying duties. Next morning he took A9-183 on a convoy escort with Bill Hamblin in A9-38 and Allan James in A9-32 to help keep watch for enemy submarines. That same afternoon Balmer carried out a special search for an Anson aircraft reported missing in the Bailebo River region. He located the Anson, and two Moths, apparently safe on the ground at Kivai Pomata Point, and was back at Gurney within the hour.

On 4 January, Flying Fortresses, which had staged through Gurney, carried out a raid on one of the five airstrips at Rabaul on the north-eastern tip of New Britain. When one Fortress was reported missing, early on 6 January, four Beauforts set off to conduct a coordinated search. 'Smoky' Douglas found the B-17 Fortress in the sea off Uras Island, and then located the crew on the island. They had spread a parachute on the grass and had tied a balloon on a nearby tree. Their waving indicated that they were glad to be found. A weighted note was dropped asking them to raise a paddle if they needed a doctor. A paddle was raised, so the need for a doctor was included in the morse code message to base.

Following news that the enemy was endeavouring to replenish its forces at Lae, the squadron was placed on alert. One convoy had been caught unloading at Lae on 6 January, and American bombers had already carried out a bombing raid, which had been unsuccessful. That evening, Wing Commander Balmer led five Beauforts loaded with bombs to attack the convoy, which was reported to consist of two cruisers, four destroyers and four transport vessels. Within 20 minutes, however, the flight encountered violent weather conditions, and all aircraft were forced to return to base.

The following evening, five Beauforts from 100 Squadron, and the same number of Hudsons from 6 Squadron set off to attack the convoy, which was still in Lae Harbour. There was no moonlight and the weather was heavily overcast. 'Smoky' Douglas in A9-182 was first to enter the target area at about 2030K, where he observed three ships at the wharves. He selected one vessel and made a successful bombing run to score an explosion on the ship.⁵⁰ Dave Forrest in A9-183 followed shortly afterwards and attacked a ship stationary in the harbour, causing an explosion on that vessel.

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The Hudsons also scored an explosion on a vessel. In the dark, neither of the crews in A9-32 nor A9-8 found the ships at Lae, but Allan James in A9-32 sighted an enemy ship at Salamaua. He attacked with all four bombs, but the crew saw no resulting explosion.

Meanwhile, Bill Hamblin in A9-87 had engine trouble and struggled back to Gurney to make a good landing at 2017K. All aircraft arrived to land safely at Gurney by 2325K.

When word came through that an enemy convoy had left Lae on a course for Gasmata, a flight from 100 Squadron was ordered to coordinate an attack. Captains Johnny Mercer, Harry Birley, Bill Hamblin, Geoff Collins and Geoff Megaw were summoned to the Operations hut midmorning on Saturday 9 January. The flight plan called for torpedo-carrying Beauforts to attack the convoy shortly after sunset, when it was unlikely to still have the fighter aircraft escort. The latest position of the convoy was reported to be 06° 45' S 148° 30' E, course 090 and speed 10 knots.

Once airborne from Gurney at 1750K, the flight came together in echelon port formation⁵¹ and radio silence was observed. Shortly after the shimmering red disc of the tropical sun sank into the sea, the weather became very turbulent, but the pilots held formation. Much of the time they were in cloud but, on arriving in the vicinity of Gasmata, in the estimated area of the convoy at 1940K, the formation descended to break through the cloud at about 2500 feet. Only John Mercer, as the leader, and Harry Birley had radar installed in their aircraft, and it was Mercer's WAG, Perce Clisdell, who located a Japanese ship about 20 nautical miles south of Gasmata.

Ivan Morris, the navigator with Bill Hamblin in A9-87, describes the attack:

The five Beauforts swung away to the east of the target and descended to wave-top height before turning in to carry out a torpedo attack on the ship, which was now silhouetted by the afterglow of the setting sun. There were some dark clouds about, but not enough to prevent a clear sighting of the vessel, which appeared to be a heavy destroyer or light cruiser. It was heading north-east towards Rabaul, and was apparently unaware of us.

The torpedo attack was not properly coordinated, as we were strung out, and we actually attacked individually. John Mercer in A9-183 went in first, lifting the aircraft to 200 feet to drop his torpedo, but no result was seen, and we followed one minute later. As we approached the target, which had been alerted by John Mercer's attack, it was running at full speed across our path and began firing with everything it had in our direction. Shells from its main armament set up a splash barrage in front of us, while its ack-ack guns were firing with virulent accuracy.

When flying directly into gunfire, the tracers show up as slowly moving blobs or streams of light until they reach you, then hopefully they whiz past. It was quite spectacular, and I moved back out of the nose of the aircraft to stand alongside the pilot, and operate the torpedo release mechanism, so I had a good

view of the action. Bill Hamblin had his hands full controlling the aircraft, and positioning it ready for the drop point. When straight and level at the right spot, I released the torpedo.

It fell truly from the aircraft, and Laurie Webb in the turret, reported that it had entered the water cleanly, and did not offset sideways as so many of them did. Meanwhile Bill Hamblin was jinking the Beaufort violently all over the sky to avoid the flak. I returned to the front, to use the nose guns, as we broke away over the stern of the ship at an altitude of about 100 feet, with engines that were at full boost. Shortly afterwards Laurie Webb in the turret excitedly reported a huge flash amidships on the target, and we knew that the torpedo had run true. A series of red flares or rockets went up from the ship immediately following the torpedo hit, and their guns stopped firing.



Ivan Morris, Milne Bay
Photograph taken 19 February 1942

A barrage of flak had made Harry Birley in A9-182 break off his attack, and on his second attempt the barrage intensified. Eventually, Birley decided discretion was the better part of valour and broke off the engagement. He warned Collins and Megaw of the futility of attempting a torpedo attack under such intense firepower. This action was in line with Wing Commander Balmer's concern for aircrew. He had expressed the view several times that he did not want aircrew to be sacrificed on foolhardy missions, when the chance of success was absolutely minimal.

In any case, the weather had whipped up a violent storm, with lightning so brilliant that each flash temporarily blinded the crews. Weather conditions at Milne Bay had also deteriorated, and base operations recalled the flight. A9-87 and A9-183 raced the storm back to land safely at Milne Bay, before very heavy rain set in. An hour later, Wing Commander Balmer and all at base operations became anxious, as there was no sign of, nor contact with, any of the other planes. Then A9-182 called on the wireless, and shortly afterwards an aircraft was heard circling somewhere overhead in the impenetrable low cloud and rain. Harry Birley called again to announce that he was coming in. How he managed to find the airstrip, and make a good landing under such atrocious conditions, was nothing short of miraculous—the aircraft landing light could not be seen in making the approach until the plane was almost landing.

Then just before midnight, A9-8 called on the wireless, and Geoff Megaw reported he was somewhere over Milne Bay in thick cloud and couldn't see a thing.⁵² By that time it was not only 100 Squadron that was concerned for the Beaufort crew, but all at the station were also worried. George Adamson, a wireless/air gunner in 6 Squadron Hudsons reported, 'We were outside our tent and we could hear the Beaufort overhead in the low ominous dark clouds and pelting rain, and we agonised with the crew'.

The CO spoke to Megaw, 'First of all drop your torpedo in the sea. You can remain aloft while you have fuel, until hopefully the weather will improve; if not, then all crew bail out, or you can ditch in the sea.' Megaw acknowledged the message to a hushed group at the base wireless, who knew that it was almost a hopeless situation. Many outside the Operations hut were listening to the sound of the plane's engines, when suddenly a loud explosion reverberated from the mountain range behind the camp. Geoff Megaw, Bill Young, Jim Howlett and Don Lay would not be returning. They had perished when the plane hit the mountain two miles south of Waga mission.

In the meantime, there was also grave concern for A9-32. Nothing had been heard from that aircraft since wireless operator Frank Roberts had reported their position, when in the vicinity of Goodenough Island. As the aircraft had well exceeded its endurance, it had to be recorded as missing in operations. Next morning, the squadron searched a wide area extending from around Milne Bay, the Trobriands, Louisiades and D'Entrecasteaux Islands, and into Dobodura on the Papuan mainland, but failed to find any trace.

Acting on advice from the natives, the AIF found the wreckage of the plane, which had exploded on crashing into the side of a hill on Normanby Island at the southern end of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands group. The bodies of newly commissioned Geoffrey Collins, with his crew comprising Robert Forrest, Albert Haysom and Francis Roberts, were recovered and buried on Normanby Island.

When Allied aircraft crews reported that there was no sign of the torpedoed cruiser, it was presumed to have sunk. The disturbing cost, however, was the loss of two aircraft and eight valiant aircrew members, not from enemy action, but due to the atrocious tropical weather conditions.

At this time, the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Balmer, wrote to No 9 Operational Group Headquarters at Port Moresby, in response to their letter of 4 January 1943. Lieutenant Commander Carr, RAN had expressed opinions and recommendations for more effective use of the squadron. Balmer agreed with Carr's recommendations but brought additional factors to notice.

Although the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production (DAP) had agreed to lighten Beauforts for torpedo operations, the new Mk VIII aircraft were 400 pounds heavier than the Mk Vs. This extra weight was due mainly to the fitting of a different turret and ASV radar equipment. The Mk VIII Beaufort was consequently 7 to 10 knots slower than the Mk V at cruising power, which limited the operating range of the squadron. Balmer pointed out that, as the provision of special night search aircraft had been agreed to in November 1942, there was no need for torpedo aircraft to carry radar.

Balmer recommended that the DAP be advised which aircraft were to be allocated to torpedo squadrons, so that they could be suitably fitted during manufacture. He urged that:

Immediate steps be taken to bring the squadron up to establishment in aircraft. (The present establishment is 16 operational, and 8 reserve, while the average number held has been 10, with an average availability of 8).

He continued:

On receipt of these aircraft an intensive period of training will be carried out. However, the torpedo sight, as fitted to the Beaufort, is still in the process of development. Several modifications are necessary before it can be considered satisfactory for both day and night use ... Until F46 cameras, an analysis machine, and suitable targets are available, this important phase of training must be deferred.

He concluded:

The possibility of operating from Guadalcanal until such time as a suitable base is available in this area, should be investigated. (If this unit remains at Milne Bay ... there is little possibility of the standard of training improving. In fact due to sickness it seems probable that the standard will deteriorate – 113 of the personnel i.e. 25% have already had malaria.)

At last all the 100 Squadron Beauforts were being fitted with Air-to-Surface Vessel (ASV) radar. This was a tremendous boost to morale, as well as being welcomed as an additional navigation aid. Night training in using the new equipment commenced on 14 January and continued as the Mk V aircraft were fitted. When six new aircrews

arrived on posting to the squadron, together with their Mk VIII Beauforts on 16 January, they were automatically included in the training program under 'A' and 'B' Flight Leaders, Squadron Leaders John Smibert and Ralph Wiley. The opportunity was taken to incorporate some formation flying with the radar training for the wireless operator/air gunners.

With radar installed, the wireless operator had a lonely existence on the lengthy reconnaissance patrols, mentally isolated from other members of the crew, as he concentrated with his eyes glued to a radar screen. Fortunately, the wireless/air gunners could share the time on the radar. On finding a telltale blip of a surface vessel on the radar screen, the operator would report the distance and direction to the captain of the aircraft.⁵³ The pilot would then home in on the vessel, so that the navigator could identify and plot its position and course, to be radioed back to base before further action was taken.

On Sunday 17 January, at 1330K, Milne Bay sustained its first unexpected daylight air raid. Flying in perfect formation at 22 000 feet (according to the radar predictor) and escorted by fighters, 23 Betty bombers, caused heavy damage to the Turnbull airstrip and extensive damage to No 6 Squadron at Gurney. The bombers were two high for ack-ack, and two Airacobras which scrambled off the airstrip failed to gain any height to engage the enemy before it was all over. On the ground, one Hudson was destroyed, six were severely damaged, and the remainder sustained minor damage.

Two Fortresses, three Airacobras and an unserviceable Liberator were destroyed. A bulldozer had to be used to clear the airstrip. Incendiary bombs set fire to petrol and oil supplies, and a tanker. Anti-personnel bombs also spread shrapnel over a wide area, damaging equipment. Fortunately there were no serious casualties. The Japanese also escaped without losing a plane. Harry Clegg, in charge of 'B' Flight ground crew, reported:

One of my men called 'Blue' was working on a Beaufort engine when the 'red alert' sounded. I called out to him get in a trench. He took no notice. 'Get in the trench Blue or I'll put you on a charge'. Still he took no notice. Then he yelled, 'Give me a 303, I want to have a go at these bastards!' (The Japanese were bombing from 10,000 feet!) 'These bastards aren't putting the wind up me.' He was there for the duration of the raid and I was there too. Of course he wasn't charged. What he did was defiantly foolhardy, but a great morale booster. The 'daisy cutter' bombs, that spread shrapnel flying in all directions, were landing not that far away.

The daylight raid had been most unexpected. Previously, enemy raids on Milne Bay were at night and always seemed to take place immediately before, or just after, a full moon. Perhaps it was for some religious reason that they did not carry out their missions during full moon. Bombing raids came to be referred to as 'the one last moon, or the one two moons ago'.

The first warning of an impending air raid was known as a 'yellow alert', which was the signal to clear everything from the airstrip. A 'red alert' was the signal for those not manning defence weapons to take cover. The siren warning of an air raid was alternate long and short blasts of the siren. The 'all clear' signal was one long blast of the siren.

The Air Officer Commanding RAAF Command, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, paid a one-day visit to Milne Bay on 30 January. His first call was to 100 Squadron, and no doubt he took note, among other things, that the strength of 100 Squadron at that time consisted of 63 officers and 363 airmen. He inspected both Turnbull and Gurney airstrips and their facilities, prior to having lunch at 100 Squadron's Officers Mess. During lunch, he spoke about the importance of the area patrols. He acknowledged that it must be boring flying over the endless sea, but he reminded his listeners of the importance of their work because 'Intelligence is the first line of defence'.

When Lieutenant D.J. George, RAN arrived on posting to the squadron on 1 February, torpedo training resumed. The exercises were for the benefit of the new crews, and required two waves of three aircraft flying in tight formation to simulate torpedoing a selected ship in the vicinity of the Gili Gili wharf. Area and convoy patrols then took precedence over training, and they continued even though the monsoon season was in full swing. On one occasion, the visibility was so poor and the rain so heavy that it impaired radar reception during a three hour search by one aircraft, and the crew failed to even find a convoy known to be proceeding to Milne Bay.

In an endeavour to extend the duration of the Beauforts on reconnaissance, under favourable conditions, many of the pilots ran the engines at high boost and low revs, and used five degrees of flap. While this procedure extended the time in the air, there was a need to fit extra fuel tanks for long-range reconnaissance. In this regard, several of the 6 Squadron Hudsons had already been modified with extra fuel tanks bolted in the passageways, outside the radio cubicle. Early attempts by some earnest boffins to fit extra fuel tanks to Beauforts, however, were a failure.

John Birtwistle in 'Sam' Balmer's crew takes up the story:

They had designed plywood fuel tanks to fit on the wing bomb racks to extend the Beaufort endurance. The bomb release kit was supposed to ensure that the tanks dropped off after the fuel was exhausted. It didn't work. The lightweight tanks were held onto the racks by the airflow. Nothing Sam could do, including 'bouncing' the aircraft, would dislodge them. So we returned to Gurney strip with them. Sam told the assembled boffins to 'revert to normal fuel arrangements' and strode off muttering, 'throw those bloody things away'.

The next experiment in overcoming the endurance problem for long-distance reconnaissance was more acceptable. An extra tank, with a capacity of 138 imperial gallons (627 litres), was permanently installed in the bomb bay. Planes fitted with these

auxiliary fuel tanks, carried two 250 pound wing bombs, and were used primarily for reconnaissance and for marking targets with flares. The whole of the underneath of the fuselage was painted black for night flying, so as not to reflect searchlight beams. They became known as the 'Black Beauforts'.

On 12 February, an enemy flotilla, comprising a light cruiser, two medium transports and one small cargo vessel, was reported at position 06° 05' S 153° 55' E, course 180 degrees, speed 20 knots at 1635K. 'Smoky' Douglas, now with the rank of Squadron Leader, set out with his crew in A9-181 to locate it. On board the aircraft was a new device called a 'Rooster'. It was an airborne radio beacon, which transmitted a continuous signal, like a rooster crowing, so that other aircraft could home in on the signal to rendezvous. Douglas was planning to locate the enemy convoy, switch on the Rooster, and then keep the convoy in sight as he waited for the others to arrive. A9-181 therefore took off at 1938K, forty minutes before the strike force, led by Wing Commander Balmer, was due to leave.

The flight departed and maintained close formation with 'Sam' Balmer's aircraft, which carried flares, while the other five Beauforts were loaded with torpedoes. Douglas did not find the convoy at its estimated position (i.e. four hours later than its reported position), and commenced an extensive square search with the Rooster switched on. The Beaufort formation picked up the signal and arrived in the search area. Further searching failed to find any trace of the convoy. The disappointed aircrews returned to Gurney and all had landed by midnight. Wing Commander Balmer, in a philosophical mood, commented that it had been a good exercise in formation flying at night and that the Rooster rendezvous had worked quite well.

Rooster was again used on 20 February. Both 'Sam' Balmer and 'Smoky' Douglas had located three enemy ships, five miles south of Gasmata shortly before dawn. The Rooster was switched on, while both aircraft attacked with 250 pound instant-nose fuzed bombs. No hits were observed. The two aircraft kept the ships in view until John Smibert, leading five Beauforts loaded with torpedoes, arrived on the scene. Two other Beauforts had taken off but were unable to locate the target. John Smibert in A9-182, Phil Harrison in A9-197, and Ken Waters in A9-19 attacked the 6000 ton transport, which put up a torrid barrage, and A9-182 was hit. Consequently, the crew did not observe the result of the attack. Then Dave Forrest in A9-189, John Mercer in A9-183 and Eric Stuart in A9-204 attacked a stationary destroyer. During the evasive actions taken to avoid the ack-ack, the crews failed to observe any explosions after the torpedoes were launched on course.

Meantime, A9-182 was in trouble. A shell had exploded inside the turret, severely wounding the gunner in his right foot, leg and arm, and also setting fire to the aircraft and damaging the hydraulic system. The gunner, Jack Hoskins, showed remarkable coolness, determination and courage when he crawled out of the burning turret to get a fire extinguisher and put out the fire.

A9-182 arrived back at Gurney an hour after the other planes had landed. With the hydraulics system out of order, the pilot was unable to lower the undercarriage. He used the emergency cartridge to blow the wheels down, but it brought the undercarriage only halfway down. However, he made a smooth bellylanding that was pretty to watch, as the loud screeching of metal faded into silence. Jack Hoskins was still in hospital at Milne Bay when he was told that he had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM). However, the award was not officially confirmed until a signal arrived from No 9 Operational Group on 9 April.

The hospital at Milne Bay continued to be a busy place, with many of the beds occupied by patients with various tropical diseases, particularly malaria. When patients required special treatment, or when there was no room for newcomers, the patients were flown to Townsville. Squadron Leader Ralph Wiley was one such patient with pernicious malaria, and was hospitalised in Townsville during the last week in February. Ralph never again flew with the squadron.

Padre Debenham had just finished his evening church service on 21 February, and the congregation was making its way to the open-air picture theatre, when the 'red alert' sounded. Neil Phelan recalls:

There was a mad scramble from the picture area, and there were about 400 servicemen, so there were chaps going in all directions. We all raced back to our tents to get our tin hats and then to the trench. We could hear the planes quite plainly, and for the first time we had searchlights trying to light up the planes. As soon as the Japs made their bombing run, the ack-ack opened up and put up a good barrage. It didn't stop them from dropping bombs at the back of our camp. You could hear the swish of the bombs and then the terrific bang. The 'all clear' went at 2045K and the pictures started. It wasn't a bad show called *This is Your Life*.

There were air raids again on the Monday and Tuesday nights. The searchlights caught one bomber in a cone of light on the Tuesday night raid, but the plane was out of range of the ack-ack. The enemy bombed the Gurney airstrip and landed bombs right in the middle of the strip. The planes then circled over the area from 0130 to 0400K—quite an effective source of annoyance.

The monotonous sea patrols continued without sightings until 23 February, when Dick Seymour and crew in A9-187 sighted a submarine while patrolling in Area 'B' of the Solomon Sea. The position of the submarine was north of Woodlark Island at 08° 13' S 153° 39' E, and this was radioed to base. A9-187 attacked with two 500 and two 250 pound bombs. There was a huge explosion as at least one of the bombs made a direct hit, and Seymour was credited with its sinking.

On 25 February, two crews, who were among the latest arrivals to the squadron, were rostered for morning patrols in Area 'B'. A9-189, captained by Alan Fraser, and

A9-197, with Gordon Yuille and crew, took off within 30 minutes of each other, and commenced patrolling their particular sectors until recalled at 0930K, due to bad weather. A9-189 arrived back to land at Gurney at 1146K. A9-197 acknowledged the recall and gave an estimated time of arrival (ETA) of 1234K. However, nothing further was heard and the crew did not reach base. During the next two days, 100 Squadron aircraft and fighters carried out an intensive search, but failed to find any trace of the aircraft. Gordon Yuille and his crew—navigator Bert Chivers and wireless/air gunners Alan Ross and Fred Fromm—were consequently reported missing on operations.⁵⁴

On 27 February, Air Commodore Hewitt, Officer Commanding No 9 Operational Group, made a surprise visit to Milne Bay, accompanied by Group Captain 'Bull' Garing, DFC. After a social visit to Turnbull airstrip to see the RAAF Kittyhawk squadrons and American Fifth Air Force Airacobras lined up on the edge of the strip, they returned for a private discussion with Wing Commander Balmer over lunch. After lunch the official party conducted inspections of all No 9 Group units at Gurney. Apparently satisfied with what they saw, they departed for Port Moresby that same afternoon.

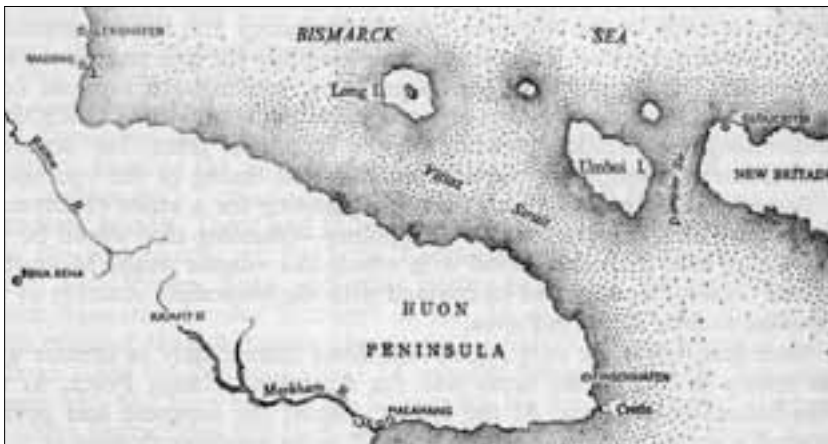
When the Americans had finally occupied Henderson Field at Guadalcanal in the south of the Solomon Islands, after seven months of gruelling campaigning, they seized the nearby Russell Islands to further secure the bases at Guadalcanal. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese combined Fleet, saw this move as a general Allied offensive and hastened to arrange reinforcements for Lae and Salamaua. This decision precipitated the Battle of the Bismarck Sea.

Allied Intelligence alerted the No 9 Operational Group that Admiral Kimura would leave Simpson Harbour, Rabaul, with a large reinforcement fleet for Lae, possibly as early as the end of February. When Group Captain Garing was informed, he persuaded General Kenney to mount a massive attack using RAAF Beaufighters, Bostons and Beauforts, and USAAF Bostons, Fortresses, Liberators and Mitchells. Having had experience in maritime air warfare in Europe, and realising that many of the aircrews were inexperienced, he proposed a full-scale dress rehearsal, so as to ensure precise coordination. The Allied operational plan was for the air armada, comprised of flights from Port Moresby and Dobodura, to rendezvous over Cape Ward Hunt. From that datum point, they were expected to intercept the convoy as it approached the Huon Gulf. The order of the attack was first for a medium-level assault to disperse the convoy; secondly, strafing from all quarters was arranged to disorganise the ack-ack defences; and finally, low-level bombing to demolish the ships. Precise timing of each assault was the key element for the plan's success. The rendezvous for the rehearsal was Cape Rodney, about ninety miles south-east of Port Moresby. A simulated attack took place on the wreck of the *Macdhui* in Port Moresby Harbour.

The unpredictable tropical weather favoured the Japanese at first, and hampered reconnaissance patrols. Then on 2 March 1943, a B-24 Liberator of the Fifth USAAF sighted an imposing convoy of twelve transport vessels, with eight escorting

destroyers, heading on course 258 degrees at 9 knots, from the north of New Britain. B-17 Flying Fortresses immediately set off to make the first strike, in which they claimed the sinking of one large transport vessel. Later the same day, another flight of Fortresses attacked from 6500 feet, with 1000 pound bombs to claim numerous hits, causing explosions and setting vessels on fire.

As part of the coordinated plan, six Bostons from 22 Squadron struck at the Lae airstrip, in an endeavour to put it out of action and deny air support to the convoy. By nightfall, a Catalina from 11 Squadron, piloted by Squadron Leader Geoff Coventry, reported that the enemy fleet was on a course of 246 degrees, position 05° 07' S 148° 10' E, and heading towards Vitiaz Strait which separates New Britain from New Guinea. This meant that the flotilla would be in the planned position for the combined air attack by dawn on 3 March. Coventry and crew then shadowed the convoy all night and provided regular position reports.



Map – Bismarck Sea

As a prelude to the coming day, eight torpedo Beauforts from 100 Squadron took off from Milne Bay for a night attack in very poor weather conditions. The weather closed in and deteriorated to such an extent that the flight had to disperse and fly on instruments. Three of the Beauforts struck a heavy weather front off Cape Nelson. This meant that they could not reach the target area before dawn, so they returned to base. Only two of the Beauforts found the convoy, which was now widely dispersed. Ken Waters and crew in A9-193, with a flare to aid visibility, made a torpedo run. Although his torpedo was on course to within 100 yards of his target ship, no hit was observed. A9-214 attacked a stationary cargo vessel but the torpedo failed to release. Lou Hall and his crew were disgusted with the torpedo hang-up, and had to be content with thoroughly strafing one of the transport vessels.

While the 22 Squadron Bostons again hit the Lae airstrip, Allied aircraft, in fine weather, attacked the widely dispersed fleet. As planned, they made the attacks in three waves. The Fortresses bombed from 6000 feet while at the same time, they were being attacked by Zeros. However, it was ack-ack from the destroyer *Arashio* that shot down one of the Fortresses. The crew bailed out, but enemy fighters strafed them as they hung in their parachutes.

The Beaufighters, flying line astern at about 500 feet, attacked immediately following the bombing. They changed to line abreast as they made their approach at mast height, and the Japanese ships' captains, thinking it was a Beaufort torpedo attack, turned their ships to face the enemy head-on. This manoeuvre made them an even better target for the strafing Beaufighters to pour lead into the ships from stem to stern. The gun crews were destroyed and deck cargoes were set on fire. Australian cameraman, Damien Parer, took dramatic photographs⁵⁵ of the battle of the Bismarck Sea from a Beaufighter piloted by Flight Lieutenant Torchy Uren.

The bombing and strafing continued all that afternoon until the whole convoy was reduced to a smoking wreck. All transport vessels and four destroyers sank. The *Uranami* was the only destroyer to escape very serious damage. General Adachi and his headquarters staff on the *Uranami*, were among those who reached Lae. Of the 8300 reinforcement troops, fewer than 2000 Japanese reached Lae.

News of the fleet's devastation in the Huon Gulf was listened to on radio sets at Moresby and Dobodura in disbelief. No doubt General Imamura and Admiral Kusaka, the Naval Commander in Rabaul, also heard the news in stunned silence!

For the next two weeks, barges and rafts carrying survivors were hunted and destroyed in the Huon Gulf. It was callous but, as one Beaufighter pilot said, 'Every enemy we prevented from getting ashore was one less for our colleagues to face'. At least four aircrews of 100 Squadron were called to carry out this unsavoury but necessary task.

Saburo Sakai, one of Japan's celebrated war aces, wrote in his book *Samurai*:

Less than a month after Guadalcanal, we were called in for a special officers' conference to hear news of a further disaster. The report remained classified throughout the rest of the war, and was never revealed to the public. I read that a Japanese convoy of 12 transports, eight destroyers and several auxiliaries had attempted to land army troops at Lae, my old fighter air base. At least 100 enemy fighters and bombers attacked the convoy on the open sea with determined runs, sinking all the transports and at least five of the destroyers.

The poor result of the torpedo attack by 100 Squadron, on the night of 2 March, brought to a head a simmering discontent at Allied Headquarters, South-West Pacific Area.⁵⁶ Colonel R.E. Beebe, GSC, Director of Operations, wrote on the subject to the Air Officer Commanding RAAF Command, Air Vice-Marshal W.D. Bostock. He expressed the view that the effectiveness of aerial torpedo attacks by both the

enemy and friendly aircraft was unprofitable. In any case, there were only limited opportunities for the use of aerial torpedoes.

Consequently, he considered that the RAAF 100 Squadron should modify its torpedo program, or abandon the use of torpedoes altogether. He recommended that 100 Squadron be re-equipped and trained as an air support unit assisting assault troops. Consideration, therefore, needed to be given to equipping the Beaufort with eight forward-firing guns similar to the modification on the new Bostons. He further recommended that, when all requirements for medium bombardment had been met, United States torpedo squadrons would be introduced. His final recommendation was that 100 Squadron should cease being an integral part of the US Fifth Air Force and return to the operational control of RAAF Command.

Needless to say, this epistle caused considerable concern, because it threatened the tenuous hold that the RAAF had in the SWPA. On the surface, there was some basis for Beebe's viewpoint. The squadron had been hastily formed as a torpedo squadron. It was virtually self-taught, having pioneered aerial torpedo technique by trial and error. The aircrews had then been pressed into active service inadequately trained, inadequately equipped and inadequately supported. Added to this was the discovery that the American torpedoes were defective! Consequently, the torpedo strike rate was far from commensurate with the loss of men and machines.

In his reply to Colonel Beebe, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock mentioned some of the tribulations the squadron had faced. He admitted that much had been learned from 100 Squadron's pioneering efforts towards making future torpedo squadrons efficient in operation.

His letter continued:

All these things are a product of a phase through which any weapon must pass which is completely new to those persons wielding it. In addition, some of the lack of success must be attributed to defects, which have subsequently been found in the Mark XIII torpedo.

The second RAAF torpedo squadron is about to start training at Nowra and all the latest methods of torpedo attack have been included in their training. It is intended to give the squadron two months to complete its working up. At the end of this period we should then have a squadron which is trained to work together efficiently with searching aircraft and with adequate maintenance and training facilities available for them in the field.

It is a mistake to condemn the torpedo as a weapon because in the initial stages we have had no success. The fundamental reasons for this lack of success are given above. An additional factor was that the tactical requirement was for the squadron to be based at Milne Bay. We now know, if we did not then know it, that Milne Bay is a most unsatisfactory base for a torpedo squadron, much of whose work is done at night.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

If it is decided that there is no need for the torpedo squadron in New Guinea, it can well be employed elsewhere, and it should be withdrawn to the mainland of Australia where its use as a defensive weapon will not be questioned.

To divert our torpedo efforts to air support is impracticable. The Beaufort aircraft is not the best available for this role. It would thus be a retrograde step to employ them as air support aircraft, even disregarding their usefulness as torpedo aircraft.

The torpedo is a great potential offensive and defensive weapon in the South-West Pacific Area. RAAF Command is the only portion of this South-West Pacific Force with torpedo squadrons available, and it is felt that RAAF Command is therefore the only force which can give a considered opinion on the state and development of torpedo squadrons in the area.

It seems that the Air Vice-Marshal's letter restored the status quo, for the squadron remained with the Fifth Air Force. It is rather ironic that, a little later, the squadron was to show that the Beaufort would perform remarkably well in the role of air support for assault troops.

The squadron settled, once again, into the necessary routine of area patrols and convoy escorts without incident. However, the calm was shattered on 8 March near Oro Bay. Sergeant Reg Green and crew in A9-181 were conducting an anti-submarine patrol for a convoy carrying supplies to the troops at Buna. The aircraft was some distance ahead of the US freighter, SS *Jacob*, when nine enemy bombers, escorted by 13 fighters, attacked the convoy to score direct hits on the ship. The Beaufort wireless operator, Norman Mann, reported the incident to base, but, while the escorting corvette began to pick up survivors from the sinking ship, three enemy fighters came down to strafe the merchant seamen survivors in the water. Reg Green felt compelled to prevent the slaughter, and banked steeply to attack them. His attack was so daring that the fighters broke off the strafing. He then patrolled between the fighters and the survivors until the enemy left the scene.

In the meantime, the wireless operator, acting on the pilot's instruction, directed a US patrol boat towards the stricken ship. For his gallant action, which undoubtedly saved many valuable lives, Sergeant Reg Green was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM).

Milne Bay continued to be under routine surveillance from enemy reconnaissance aircraft, which heralded a raid to follow within a day or two. This method of operating led to one of the Kittyhawks being airborne at the time of arrival of the next Japanese surveillance plane on 17 March, and the Kittyhawk pilot shot it down.

When No 9 Operational Group Headquarters instructed Wing Commander Balmer, OBE, to proceed on leave, prior to a RAF posting, the whole squadron was sorry to lose such a great leader. By this time he was well liked by all ranks and held in the highest regard, particularly by aircrew, who said that it was an honour to serve

under him. As Bill Ewing said, 'His generous remarks in our log books apparently demonstrated his conviction that the Empire Air Training Scheme was now working'. His posting to Overseas RAAF Headquarters, with effect from 26 March, was for attachment to the RAF on loan for two years.

In the UK, he was appointed Commanding Officer of 467 Squadron Lancasters, where he earned the DFC before being killed in action over Belgium on 12 May 1944. The UK *Daily Mail* newspaper of 17 May 1944, in reporting his death, stated:

Balmer was as well known in the RAAF as was Cheshire in the RAF. He had done almost 5000 hours of service flying over New Guinea as well as Germany. Hundreds of other pilots, many of whose names have since become famous, were trained by Balmer.

Squadron Leader John Smibert was appointed temporarily to command the squadron. His first official duty was to be host to the Officer Commanding No 9 Operational Group, Air Commodore J. Hewitt, OBE, accompanied by Commanding Officer No 73 Wing, Wing Commander I.D. McLachlan, DFC. John Smibert accompanied his guests on an inspection of the station and then received them at dinner that evening.

Before Air Commodore Hewitt departed the following morning, he again stressed the need for protection against malaria, as he had on his earlier visit to the station. Tropical diseases, particularly malaria and dengue fever, continued to plague all servicemen in Milne Bay. The situation was serious. War casualties and disease combined had reduced No 9 Operational Group by as much as 1000 below the nominated establishment. In the past three months, malaria and dengue fever had accounted for 80 per cent of RAAF casualties. It was hoped that, as the wet season showed signs of abating, the rate of malaria cases would decrease. One welcome initiative, although a little late, had been to replace the leaky American tents with Australian tents with flys.

Area patrols and anti-submarine patrols continued as weather permitted. The only diversion was the occasional strafing of isolated enemy barge traffic near Kiriwina, Simlindon, and Nauria Islands. In each of these encounters, the barges, loaded with men and supplies, were sunk.

Training also continued for new crews, and this included night formation flying, radar exercises and torpedo runs at motor vessels in Milne Bay, in which HMAS *Vendetta* featured quite frequently.

When an unidentified signal was being heard nightly on 500 kcs, the international emergency calling frequency, Dave Forrest was sent on a special reconnaissance to locate the source. Wireless operator, Noel Loveday, tuned into the signal on 498 kcs, which consisted of a series of 10-second dashes with 10-second breaks for a five-minute period. The signal then ceased before a bearing could be taken. Forrest conducted a

square search and at 0627K, navigator Flying Officer Ken Holmes located a burning flare (probably a marker beacon) on the sea at 11° 08' S 150° 49' E. Jim Hatfield in the turret fired about 500 rounds into the flare, but it was still afloat and burning when they left the scene. John Smibert with wireless operator Ken Foster made another attempt to locate the unidentified signal.

Although the signal was heard briefly, severe interference from static due to an impending tropical storm made it impossible to determine a bearing. The source of the signal, thought possibly to be a homing signal for a submarine, was never found. The closest to resolving the mystery was when Alex Heagney, in A9-183, identified a ship on his radar screen as the likely source at 0233K on 27 March. The navigator, Ken Burnett, logged the position of the ship as 11° 55' S 151° 13' E, but persistent bad weather forced the pilot, Len Parsons, to abandon the search.

As part of the Allies' preparations to capture Lae, the role of No 9 Operational Group was to harass the enemy as the opportunity arose. When an early morning strike in the Salamaua area was planned for 26 March, Dave Forrest carried out an armed reconnaissance of the route as far as Lae. Flying at 7000 feet, he reported good weather and clear visibility all the way. He then flew straight and level over the Lae runway to drop a single 250 pound bomb, but did not see a result. An hour later, at 0133K, they were over the runway again for navigator Ken Holmes 'to lay a second egg'. This time a direct hit was made on the runway, close to some parked aircraft. Before leaving the area, A9-185 descended to make three strafing runs over Salamaua, while encountering only spasmodic anti-aircraft fire.

Acting on Dave Forrest's good weather report, a strike force of eleven Beauforts, led by John Smibert in A9-203, set off shortly after 0200K (2 am) for Salamaua. 'Pranger' Harrison in A9-189, which had engine trouble, was airborne 35 minutes later and followed them. Harrison caught up and joined the formation en route to the target, which was Kela village, Salamaua.

Approaching the target at 0500K, the aircraft made individual bombing runs at varying heights from 8000 to 5000 feet, to release their general purpose and incendiary bombs. No searchlights hindered their attack, and only medium and light ack-ack was evident. The majority of the bombs were observed to land in and around the target area, and several fires resulted, one of which was a major blaze. The operation had taken 5½ hours, and the last plane to land at Gurney was A9-210 with 'Tex' Morton and crew at 0747K.

The lack of anti-aircraft fire at Salamaua surprised the aircrews, because, only the previous week, six Bostons from 22 Squadron encountered severe ack-ack when bombing the area and suffered some damage. Three of their planes were hit. Two of the planes, however, were not seriously damaged. The third Boston, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Newton, was hit four times, putting an engine out of action and causing damage to the wings, fuel tanks and control surfaces. He flew the plane on one motor back over the Owen Stanley Range to land safely at Port Moresby.

Shortly after this incident, Newton's Boston was shot down over Salamaua on his 52nd sortie. Flight Lieutenant Newton and one of his crew survived the crash but were captured by the enemy. Both were executed, Sergeant B. Lyon by bayonet at Lae and Flight Lieutenant W.E. Newton by beheading with a sword at Salamaua. Newton was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

No 100 Squadron again attacked the area two nights later, in a similar fashion, with six of the same crews and six fresh crews. One flight of six bombed Kela village, causing a large explosions and widespread fire on hitting a fuel dump.

The other flight attacked the township between the eastern end of the runway and the mouth of the Francisco River, setting buildings alight and causing a fierce, vivid white flash, which lasted for a full minute. The crews reported mild anti-aircraft fire, and one Beaufort, strafing the township on the isthmus, reported only inaccurate machine-gun fire. On leaving the target area, each aircrew made its own way home, and one Beaufort, on sighting a B-17 Fortress 20 miles south of Buna, was welcomed with a burst of machine-gun fire before escaping the encounter. A reconnaissance of the area confirmed that the raid had caused extensive damage.

Towards the end of March 1943, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff issued new orders to General MacArthur in the South-West Pacific, and to Admiral Halsey in the South Pacific Areas. The capture of the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul was to be postponed, and efforts were to be concentrated on securing airfields on Kiriwina and Woodlark Islands. The seizure of the Huon Gulf area from Lae to Madang was imperative, and the seizure of western New Britain to bridge the Bismarck Sea was to be a priority. The capture of the Solomon Islands, particularly southern Bougainville, was also necessary in order to keep the pressure on, and isolate, Rabaul.

It seems that the Japanese learned of these new orders because, early in April, they stepped up their offensive with massive attacks on Allied shipping and airstrips. On 7 April, 67 dive-bombers and 110 Zekes struck at Guadalcanal, where a United States destroyer and a New Zealand corvette were sunk. During the conflict, the Japanese lost 21 planes, while the Americans lost seven. On 11 April, enemy dive-bombers struck at shipping in Oro Bay, south-east of Buna, and sank a cargo ship. The corvette HMAS *Pirie* and a small supply ship were also seriously damaged.

While this night attack was under way, 12 Beauforts from 100 Squadron were combing the Huon Gulf, south of Finschhafen, on the Mape River, for two enemy destroyers reported to be in the area. In the murky conditions they failed to find them. The visibility was so poor that Allan James in A9-193 was completing his search with landing lights on, and flying at 500 feet, without sighting the ships. On leaving the search area, he decided not to return with bombs, so he unloaded them on Finschhafen settlement from a relatively safe height.

In the early hours of the following morning, A9-121, 198 and 202 were sent to search for an enemy aircraft carrier reported to be in the area between Kiriwina Island, Cape

Orford on New Britain and Bougainville Island, but again there was no sighting made.

Later that same day, more than 100 enemy planes raided Port Moresby airfields for the 106th time. However, intelligence reports, coastwatchers and radar had given the Allies time to arrange their defence. Several runways received direct hits which destroyed four planes and damaged fifteen others. Two American fighters were shot down in combat, but the Japanese lost fifteen bombers and nine fighters.

Sea patrols continued from Milne Bay for the next few days with negative sightings. Then at 1128K on 14 April, as Phil Harrison and crew were patrolling Area 'A' in A9-210, Merv Sheridan, operating the wireless, tuned into strong signals of Japanese messages being exchanged. By means of the direction finding loop, he directed the pilot towards the signal where 30 aircraft could be seen gathering into a formation in the vicinity of Goodenough Island. Sheridan sent off a message to base, giving the position of the enemy aircraft, while Harrison turned the Beaufort to resume the patrol.⁵⁷

Harrison's report confirmed the warning already received by radar at Milne Bay, and a 'yellow alert' sounded. The bomber Squadrons 6 and 100 flew out to sea to avoid destruction on the ground, while the RAAF Kittyhawks moved into position over the Bay. Shortly afterwards, a flight of American Lightnings from Port Moresby joined the Kittyhawks. Following a further warning from 37 Radar Station, a 'red alert' sounded at 1220K, and, within two minutes, a flight of 36 enemy bombers, in perfect formation, arrived over the Bay. A formation of 35 dive-bombers followed the bombers, and 30 fighters escorted the two flights from above.

When the bombers were committed to their bombing runs onto ships in the Bay, one of the Lightnings dived through them, shooting down two in flames. The Lightning was short on fuel and immediately left the battle zone to refuel. In an attempt to land with one motor, it crashed and the pilot was killed. The MV *Gorgon* received a direct hit which destroyed it,⁵⁸ and two others were set on fire at the beach. The dive-bombers struck at Turnbull airstrip, setting an oil dump on fire and causing casualties, while Gurney was ignored. The ack-ack gunners claimed to have destroyed four bombers and the Allied fighters claimed nine bombers and three fighters.

Flight Sergeant George Adamson, a 6 Squadron WAG, recalls the raid:

Our Aussie and Allied fighters were diving through the formation of planes. There was tremendous noise from the A/A guns as the sight of the air battle disappeared over the mountain. Then a few minutes later our Kittyhawks were rushing down to land on Turnbull strip, some of their engines coughing and spluttering.

Neil Phelan, from 100 Squadron, also tells of the raid:

Next we saw a big formation of Jap kites approaching from the south-east. The Kittyhawks and Lightnings intercepted the Japs about 35 miles out. The ack-ack opened up and seemed to break up the formation. There was a terrible lot of them and from a distance they looked like a flock of birds. None of us was in the trenches. We were all watching the dogfights and as soon as we saw one coming down there was a lot of cheering. One Betty came down right past our camp, pouring smoke out of it. Another came straight down in a spin, with smoke trailing it. We saw two others in the distance come down. There was quite a bit of noise from the whining motors and bursts of machine-gun fire. Two Kittyhawk pilots bailed out but were not found. One Kittyhawk landed with a bullet hole right through the ignition wires, and others with bullet holes all over them. One came overhead with all its aileron shot away. The Japs didn't do very much damage. They put one bomb into the No 3 strip.

Meanwhile, Allied Intelligence had deciphered a highly secret message, which gave the itinerary of Admiral Yamamoto's plane on tour of bases in the Solomon Islands. As Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Japanese Fleet, he proposed travelling from Rabaul to inspect newly constructed airstrips at Buka Island, and at Buin on Bougainville. The Americans planned to intercept and attack the plane as it approached Buin.

On 18 April, a flight of sixteen P-38 Lightnings successfully located and attacked the Admiral's plane and entourage. The Admiral was in a camouflaged Betty bomber, while his chief of staff and senior staff officers were in another plane. In a brief encounter, the Lightnings swept through the six escorting Zekes to shoot down both bombers for the loss of a Lightning. The loss of Japan's most celebrated strategist and senior staff would have been devastating for the Japanese, not only in terms of morale, but also to their hierarchical command. On the other hand, it certainly raised the morale of the Allies.

Squadron Leader J.A. 'Jim' Hepburn arrived on posting to the squadron on 19 April, to take command from temporary Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader John Smibert. He was advised that there were 44 officers and 451 airmen, with 19 serviceable Beauforts. Jim Hepburn, was 24 years old and an experienced pilot. He was keen to see the Beauforts in training as torpedo bombers. Using dummy torpedoes, Flight Lieutenant Chas Bourne and Sergeant Reg Green demonstrated a typical torpedo run with an attack on the US destroyer *Hilo*, which, as arranged, took evasive action in the Bay. One torpedo made a textbook drop and a perfectly executed run, despite the efforts of the ship's captain and crew. However, the practice torpedo was lost when the dummy head shattered. The torpedo filled with water and sank to the bottom of the Bay.

The spell of good weather did not last, and flying patrols in bad weather made the task all the more tedious. While Peter Creagh in A9-186 was patrolling in Area 'B2' in rough flying conditions on 20 April, his navigator, Joe Waters, sighted two empty barges east of Normanby Island and south of Woodlark Island. There seemed no reason to waste time and ammunition in strafing them, so wireless operator, Tom Parkhill, sent off their position to base while the A9-186 continued its search in the stormy weather. After four hours of rugged flying and poor visibility, the pilot turned the Beaufort on a course for Gurney. While attempting to land, an hour and half later, in such rough conditions, the aircraft crashed onto the airstrip and aquaplaned off the Marsden matting to bury its nose section into the mud. Surprisingly, the crew was uninjured.

Nine crews were pleased to have a diversion from patrols by being called, on 23 April, for a night strike. They were airborne shortly after 0100K for an attack on the wrecked vessel *Malabani* in the Huon Gulf, south of Finschhafen. It was suspected that the Japanese were using the wreck to store supplies and unload submarines. The weather was atrocious and, within an hour, four of the aircraft were forced to return to base, and four others failed to find the target. Only A9-210, piloted by 'Tex' Morton, located and attacked the vessel. The four bombs, however, straddled the ship without making a direct hit. On the return trip, A9-210 diverged to fly across Salamaua at low level and strafe the settlement, before continuing on a course for home. All planes returned safely with A9-206, piloted by Reg Green, being the last to land at 0717K.

Malaria was still a problem at Milne Bay, and although Jim Hepburn had only been with the squadron for two weeks, he was found to be suffering badly from the disease. On 1 May, he was admitted to the 2/5th Australian General Hospital at Port Moresby. Squadron Leader John Smibert was once again appointed to temporarily command the squadron, with its complement of 44 officers and 382 airmen. The loss of 30 per cent of officers since January was of particular concern for the CO, as the sharing of the various squadron duties became more onerous for the remaining officers.

Moreover, at this time, the number of unserviceable Beauforts was so high as to draw comment from Prime Minister John Curtin. He pointed out that of 303 aircraft delivered to the RAAF,⁵⁹ 51 had been lost and only 121 of those remaining were airworthy. With all 25 aircraft of 100 Squadron serviceable at this stage, the squadron's serviceability standard far exceeded the average rate.

A significant increase in convoy traffic to and from Milne Bay, kept the squadron busy on sea patrols for the rest of the month and well into May. Most of the armed surveillance patrols from Milne Bay were confined to the Oro Bay (Buna) area, in preparation for the Australians' advance on Lae. On returning from one of these patrols on 30 April, A9-185 pranged on landing at Gurney, but there were no injuries to the crew. Most of the patrols were uneventful but were considered

important. One AIF soldier, VX21257, wrote of the air surveillance carried out over the Solomon Sea:

Throughout the [Papua] campaign that Force [Fifth Air Force] was ever ready to assist ground troops, and did. There here is no question that the bombing of Gona materially affected the battle there, but above all else was the operation of this force in the Solomons Sea.⁶⁰

All activities at Milne Bay came to a standstill from Monday 3 May to Friday 7 May, when 20 inches of rain fell. Thankfully the weather had also prevented the Japanese from raiding. Then in the morning of 10 May, the radar crew gave warning of an air raid. However, only two aircraft came over to drop bombs on shipping in the harbour from about 20 000 feet. There was no loss of life or shipping.

Submarines, of course, were still operating, not only in the Solomon Sea, but also in the Coral Sea and off the coast of Australia. At 0610K on 11 May, Sergeant Reg Green and crew in A9-206 were well south of Milne Bay in the Coral Sea, on convoy patrol, when they sighted three torpedo tracks. The nearest went within 30 yards of the ship, but a search for the origin of the tracks failed. The convoy escort dropped depth charges in the likely whereabouts of the submarine, but there was no evidence of success.

When necessary, shipping patrols took the crews to Cairns or Townsville. Cairns remained relatively untouched by the war, but Townsville was a very busy hub for military personnel movements. Ron Munro describes the situation:

The American and Australian Army and Air Force contingents crowded the place often beyond its capacity to cope. Frequently they drank the hotels dry within an hour or two of the beer arriving. There were no glasses provided and if you were fortunate enough to get to the front of the queue, you had to produce your own tin mug if you wanted a drink.

The shops too were sold out of goods as soon as they arrived. There were a couple of isolated raids on Townsville by a single or perhaps two aircraft and we were there one evening enjoying the hospitality of an elderly couple, when the siren sounded. We all ran out into the back yard to take shelter in a slit trench. Suddenly the old lady started to climb out of the trench and her husband said, 'Where do you think you're going?' To which she replied, 'I'm going back to get my false teeth'. 'Get back in the trench,' he said, 'they are not dropping bloody sandwiches!'

With the monsoon season over and only the occasional tropical storm, there was the opportunity to explore and swim in the many creeks in the area. Travelling upstream usually led to a waterfall and a place to swim, but care was necessary, as the place was also the hunting ground for large rats and glossy black snakes. Taking a short

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cut through the jungle was unwise, not only for disturbing unwelcome wildlife, but because it brought one into contact with the many climbing vines that tore at the clothes. One vine, nicknamed 'Grab it', would tear both clothes and flesh.

Another alternative was to visit one or two of the native villages. Ron Munro recalls walking along a pathway through the kunai grass and across several small mountain streams to visit a village:

We set off midmorning to an isolated village. I told the others I would go forward and establish contact and indicate we were friendly. I advanced holding out my hands to show I had no weapons and in my best pidgin tried to talk with a girl of about 17 at the gate to the village. She was puzzled at my talk and gestures and said in perfect English, 'Do you wish to trade with us sir?' She had been a typist with Burns Philp at Samarai until the Japs landed, and she, along with others, had taken to the bush. We swapped razor blades for tropical fruit.

Tony Booth, on the other hand, saw native village life at close quarters and was not impressed:

We looked through some of the villages. Officially they were 'out of bounds' from sunset to sun-up. You could smell the villages before you reached them. The houses were built up off the ground and a fire would be inside, and a pig or two would be kept underneath the house. The natives smeared their bodies with coconut oil, which gave them a distinct aroma. The women were very presentable up to the age of about sixteen, but as they aged their breasts sagged, first one and then the other.

With the completion of the Vivigani airstrip on Goodenough Island early in May 1943, 100 Squadron was the first to use it as a staging base to attack the enemy on southern New Britain. Six aircraft led by Len Parsons in A9-204 landed there from Milne Bay very early on 17 May. At 0900K that same morning, the six Beauforts set out to strike at the Gasmata airstrip and fuel dumps. All bombs were dropped on the target area, except one which exploded in the sea, and all planes came through the ack-ack unscathed. No fires or other special results were observed. Prior to reaching the target, Murray Anderson, flying in A9-191, reported sighting a destroyer south of Gasmata, and 'Tex' Morton's wireless/air gunner in A9-210, Bill East, reported logging the blip of a ship on the radar to confirm the position.

Another concentrated effort, by 100 Squadron, to render the heavily defended Gasmata airstrip unserviceable, was carried out with a night raid on 20 May. John Smibert in A9-203 led the first wave of three Beauforts. A second wave of four followed forty minutes later, and A9-214 and 216 were the last to bomb. The eight Beauforts in the raid dropped six tons of bombs and incendiary bombs, which hit

the target area. Small fires and explosions were observed as the squadron returned at low level to strafe the target area. Ken Waters and crew in A9-193 also strafed a small motor vessel in the vicinity and forced it to run ashore. However, A9-188 with Dave Forrest and crew failed to return from the raid.



Gasmata Airstrip

Photograph taken by 30 Squadron Beaufighter as 100 Squadron bombs the airstrip

Next morning six 100 Squadron planes, escorted by eight Kittyhawks, set off to carry out separate parallel searches, near Gasmata, for the missing plane. Murray Anderson in A9-191 took Sergeant Harry Clegg with him. Clegg, who was in charge of 'B' Flight maintenance, had been asked to determine independently what probably happened. After the search he reported:

With full tanks but no bombload, we flew to the southern coast of New Britain. While flying within half a mile of the coast I identified a piece of Dave's Beaufort, some small oil patches and a bright yellow rubber dinghy. At about the same time I caught sight of what I thought was a plane taking off from the Gasmata airstrip. I drew the pilot's attention to more Zeros taking off. We dropped down to sea level and opened the throttles wide. There were six Zeros after us. Every sixth bullet was a tracer and they were getting closer. I thought my time was up, but after about half an hour when they were closing

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the range they turned away. Lucky for us they must have been running low on fuel.

Allan James and crew in A9-184 also reported seeing a piece of an aircraft and a yellow dinghy about 800 yards south of Gasmata.

Possibly a night fighter shot A9-188 down into the sea. Those lost were David Forrest, pilot, Ken Holmes, navigator, and wireless/air gunners, Jim Hatfield and Noel Loveday. It may well have been night fighters that downed A9-188, or enemy ack-ack, but could it perhaps have been that the pilot was operationally fatigued, being required to fly well beyond his endurance capability.

At that time, there were still three of the original 100 RAF/100 RAAF crews serving with the squadron—Ken Waters and crew (Bill Ewing, Stan Webber and Bob Walker), Allan James and his crew (Arthur Brasnett, Bert Furler and George Daws), and Dave Forrest and his crew. Arthur Brasnett reported, ‘We were all very concerned that Dave Forrest and at least one other member of his crew, Noel Loveday, were obviously under some sort of mental strain’. Bill Ewing writes:

W/C ‘Sam’ Balmer, on leaving the squadron towards the end of March for a UK posting, had told all three crews that they were ‘Operationally Tired’ and would be posted south within a month. When a month passed and there was no word on the subject, they continued in operations. Ken Waters, Allan James, and Ken Holmes, who was Dave’s navigator, and I watched our tent mate, Dave Forrest, gradually recede into a morose shell. The acting CO Smibert and MO Burgess wouldn’t listen to our concern for his wellbeing. With the demise of Dave Forrest and crew on 20/21 May, the CO and MO were finally convinced that we were all in fact ‘Operationally Tired’. We all left forthwith.

The posting of these crews, on 27 May, was the beginning of further crews, having completed their operational period, being posted south, and new replacement crews arriving at 100 Squadron.

The Directorate of Medical Services in the RAAF had become very concerned at the continuing casualties from malaria and other tropical diseases. The latest victim was the acting Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader John Smibert. It was not surprising, therefore, that, when the Director General of Medical Services, Air Vice-Marshal T.E.V. Hurley, visited the squadron sick quarters on 26 May, he sent John Smibert to the 2/5th Australian General hospital at Port Moresby. The Director General also brought with him the news of the sinking of the hospital ship *Centaur* off the Queensland coast on 14 May.

The next day His Excellency, the Governor-General, Lord Gowrie, VC, on visiting Milne Bay, was welcomed to the squadron. The Governor-General spoke of his visit to see the squadron aircraft when stationed at Mareeba the previous year, and expressed

a wish, on this occasion, to see the Operations Room. The acting Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant Len Parsons, obliged and introduced the staff on duty to the Governor-General. Len explained the use of the operations board, which still had the list of Beauforts that had been on operations earlier in the morning, and outlined typical briefing and debriefing sessions over morning tea. The Governor-General obviously had a tight schedule, for he departed before lunchtime.

Jim Hepburn arrived back to relieve Len Parsons of his temporary command of the squadron, on 10 June. He was a lot thinner but looked fit and well again. A few days later, nine completely new aircrews arrived on posting from the Torpedo Training Course at Nowra. Adding to this influx, six officers, two warrant officers and 229 other ranks of 76 Squadron were staging as lodgers, prior to their departure next day to operate out of Goodenough Island. This activity was followed on 19 June, when 23 Spitfires of 79 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader A.C. Rawlinson, DFC, landed at Gurney as a staging point on their way to Goodenough Island.

The build-up of Allied forces at Goodenough Island was part of the agreed plan to attack and secure airfields on Kiriwina Island (also known as Trobriand Island) and on Woodlark Island. General Kenney had already relocated the No 9 Group Headquarters to Milne Bay, and an advance party of No 73 Wing had been moved to Goodenough Island to direct the fighter squadrons. The role of the Beauforts of 100 Squadron and Hudsons of 6 Squadron was to concentrate on anti-submarine patrols, and to protect convoy movements, leading up to the landings on these two islands.

The strength of 100 Squadron was further increased at this time by the arrival of four more Beaufort aircrews. These crews were on attachment from 7 Squadron, which had been operating out of Ross River, Townsville since October 1942. The additional posting brought the strength of the squadron to 62 officers and 413 other ranks.

With the arrival of new aircrews, several of the long-serving crews, having completed their operational tours, were posted south. Among these postings were Kym Bonython, DFC,⁶¹ 'Smoky' Douglas, a veteran pilot, and John Mercer. These latter two men had recently been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Reconnaissance patrols seaward, in all areas, continued without incident, although windy weather whipped up white caps on the waves. Milne Bay was now a very busy port with convoys coming and going, but there had been no sightings or reports of submarines.

On 23/24 June, landings took place unopposed at Nassau Bay and on New Georgia, Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands. Surprisingly the Japanese offered no defence of these two islands. The American Airfield Construction Unit began work very shortly afterwards on both Islands, and the RAAF established No 305 Radar Station on Kiriwina, which gave 360 degrees coverage up to 100 nautical miles.

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On 25 June, Dick Seymour and crew, on an armed reconnaissance in A9-202, came across a small enemy convoy, west of Bougainville Island. The position was immediately reported to base, together with its course of 145 degrees and estimated speed of 6 mph. The crew shadowed the convoy, consisting of a destroyer and three merchant ships, until the pilot saw an opportunity to attack. At 1125K, Seymour dive-bombed one of the merchant vessels, thought to be a 'sea truck',⁶² but the nearest of the two 250 pound bombs hit the sea about 60 yards from the starboard stern of the ship. A9-202 then resumed its planned patrol, while 9 Group Headquarters ordered eight fully armed Beauforts, led by Squadron Leader Hepburn, to set off from Gurney to find the convoy. Although a search was carried out on reaching the calculated position, they did not find the convoy. It could only be assumed that the convoy altered course immediately after the attack by A9-202.

On the last day of the month, six aircraft set off on a dawn raid to Gasmata in appalling weather conditions. Three crews were forced to return before reaching the target, and A9-211 returned in an unserviceable condition. A9-210 failed to locate the target, and dropped bombs on Atu, a small settlement east of Gasmata, without observing the result. Only Reg Green and crew, in A9-203, located Gasmata airfield in the murky conditions and dropped their payload in the target area, but the result could not be observed.

Sea patrols continued despite the foul weather and, on 2 July, an enemy submarine was sighted due north of Woodlark Island. It was the submarine's lucky day. Ted McKenzie and crew in A9-216 came across it just before 1300K, while on an armed reconnaissance patrol, and attempted to bomb it. The bombs failed to release. Then at 1412K, Lou Hall and crew in A9-208 found the submarine and attacked. The bombs straddled, but failed to damage the submarine before it crash-dived.

Next day, 'Tex' Morton in A9-225 sighted another low profile object on the sea, but it turned out to be an empty barge. He gave Ron Harbeck in the turret some gunnery practice in strafing it until he was satisfied that it was sinking. Then, once again, heavy rain set in and brought the base to a standstill for the next 10 days. The whole area was one large swamp. Fortunately the temperature did not drop to cause further discomfort.

On 12 July, sea patrols recommenced, when A9-225 set off to reconnoitre in the Solomon Sea between Bougainville Island and New Britain. When the aircraft failed to return, a search for the missing plane was proposed, but the search was curtailed by violent, stormy weather. An American Navy Liberator captain then reported that his crew had mistakenly shot down a Beaufort! The Liberator had been patrolling the South Pacific Area, bordering on the South-West Pacific Area.

Jack Coutts, the navigator in Ted McKenzie's crew, recalls the situation:

There was a real cock-up with signals and cooperation between SPA and the SWPA. One would have thought we were fighting two different wars. By the time a PB5Y [Catalina] was organised it was too rough for them to put down. Next day all Beauforts were grounded due to the bad weather.

Subsequently, from 14 to 17 July, searches were carried out despite the turbulent weather, but nothing was found. The search was therefore called off, and normal schedules were resumed. Some 10 days later, a 100 Squadron crew (possibly Bert Godfrey's crew) sighted the dinghy, and all available squadron aircraft made another search.

Jack Coutts continues:

The weather was foul. We carried 44-gallon drums of oil, which were to be dropped near the dinghy, to provide a more visible marker for subsequent rescue. Again, despite all efforts, nothing was found. It was assumed the dinghy had sunk, and the search was abandoned. On 6 August 1943, however, while flying in A9-307, again in same area, and in the worst of weather, I saw the dinghy, by sheer chance through a break in the swirling clouds, at position 07° 26' S 152° 47' E. It had drifted some 93 nautical miles further south-west in the twenty-six days. I saw three, possibly four crew, as a canopy had been rigged at one end of the dinghy, obscuring anything beneath. Very clearly, I saw Geoff Emmett standing at the other end and frantically waving. We responded with a wing waggle, and made ready with survival gear to be chucked out on the sea.

Unbelievably, leaden cloud descended even lower, and the sea surface was completely veiled. We circled several times, saw nothing, and then commenced a square search until we had to reluctantly return to Gurney, after 7 hours 30 minutes in the air.

The dinghy was not seen again. Rumour persists that three of the survivors made it ashore on an island off New Ireland, but were captured by the Japanese and executed. The crew of A9-225 had been posted to 100 Squadron on 12 June 1943 and failed to return from only their fifth operational mission. They were John Davis, pilot, Geoff Emmett, navigator, and George Collins and Willie Brain, wireless/air gunners.

Official Report No 3, 'Shoot Down of a Beaufort Aircraft', dated 11 October 1943, shows that this unfortunate incident occurred while the Liberator was on a routine search patrol near Buka Passage. The Americans mistook the Beaufort for a Japanese Betty bomber:

... At 0215 sighted 2 engine plane low over the water heading for Buka Passage. Dove [sic] on this plane. Other plane sighted PB4Y (Liberator)⁶³ and turned directly towards our plane. Altitude at this time for both planes was 100 feet. At about 1000 yards both planes fired.

Waist gunner and tail gunner saw splashes in water indicating fire from other plane. Top turret and bow turret of PB4Y fired. Other plane made sharp right turn about 500 yards distant. At this point top and bow turrets were hitting well. Other plane pulled away rapidly out of range. PB4Y chased for 10 minutes when other plane was observed to smoke and catch fire. Plane made a 90-degree turn to right and landed on water. PB4Y circled over crashed plane. Two survivors in the water were definitely identified as white men. A large life raft was dropped, which partly inflated. Raft landed 40 feet over the men. The survivors did not see it. They were clinging to part of the wing and made no effort to reach the raft. Two life jackets tied together were then dropped near men. One man swam out and got them returning to the wing section.

Another jacket was dropped with the following note attached, 'Your position reported to base radio. Will drop rations. Raft is ahead of you. Will drop smoke lights by raft. Will have to leave shortly, due to limited gas supply.' Survivors got note. One swam to raft and pulled it to companion when men were about 100 feet apart. Life jackets were dropped with kit from other raft in plane containing rations, water, first aid kit, fishing gear, Verey pistol, smoke grenade. At 0302 sent message in code reporting, 'Unidentified plane shot down, believed to be friendly. Dropped raft to two men. Sea calm. Will circle until ordered otherwise. Position 6° 40' S 154° 02' E.' Received no orders from base. Departed scene 0545 ...

This incident only added to the view that the Americans were very poor at aircraft identification. That the Beaufort crew fired at the Liberator would be most uncharacteristic of Beaufort crews, who were well trained to recognise friendly and enemy aircraft. On the other hand, it is well known that the Americans usually shot first and identified the aircraft afterwards.

Meantime, on 20 July, John Baker, who was flying as second pilot with Roy Woollacott's crew during the search for the dinghy, sighted an enemy naval force:

We encountered eight Japanese cruisers and destroyers heading for Rabaul. We descended to 500 feet to investigate, but, at about seven miles distance, they opened fire, and we turned about at the sight of the gun flashes. Water from the shells spouted up about a mile behind us. We also sighted a submarine, which immediately submerged as we approached. This was later established to also be Japanese. Our radio was on the 'blink', so no message was sent to base, and we could only report the sighting on our return. We had been airborne for 8 hours, thanks to the extra fuel tank fitted in the bomb bay.

Shortly afterwards, on that same day, Roy Anderson and crew in A9-208 came across probably the same enemy convoy in the vicinity of Cape Saint George, New Ireland. An aircraft carrier was being well protected by three cruisers and five destroyers. While the content, course and position of the convoy was being transmitted to base, three Zekes challenged the Beaufort. Anderson at first endeavoured to outrun them but could not. One Zeke closed in to within 400 yards and attacked from the rear, while Bill McMahon in the turret fired a six-second burst with his two Browning guns. The Zeke stopped firing and dived below the Beaufort with smoke pouring out of it. Then a second Zeke, following in behind the first one, began firing from about the same distance. McMahon again opened fire, but found difficulty in keeping the Zeke in the ring sight as Anderson took violent evasive action, while heading for a lonely cloud. Using the cloud as a shield, he flew in, around and over it for the next 20 minutes, chased by the two remaining Zekes until he lost sight of them. On returning to Gurney, the crew found significant damage to the aircraft. Part of the tailplane had been shot away, and they counted 64 other bullet holes.

By this time, the prolonged wet weather and heavy humidity had ruined some of the food stores, and food rationing had to be introduced. Shortage of uncontaminated flour meant that each person was rationed to one slice of bread each day, and this restriction remained until further notice.

On Thursday 22 July, the RAAF in the South-West Pacific set a new benchmark for operations when it became possible to make the largest strike up to that time. Sixty-two aircraft were mustered for a raid on the Gasmata runway and dispersal bays. Ten Beauforts from 100 Squadron would be carrying 11-second delay bombs to enable them to drop from 1200 feet. They would be accompanied by six Bostons from 22 Squadron and eight Beaufighters from 30 Squadron, while top cover would be given by 38 Kittyhawks from 75 and 77 Squadrons. Knowing how well Gasmata was defended, the crews knew it was going to be a very hot reception.

It was 0530K when Jim Hepburn took off in A9-213 to lead the squadron, with Kittyhawk fighter cover overhead. The captains of the other aircraft were Roy Woollacott, Tony Jay, S.G. Sharpe, R.G. Mullins, P.B. Creagh, Lou Hall, Jim Birt, Chas Walsh and 'Tex' Morton. As they lined up for the bombing run, they met, as expected, intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire.

Their bombing was on target. Thirty-three out of the forty bombs hit the runway, and the remainder hit the dispersal bays. Furthermore, one enemy plane was destroyed on the tarmac and two machine-gun nests were hit. The Beaufighters then came through a barrage of ack-ack, strafing at levels varying between 200 to 500 feet, setting buildings and a fuel dump ablaze.

The firepower from the Beaufighter 20 mm cannons was particularly destructive, while, at the same time, the Bostons destroyed the radio station. The raid caused enormous damage. As the raiders left the scene, the eastern half of the runway was enveloped in thick smoke and dust, which rose to 200 feet.

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Five of the Beauforts, however, had taken some flak. Neil Phelan, who was one of the ground crew maintaining Hall's plane, describes the ack-ack damage:

210 had three shots in a motor, two through the cockpit and shrapnel in the bomb bay. 184 had a gaping hole in the port underside near the trailing edge. It had severed elevator cables so had to land using the trimmer. The aircraft bounced about 100 feet, hit down again and then revved to take off again. The second attempt was better. The crew was very lucky to get in at all. 214 had a shell burst in the port side of the tailplane that left a very large hole.

Beauforts A9-213 and 195 also showed evidence of the accuracy of the enemy gunners, with holes of various sizes in their airframes. Although there were no 100 Squadron casualties, one Kittyhawk pilot, however, was lost.

The official RAAF photographer, Flying Officer N.A. Boddington, AFM, flew on this raid in the Commanding Officer's aircraft, A9-213. He secured some good shots of the Beauforts in action and of the target area, but his enthusiasm was dampened when a piece of shrapnel hit one of his cameras a glancing blow.

When coastwatcher, Flight Lieutenant H. Koch, MC, reported two enemy ships beached in Jacquinet Bay, near Cape Cunningham, New Britain, four 100 Squadron aircraft were ordered to strike. Roy Anderson, Dick Seymour, Ed Clark and Ted McKenzie and their crews took off at 0530K on 27 July. They were over the target between 0755 and 0810K to drop 24 x 250 pound bombs. One ship received a direct hit, while there were four near misses on the other one. The crews then strafed the ships without experiencing any opposition. They were all safely back at Gurney by 1030K.

Three days later Jim Birt and crew in A9-310 were carrying out an armed reconnaissance, when, at 1050K, they sighted a destroyer escorting six barges at position 05° 30' S 153° 50' E. As soon as the position had been reported to base, Birt attacked the last barge in the line of vessels. The bombs were close, but there was no direct hit. The crew then strafed the vessel, which was at a standstill in the water, as they left the scene.

At the end of July 1943, Flight Lieutenant Tony Jay was appointed temporarily to command the squadron while Squadron Leader Jim Hepburn proceeded to Townsville on duty. One of Tony Jay's first duties was to announce that fresh food supplies had arrived, and food rationing had ceased.

By that time the personnel of the squadron had changed significantly, with new crews and support staff replacing those completing their tour of operations. With 23 aircraft, the strength of the squadron was now 46 officers and 404 other ranks. This included 8 officers and 14 airmen on attachment to the squadron. During the month, three squadron records were set: total flying hours for the month amounted to 1297,

the total flying hours for any one day was 100, and the squadron had participated (on 22 July) in the largest RAAF strike to that date.

Nine aircraft in formation, mistaken at first for enemy aircraft approaching, came over Milne Bay on Sunday 1 August, and then landed at the Gurney airstrip. They were P-47 Thunderbolts on their way to Goodenough Island. On the ground, the all-metal Thunderbolts were considered large for fighters, powered by 18 cylinder Pratt & Whitney engines, and carrying eight 0.5 guns in the wings. An unusual feature of the aircraft was its flaps, which formed part of the trailing edge of the main plane.

The squadron was particularly busy during August, conducting anti-submarine searches and reconnaissance patrols into enemy territory. Not surprisingly, with so much flying, there were several prangs. A9-369, piloted by Bert Godfrey, skidded off the runway and bent a prop. A9-320, piloted by John Pressey, slipped off the side of the runway on returning from an anti-submarine patrol, as did A9-347, piloted by Clem Wiggins, two days later. Both aircraft had damage to the undercarriage, port engine nacelles, port wingtip and propeller, but the crews walked away unhurt from their damaged planes. A9-384 then crashed into the sea. Bill Hay, the pilot, takes up the story:

We were on an SJY [anti-submarine patrol] around an inbound convoy to Milne Bay. About two hours after take-off we noticed suspicious swirling in the water about five miles away from the convoy and went down to investigate. While low over the disturbance, the port engine failed. I increased power on the starboard one but could not stop the plane from trying to roll. The navigator was working the wobble pump after I had changed tanks, but the port engine would not start so I decided to ditch. There was no time to even think of jettisoning the depth charges.

After initial contact, the bomb aiming glass panels must have broken as a great wave came up from the navigator's compartment. She seemed to settle fairly quickly. Fred and I got out through the roof. He went starboard, while I went port and down to the dinghy, which was already inflated. Fred meanwhile was swimming around to the front of the aircraft calling out, 'Shark', though I could see no sign of any. Down the back, the turret had broken loose, pinning Gerry Hunt to the floor, but Laurie Bourke, and a passenger we had on board, were able to clear it off him and we all got in the dinghy. A few natives then came to us in a canoe, but fortunately the watch on the escort destroyer *Arunta* had marked our position and came to our rescue.

On 19 August, 100 Squadron claimed a world record for a squadron on active service. Bob Aldridge in Group 9 Operations Room reported that 100 Squadron, as of that date, held the world's record for the number of operational flying hours for any 31 days in any month. Between 20 July 1943 and 19 August 1943 (31 days) the squadron flew 1615.18 hours on 438 sorties. About 113 000 gallons of fuel were needed to keep the planes in the air, along with 1500 hours of service work to maintain

them in flying condition. Jim Hepburn, who had returned from Townsville earlier in the month, was obviously pleased to announce, to all members of the squadron, details of the claim for a world record. Needless to say, there was a certain amount of celebrating, especially by the Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Root, who had received word of his posting south at the end of the month.

While 100 Squadron was engaged in the Solomon Sea and Huon Gulf areas in August, other sections of No 9 Group were attacking the enemy barge traffic along the southern coast of New Britain from Jacquinot Bay to Gasmata. A captured Japanese map of New Britain had revealed the routes of the barges and was being used to good effect. As a result, the Bostons from 22 Squadron and Beaufighters from 30 Squadron, operating out of Goodenough Island, had forced the barge traffic to operate mostly at night.

Then, in the early hours of 17 August, the American bomber squadrons of the Fifth Air Force attacked a newly established enemy air base at Wewak and new air strips at Boram, Dagua and But in the same region. It was known at this time that the Japanese 4th Air Army, comprising some 10 000 aircrew and ground staff, had almost completed a move from Rabaul to Northern New Guinea. Fortress, Liberator and Mitchell aircraft caught the Japanese unprepared. One hundred of their aircraft were destroyed on the ground, together with supplies stacked in the open, awaiting secure storage. While the USAAF lost three bombers, the loss to the enemy of more than 20 per cent of their aircraft, stores and personnel in this raid was a major blow to the Japanese.

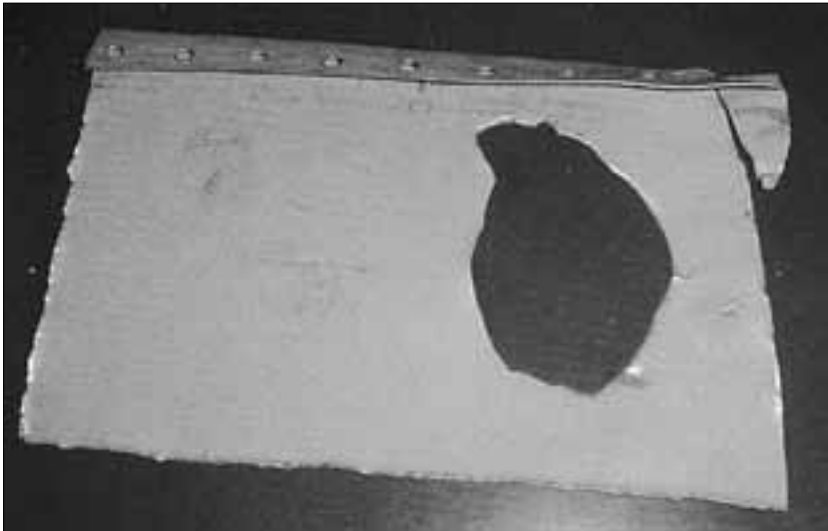
At the same time, further down the New Guinea coast, in the early light of 4 September, Australian troops were storming ashore in the Huon Gulf. This was the first massive amphibious operation undertaken by Australian troops since the Gallipoli landing. To coincide with the Australian 9th Division AIF landing at Hopoi near Lae, Flight Lieutenant Tony Jay led 10 Beauforts to raid Gasmata airfield at 0550K. Three Bostons from 22 Squadron swept in first at low level to bomb and strafe the airfield, which primed the Japanese gunners for our approaching Beauforts. The 10 Beauforts climbed on full power to 4000 feet, then dive-bombed the airstrip in line astern.

John Baker takes up the story:

I released my bombs at 1500 feet, and dived away to sea level through a barrage of ack-ack. I dodged and weaved all I knew. It was the most thrilling experience of my life. Ted McKenzie, who followed us, confirmed that our bombs had hit right along the middle of the landing strip.

Several fires were started, including a large blaze, possibly on a fuel dump. During its bombing run, A9-204 was caught in the anti-aircraft barrage and burst into flames before crashing. Tom Allanson and his crew, Merv Keehn, Keith Grieve and Denis Webb were killed instantly. A9-315 was also hit, but John Baker brought the aircraft

back to base with a shell hole in the main plane, which luckily had not destroyed the starboard aileron hinge.



Ack-ack Damage to Aileron A9-315

The following morning, 5 September, when a dawn reconnaissance over Gasmata revealed that the enemy had repaired the runway,⁶⁴ Bostons from 22 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Charles Learmonth in his aircraft, 'She's Apples', bombed the airstrip. Ten Beauforts from 100 Squadron then made their attack.

Acting on intelligence reports, Air Commodore Hewitt warned the squadron that the firepower from the anti-aircraft batteries protecting the airstrip was very accurate and proving dangerous for bombing at lower altitudes. Jim Hepburn would have normally led the squadron, but he had a nasty dose of tinea and was not flying. He appointed Flight Lieutenant Roy Woollacott to lead the strike. Woollacott had struck at Gasmata previously, and his aircraft had been damaged by ack-ack, so he knew it was a very dangerous mission. Setting off with eight Kittyhawks as top protection, the squadron arrived over Gasmata at 0730K. Losing height to bomb at the relatively low altitude of 1500 feet, they released their bombs. While the majority of the bombs were set with 12 second delay fuzes, some of the bombs were set for delayed detonation after 6, 12 and 36 hours.

The Japanese, however, were ready for them with their ack-ack, and sent up a deadly box barrage. A9-374, with Woollacott and crew, was badly hit and burst into flames. Woollacott, however, meritoriously remained on the bombing run, and hit with all bombs on the runway before crashing. A9-183, with Roy Anderson and crew, was blasted apart and went down in flames into the harbour. A9-186 was also hit, and

Clem Wiggins struggled to remain airborne. Pouring out smoke and fire, the plane crashed into the hills seven miles north-east of Gasmata.



Ack-ack Damage to Fuselage

A9-362 had also been hit, but Chas Walsh managed to get the plane to Goodenough Island, where it ground-looped and crashed, due to damaged hydraulics and a tyre being shot away. The aircraft was damaged beyond repair, but the crew walked away from the wreck. 'Tex' Morton and crew in A9-195 were also lucky to return to a safe landing. Included in the damage to their aircraft was the starboard fuel system control, which had been shot away, but fortunately those tanks were already in use. The other five Beauforts ran the ack-ack gauntlet without damage to the aircraft or injury to the crew. Twenty-four bombs made direct hits on the runway, while the crews also strafed ack-ack positions and buildings.

Fitter 2E, Tony Booth, reports:

When word that we'd lost four crews and five aircraft in two days reached the Repair Service Unit (RSU),⁶⁵ a couple of my mates inquired. When I confirmed the loss, they looked me straight in the eye and said. 'You chaps are a hard-hearted lot of bastards. You have lost all those men and here you are all getting round as though nothing has happened.' This way of looking at things did surprise me, for I had seen some fail to get home before, and, being a

flying unit, it seemed different as we always sort of expected this could happen. Apparently non-flying units saw it in a different light.

Learning of the successful landing near Lae on 4 September, General Kenney pressed on with the storming of Nadzab. The Nadzab attack had been well rehearsed, and part of the planning had been to keep the Gasmata airfield unserviceable, in order to protect the paratroopers in the landing. Everything went smoothly and the landing was completed within the hour.

A follow-up airborne infantry attack, on the Japanese in the Markham Valley, was planned for the 25th Brigade of the 7th Division AIF on 7 September. In the early hours of that morning, D Company members were in Army trucks at the western end of Jackson airstrip, Port Moresby. They heard the roar of an American Liberator bomber coming along the asphalt runway towards them in preparation for take-off, but no-one took any notice because they were at least 200 yards beyond the end of the runway. The Liberator, with a full bombload, failed to achieve lift-off. It crashed with a roar beside the troop-filled trucks, and fuel from the exploding petrol tanks engulfed the troops.

Soldiers with bandoleers full of ammunition and hand grenades in their webbing pouches did not stand a chance. Others, carrying two-inch mortar bombs in their pouches, or holding loaded Bren or Owen gun magazines, were also killed. The entire Company of 134 soldiers had been wiped out—72 were killed and 62 were shockingly burned or wounded. Remarkably, the tail of the Liberator broke free in the crash and two of the crew walked away from the wreckage. They were dazed and were taken to hospital for observation, but died from shock. The other members of the Liberator crew had been killed instantly.

No 100 Squadron was again kept busy with convoy patrols and reconnaissance. By staging through the new airfield at Kiriwina, the squadron was able to reconnoitre further afield into enemy territory, particularly to the north-east. On 11 September, Bert Godfrey and crew in A9-199 came across an enemy convoy near the Saint George's-Buka channel, between New Britain and Bougainville. A destroyer, with four landing craft, and two motor vessels were on course 090 degrees and travelling at about 8 knots. A bombing run on one of the motor vessels was attempted, while heavy ack-ack came from the destroyer, and light gunfire from the motor vessels. The bombs, however, failed to release. Godfrey turned to port and dived on the other motor vessel. He strafed the vessel with his wing guns, and the crew continued the strafing to start a fire amidships.

John Baker was patrolling the same area a week later in one of the new Beauforts, A9-365, when he sighted two small boats off Cape Saint George. He dive-bombed one of them with two 250 pound bombs, while navigator Ken Burns strafed with the nose guns. The two bombs, however, overshot the target. The next day, Godfrey in another new Beaufort, A9-367, came upon a Japanese naval vessel escorting a supply

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ship, and attacked. His two bombs also overshot the supply ship by 20 feet, but the crew's strafing was effective in penetrating the decking and wheelhouse.



No 100 Squadron Aircrew at Milne Bay

Standing, L-R: Tony Jay (OC 'A' Flight), John Snewin, Bob Mullins, Aub Dodd, 'Tex' Morton, Ted McConchie, John Baker, Ken Davies, Ken Scheller, Bill East, Ted McKenzie, Owen Griffiths, Fred Partington, Jack Coutts, Jack Farness and George Maugher

Crouching, L-R: Tony Warden, Ron Harbeck, Alby Neil, Keith McKay, Harry Johnson, Stan Harris, Bert Godfrey and Tom Davies



John Baker and Crew

(L-R: Stan Harris, Ken Burns, John Baker and Keith McKay)

While the sea patrols were being conducted, administrative and routine duties were, of course, continuing. Aircrews, having completed their operational tour of nine months, were posted south and replacement crews were arriving. The exchanges at

this time included the departure of Squadron Leader Jim Hepburn on 12 September and the arrival of Squadron Leader Ivor Roberts from 6 Squadron, to temporarily command 100 Squadron.

Ground personnel, too, were generally released from operations after a period of 15 months and replaced by fresh staff. Some ground crews, during their tour of duty, earned a four day rest period. Neil Phelan recalls one of his rest periods and describes his visit to an American unit stationed along the coast from RAAF establishments:

Eleven of us went up the coast on a good road for about 20 miles that the Yanks had made. I was surprised to see how the Yanks had improved things. The old coconut factory at the 'Arshoma' wreck had been turned into a big workshop. They had also put up an ice factory. For the last 2 miles to the Yank's camp we travelled along the seabed in about 2 feet of water. The beach, where we were camped, was made of cobblestones. The Yanks fed us well and on Thursday night we went to the pictures. They didn't start until 9 and finished at 2.30 am. It was a good show, *Power House Girls* followed by *Joan of Ozark*. Each evening the Yanks would come over to our camp and talk to us until bedtime. They were very nice chaps. We visited a village a little farther on and saw a youngster riding a Japanese bike, which seemed to be in good order. We were all sorry to leave the place.

On 21 September, the squadron strength was down to only five available aircrews, when a night strike was called to again bomb Gasmata. The five Beauforts led by Tony Jay set off at 0255K, after staging overnight at Vivigani. John Baker reports:

We flew across to Gasmata in formation, wondering if we would receive as hot a reception at night, as it had been in daylight. We located the target, and released our bombs—two 500 pounders, with instantaneous fuzing, and four 250 pounders with 6-hour delay, following a diving attack from 10,000 to 8,000 feet. Our bombs, and most of the bombs from the other Beauforts, hit the target area. This time there was no ack-ack at all, or searchlights. We climbed to 11,000 feet after the attack, which resulted in an uncomfortably cold flight back to Milne Bay.

In the meantime, the Australian 20th Brigade had made two more successful landings at 'Red Beach' and 'Yellow Beach' to capture Salamaua and take Lae on 16 September. At the Lae airstrip, which was riddled with craters, 55 aircraft of various types were discovered, in various states of disrepair, in camouflaged parking bays.

General MacArthur was impressed with the progress of the Australians, and approved a plan for the Australians to take Finschhafen, on the horn of the Huon Gulf. On 22 September, the Australian 9th Division successfully landed north of Finschhafen. In support of the landing, the USAAF bombed Wewak and the Cape Gloucester airfield, while 100 Squadron, and the recently reformed 8 Squadron Beauforts, jointly

attacked the Gasmata airfield with time-delay bombs. Tony Jay and Geoff Nicoll were the flight commanders to lead the bombers out of Goodenough Island for the raid. The detonation of the 500 pound bombs was delayed 12 seconds to enable a low-altitude drop, while the 250 pounders were set to explode 6, 12 and 36 hours later. Nearly all the bombs landed on or very near the airstrip, but 8 Squadron suffered its first casualty with the loss of Beaufort A9-256 and its crew.

October began with 100 Squadron again ranging over the Solomon Sea to New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville and across to Lae, searching for enemy movements. Beauforts which had replaced the 6 Squadron Hudsons in September had also become operational, and were carrying out sea patrols.

When the Japanese launched small-scale air attacks on Goodenough and Kiriwina Islands, 100 Squadron responded by raiding their home base at Cape Hoskins airstrip on the other side of New Britain, which was only 50 miles from Gasmata. However, it meant climbing and crossing the range of volcanic mountains, which extends the full length of the island. On 12 October, four aircraft made the strike from between 8000 and 11 000 feet, and 14 instantaneous high explosive bombs hit the target area. Two 500 pound bombs in A9-190 failed to release, and Bert Godfrey, on returning to land at Vivigani on Goodenough Island, took precautions to make a careful landing.

Goodenough and Kiriwina Islands, by this time, were being used more and more as stepping stones to refuel the Beauforts, so as to extend the area of operations for the fighters and bombers of the Fifth Air Force. Kiriwina also had a radar station, which was used regularly for navigation.

Mid-afternoon on 16 October, A9-191 was setting off on an anti-submarine patrol, when it crashed shortly after take-off at Gurney. Fred Cornish, Don Cooper, John Rekdale and Fred Maloney were killed instantly. Fitter 2E, Tony Booth, witnessed the incident:

On taking off, the plane didn't sound right, so we came out of our tent to see it. There was smoke pouring out of the port motor, which then burst into flames before cutting out. The plane banked around and then spun over, and it went down near Lyle wharf, Gili Gili. There was a terrible explosion, which left a huge crater, for the plane had a full bombload, and was fully fuelled.

The remains of the crew, who had only been with the squadron for one week, were buried, with white crosses bearing their names, at the Milne Bay Cemetery. Group Captain Campbell, Inspector of Administration from RAAF Headquarters, visited the squadron for a few hours the following day to investigate the tragedy, which was found to be due to loss of power in the port motor on take-off.

Ron Caffin and crew, in A9-189, were on a reconnaissance patrol on 18 October, when they came across a submarine at the entrance to Saint George's Channel between New Britain and New Ireland. It was travelling almost north at about four knots. To

their astonishment, they saw that it had a swastika painted on the conning tower! Ron went into dive-bombing mode and released all four bombs. Two of the bombs were anti-submarine explosives and the other two were for general purposes. There was no direct hit, but the bombs landed to explode slightly ahead of the submarine's wake and obviously did some damage, because it seemed unable to submerge. Two seamen appeared on board and began manning a machine gun, as Ron turned for a strafing run. He hit the submarine from stem to stern with his wing guns, while the navigator was also firing his nose guns into the craft. Several strafing runs were then made to allow the wireless/air gunners also to expend their ammunition. Having damaged the submarine and silenced its gun, they left the scene.

On the return trip, the crew observed an enemy convoy of two escort vessels and five motor vessels east of Cape Saint George, and reported their position. This sighting interested Allied Intelligence, who identified the convoy as one bound for Rabaul from Truk, 700 miles to the north of Rabaul. Air Commodore Hewitt gave orders for Beauforts of No 9 Group to attack in the early hours of 21 October. Squadron Leader Ivor Roberts, Commanding Officer of 100 Squadron, was to be the director for the combined strike on the two *Kuma* class cruisers, with all aircraft staging through Kiriwina. No 100 Squadron was providing nine aircraft carrying bombs, 6 Squadron was sending seven aircraft similarly armed, and 8 Squadron would use ten torpedo bombers.

Cliff Tuttleby, with Colin Bourke as navigator, led the flight in A9-429, flying at 700 feet to the datum point, Cape Kabairuma, and then climbed to 3000 feet at Cape Saint George. At this point, Ivor Roberts, flying with Tuttleby, ordered the squadrons to split into separate flights to search the area to the north of Cape Saint George.

Just before dawn was breaking, two ships of equal size were sighted on radar at five miles range. However, they were not visible to the naked eye until the moment the aircraft passed over the vessels near Cape Narum. Both vessels opened up immediately with intense heavy, medium and light ack-ack. The ships, about a mile apart in echelon formation, came into view a few minutes later, and were identified by their distinctive three funnels and high tripod masts as being light cruisers. Tuttleby dive-bombed on one ship, releasing the full bombload at 1700 feet. Crawford, in the turret, saw the bombs hit the water slightly ahead of the cruiser.

Ken Davies, a wireless/air gunner in Tony Warden's crew, also sighted the two blips on the radar screen, indicating that the ships, large enough to be cruisers, were on the port side of A9-321. Three much smaller blips indicated three vessels on the starboard side of the aircraft. Although the area was still weakly moonlit, the haze reduced visibility and restricted visual sighting until they were within two miles of the ships. Warden dive-bombed one of the cruisers from 1500 feet, but missed as the vessel took evasive action by making a sharp turn away from the aircraft.⁶⁶ Ted McConchie, in the turret, claimed that all five ships were firing, judging from the intensity of the ack-ack fire and the direction from which it came.

The crew noted, with surprise, that the enemy was using a new class of shell, which burst horizontally and discharged red and white diamond shaped fragments in two close layers. On pulling out of the dive, Tony Warden reported a burst of tracer from an unseen aircraft passing over the port wing. Chas Walsh in A9-427 also reported tracer on the starboard side and took evasive action. His beam gunner, John Barton, saw a single-engine aircraft firing four guns in their direction, but the tracer went wide of their plane.

Ray Smith in A9-433 made a steady dive through the ack-ack to unload his bombs so close to the ship that it must certainly have caused some damage. Steve Hales of 6 Squadron made a similar dive-bombing attack and claimed that one bomb hit directly behind the stern funnel. In fact he exclaimed, 'one of the bombs looked as if it might have gone down the funnel'. When 8 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Owen Price, arrived, the cruiser was well alight. The ack-ack was still intense and remarkably accurate, as the cruiser took evasive action to avoid Price's torpedo, giving credence to the opinion that the guns could have been radar controlled. However, the torpedo found its mark. All three squadrons therefore claimed hits on the cruiser. The other 100 Squadron aircraft and captains actively engaged in this 40-minute melee were A9-432 (Ed Clark), A9-437 (Ted McKenzie), A9-382 (Bert Godfrey), A9-213 (Jim Birt) and A9-315 (John Baker). All 100 Squadron aircraft arrived back safely at Kiriwina, but unfortunately one 8 Squadron aircraft and crew failed to return.

Next day Jim Birt, Ray Smith and Ed Clark, and their crews, made effective high-level raids on Cape Hoskins and Gasmata, departing from Vivigani but returning to Gurney. This type of operation suited the Australian Beaufort, which could carry a 2000 pound bombload several hundred miles, and bomb accurately from medium to high altitudes.⁶⁷ Shortly after this raid, news came through that Finschhafen was finally secured after three weeks of repeated enemy counter attacks.

The end of October saw 100 Squadron fragmented, with four aircraft operating out of Kiriwina, two at Vivigani and the remainder at Milne Bay. Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Ivor Roberts, together with Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Quinlan, Equipment Officer, Flight Lieutenant Paine, and Engineering Officer, Flying Officer Greenham, were also in Kiriwina. They were inspecting a prospective new campsite for the squadron, which at the end of the month had a strength of 41 officers, 339 airmen and 19 aircraft. Kiriwina, where 30 Squadron Beaufighters were already using the airfield, was approximately 310 miles from Rabaul, the most important enemy maritime and aeronautical base in the South-West Pacific. A move to Kiriwina would save one third of the travelling time when attacking Rabaul from Milne Bay.

Since its capture in January 1942, Rabaul had been developed into a very heavily defended bastion, linking the Japanese island territories of Truk in the north, with the Solomon Islands to the south-east and the New Guinea mainland to the west. It had expanded its air operations to a stage where five airfields were in use. Protected by more than 300 anti-aircraft guns, Rabaul was well known to aircrews as a 'hot spot'.



A9-203 and A9-214 in Milne Bay Area

The Allied plan now was to acquire the Caroline Islands for maritime bases and to bypass Rabaul. To achieve this, it was necessary to keep pressure on Rabaul itself, as well as movement to and from Rabaul, by constant air attacks, to render it impotent. An integral part of this plan was to secure an airfield closer to Rabaul. On Monday 1 November, a Division of American Marines went ashore at Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville, almost in the shadow of Mount Bagana, an active volcano rising to 8560 feet. Within days, the Torokina airstrip, at the north-west end of the Bay, was operational.

Allied Intelligence then learned that the Japanese were consequently reinforcing their air strength at Rabaul. Admiral Koga at Truk ordered 173 carrier aircraft to Rabaul, to team up with Admiral Kusaka's Eleventh Air Fleet. On receiving this information, the American squadrons of the Fifth Air Force raided the Tobera and Lakunai airfields, where they claimed to have destroyed 68 planes on the ground, and set fire to Lakunai aerodrome.

As the Beaufort crews were fully trained on night operations and the Americans lacked that skill, the three Beaufort squadrons attacked at night, and the Americans, with fighter escort, attacked in daylight. The Beauforts were ordered to repeat an attack on Tobera airfield on the night of 3 November. No 8 Squadron carried out the first raid, but attempts to hit the target area were unsuccessful.

In the early hours of the following morning, 6 and 100 Squadrons bombed the target area. During the raid, Flying Officer Clem Renouf of 6 Squadron was attacked by three

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fighters and was forced to jettison his bombs and take evasive action. Although results were not observed, Jim Birt, Ed Clark and Gordon Bland of 100 Squadron, were confident their bombs hit the target area. All aircraft returned to a safe landing.

On 5 November, 100 Squadron began moving, not to Kiriwina as expected, but to Goodenough Island to conduct operations from Vivigani airfield. The squadron aircrews were very familiar with Vivigani, as they had been using it as a staging airstrip for operations since May. No 22 Squadron Bostons and 30 Squadron Beaufighters had been operating from there since August, and 6 and 8 Squadrons since September.

GOODENOUGH ISLAND

*Through sunlit days
And darkest night
We dare to face
The risks of flight;
In speeding craft we soar to fly
On hidden highways in the sky
Be with us Father as we rise
To the brave challenge of the skies.*

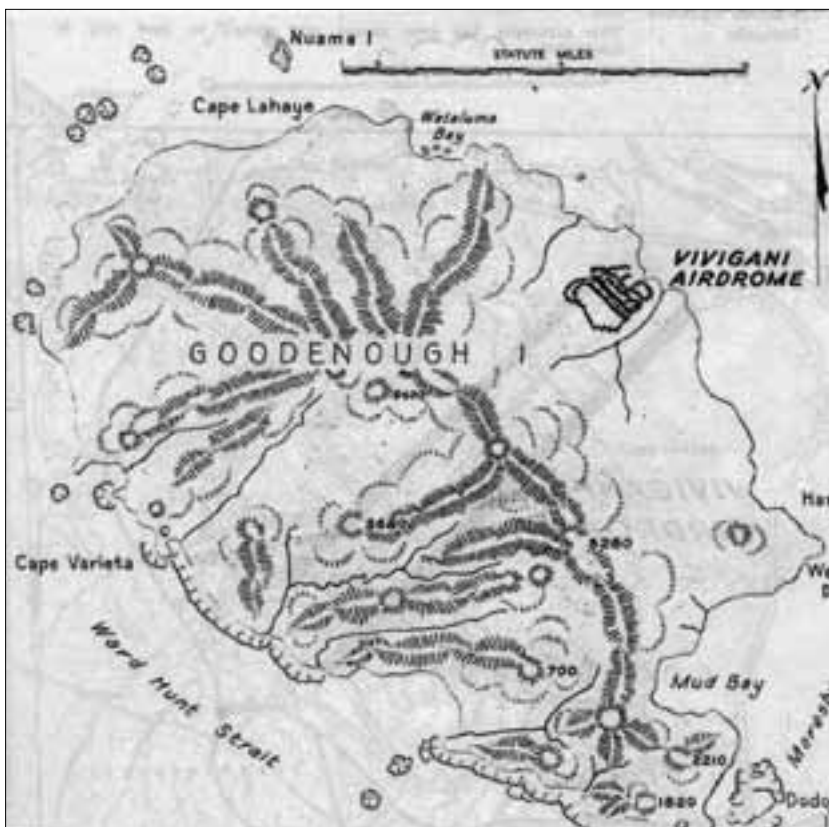
Geoff Baskett, *The Airman's Hymn*

As one of the northernmost islands of the D'Entrecasteaux group, Goodenough Island was well named. It was a typical tropical island that one dreams about. Situated on the 9th parallel South in the southern Solomon Sea, it was only 16 miles in diameter and fringed with reefs. With lush, colourful vegetation and fresh water streams, it was a far more pleasant place than either Port Moresby or Milne Bay. Although the jungle on the island was not as thick, the mountainous terrain, with peaks including a volcanic cone rising to almost 8500 feet, was a hazard to flying, particularly when the peaks were shrouded in cloud. The waterholes, in the largest of the streams that came cascading down from the mountains were very clear, but almost freezing to swim in, and far deeper than they appeared at the surface. The huge boulders nearby were a popular place to warm up again after a dip in one of the pools.

The main advantage in being based at Goodenough Island was being nearer to the front-line action. Roads, when first built, traversed numerous creeks, and several improvised bridges had to be constructed. Suitable sites for airstrips were difficult to find, and it required the clearing of patches of forest to build the two airstrips at Vivigani, one for fighters and one for bombers. The 6000 feet western airstrip was formed with good hard coral, and the eastern one of 5000 feet had Marsden steel matting. Both airstrips were 80 feet above sea level.

During the installation of a communication line at the coral airstrip, the Signals team came up with a novel way of saving hundreds of yards of cable and trench digging to get the cable from one side of the airstrip to the other. There was a drainpipe under the airstrip. It was too small for even one of the native children, who had taken an interest in the proceedings, to crawl through. When the Signals team sighted a playful, nondescript dog playing with the children, their hopes of solving the problem rose. Despite its mangy appearance, the dog became the centre of attention and was given the name 'Siggy'. The children were even more impressed when Siggy was

commissioned as a Lieutenant, with two pips chalked on each shoulder and promised a reward to run through the drain with a cord attached. Lieutenant Siggy saw the plan in a different light, and refused to cooperate despite coaxing, bullying, cursing and being demoted to Lance Corporal. Eventually, once the dog was inside, one of the signallers lit a fire at the entrance and Lance Corporal Siggy scampered quickly to the other end. When the cord had been used to drag the cable ends through to the other side, the Signals team was very contrite over Siggy's raw deal, and saw that he was rewarded with a feed fit for a pedigreed show dog.



Map – Goodenough Island

Ferguson Island, a much larger island adjacent to Goodenough, was used as a supply depot for the armed forces on Goodenough. The native workers would help to unload the supply vessels and then ferry the goods across to a native-built wharf at Mud Bay on Goodenough Island. Two RAN patrol vessels were caught between the two islands in a surprise attack by Japanese planes one afternoon during the building of Vivigani airfield. Fortunately the bombs straddled the boats, allowing both vessels to escape unscathed. Mud Bay was the venue for the RAN to trade with the natives

for fruit, which would go to the field hospital, in exchange for knives, razor blades and cigarettes. The hospital at Goodenough was thought to be well concealed in the jungle, but, on the siren sounding an alert, the patients were carried out to an underground shelter.

When 22 Squadron moved from Goodenough to Kiriwina, 6 Squadron moved into their campsite, which was separated from the Vivigani airstrip by a fast-flowing stream. The Beaufighter squadron had also moved to Kiriwina, and it was their campsite that 100 Squadron would occupy. It was a slightly elevated site on the foothills of Mount Whyalla (8419 feet), giving a clear view of the airstrip and beyond to the sea. Alan Kingston, an instrument maker, reminisces:

I remember the camp up the mountainside where the Beauforts returning from New Britain strikes often roared low over the grass Mess hut, shaking bugs and lizards out of the grass roof to fall onto our tin plates. The mountain pool nearby was popular for a cool swim in the crystal clear water.

An advance party of the squadron had barely settled into its new quarters on 6 November, when a night strike was called on Rabaul. It was common knowledge that Rabaul was a veritable fortress, with tunnels and pens for submarines. It was also known that the air strength at Rabaul had been increased significantly. All five airfields were busy, but Vunakanau, one of the original airfields situated south of the town in the centre of the Gazelle Peninsula, had been selected that night for special attention. As Walsh, Clark, McKenzie and Godfrey, with their respective crews, reached the target area, searchlights came on, and red tracers gouged great arches towards them. At 8000 feet, the crews were relatively unconcerned, and successfully dropped bombs on the airfield dispersal bays to cause three large fuel fires.

Torpedo raids, which 100 Squadron had pioneered, were now being conducted by 8 Squadron. While the attack on Vunakanau was under way, three torpedo Beauforts from 8 Squadron were attacking shipping in nearby Keravia Bay. One torpedo was seen to be running true and may have hit a cruiser, but no result was observed because of intense searchlight glare and evasive action being taken. Another torpedo ran erratically and missed its target, and the third torpedo was dropped in line to hit a cruiser, but again there was no resulting explosion. All seven aircraft and crews returned safely to Vivigani.

On the following night, Cliff Tuttleby, Laurie Glenn, Gordon Bland and Ron Caffin, and their respective crews, took off at 2030K to strike at a fuel dump in the jungle beside the Anwek River near Gasmata. Bombs from all four aircraft hit in the target area, but no result was observed. It was a change from strikes at Rabaul, not to encounter any searchlights or ack-ack. All aircraft had returned to Vivigani airfield by midnight.

The Air Board had been concerned for some time about the loss of aircraft and crews on torpedo attacks for the results obtained. There was also the cost and future of maintaining the torpedo training school at Nowra to be considered. Continued criticism of the torpedo as a tactical weapon had forced Hewitt⁶⁸ to attempt a large-scale torpedo attack, which would either demonstrate or disprove its value.

He planned a night torpedo attack on Simpson Harbour, Rabaul. As a diversionary tactic, Nos 6 and 100 Squadron Beauforts would bomb Rapopo and Vunakanau airfields. A reconnaissance of Simpson Harbour on 8 November revealed that there were '8 cruisers, 14 destroyers and about a dozen merchant ships in the harbour'. Naval observer, Lieutenant Russell Greentree, advised Air Commodore Hewitt against the raid, pointing out that cruisers and destroyers were drawn up in line close to the shore to protect the ships, as if they were expecting a torpedo attack.

Hewitt, however, wanted the strike to go ahead and, after argument, Wing Commander Geoff Nicoll, Commanding Officer 8 Squadron, volunteered to proceed with the strike, but not with the whole squadron, on what was obviously an extremely dicey mission. He asked for two volunteers to go with him to attack the shipping. Squadron Leaders Price and Quinn, the two flight commanders, volunteered. They, together with their crews, departed shortly after midnight, and in 2½ hours the trio reached Rabaul despite the bad weather. To avoid initially the searchlights and the very well-protected entrance to the harbour, the three Beauforts, in a line astern with Nicoll leading, dived in over Talili Bay at full speed into Simpson Harbour. The outline of the harbour was clear. Light from the half moon was reflected from the open, smoking volcano cones of Vulcan and Matupi, as they headed towards the Toboi wharf area.

The appearance of the Beauforts immediately attracted a concentration of searchlights from all directions, and a heavy barrage of flak quickly followed. Diving to attack, they twisted and turned in an endeavour to avoid the shells bursting beside them. The individual outlines of the ships became perceptibly clearer, as the Beauforts held a level course at about 100 feet above the water. Light ack-ack from the ships and shore exploded into action with a hail of tracer, as they drew closer to their targets drawn up along the shoreline.

Geoff Nicoll, down to 20 feet above the water, eluded the searchlights, and launched his torpedo on a tanker at close range in the northern area of the harbour. The torpedo hit something, but they were so busy evading the ack-ack, the crew did not observe the result. Owen Price in A9-247, following next in line, launched his torpedo with extreme daring into the middle of the line of cruisers, while caught in a blaze of searchlights and flying through a tremendous barrage of ack-ack. An explosion indicated the torpedo had hit its target, but, as Price twisted away from the cruisers at point blank range, the plane was blown to pieces.

Quinn then made his attack, weaving and turning as Greentree guided him into the southern end of the harbour towards a cruiser off Keravia Bay. He dropped his

torpedo while blinded by searchlights and missed the target. In the confusion, he turned back into the line of ack-ack fire. So thick and close was the flak that the aircraft was severely bounced and filled with cordite fumes. Amazingly, Nicoll and Quinn and their crews escaped destruction, and climbed out of the harbour around Tawui Point. Both crews returned to base unhurt to make a safe landing, but brought with them the smell of cordite, from the battle zone, impregnated in their clothing.

A reconnaissance flight next morning confirmed that a cruiser and another vessel had been damaged in the attack. At the same time that the torpedo action took place, the 6 and 100 Squadron bombers had successfully bombed Vunakanau airfield and Rapopo airfield, about 10 miles to the east of Vunakanau, and had started fires, which were observed by Quinn and Nicoll as they returned to base. These two pilots involved in the torpedo attack were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Lieutenant Greentree was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Later, Squadron Leader Owen Price was recommended for an award of the Victoria Cross, but nothing came of it.⁶⁹

Another night strike was called on 9 November. Eight crews were briefed in the 100 Squadron Operations Room in the usual way. Numerous conversations ceased when the Intelligence Officer called for attention. The operation may have been one arising from a report from those heroes, the coastwatchers in New Britain, who gave aircraft, shipping or other enemy activities. In this case, however, it was based on photo reconnaissance of fuel and oil dumps, and aircraft dispersal bays at Vunakanau. Maps of the target area were already on the wall, with heavy and light ack-ack positions marked. Radio call signs and operating frequencies were given, and navigators studied their charts and calculated a compass bearing from base to target. Finally, the meteorologist gave the probable weather conditions for the route to the target and over the target area. On this strike, the flight departed shortly after midnight.

On reaching 12 000 feet, the aircraft were above the clouds, in full moonlight and free from lightning, which had been flashing in all directions. By 0240K, the bad weather cleared completely in the vicinity of the target. The strike, carried out at between 8000 and 12 000 feet, was remarkably accurate. Seven of the 100 Squadron Beauforts dropped 26 out of 28 bombs in the target area. Nos 6 and 8 Squadrons' aircraft were also bombing in the same area with similar results. John Baker of 100 Squadron describes his role in the strike:

The intense barrage of anti-aircraft shelling, and groping beams of the many crisscrossing searchlights made identification of the intended target difficult, so we released our bombs on the secondary target, the Tobera airstrip. Taking violent evasive action between 11 000 and 8000 feet, we turned about, but were unable to observe the result. On the way home, Stan Harris, the turret gunner, reported a fighter making a pass at us, but we lost him in the clouds. By the time we were within 80 miles of Kiriwina, we were still in cloud, and

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

relying on instruments and compass. It was Keith McKay's radar bearings on landfalls and on the radar beacon that eventually brought us down safely onto the strip at Kiriwina.

This was the heaviest bombing raid that the RAAF had carried out up to that time. All planes had landed back at Vivigani by 0410K, except Baker's crew in A9-315, which landed at Kiriwina because of shortage of fuel. Then, on the following night, Gordon Bland, Laurie Glenn and Dave Hitchins, with their crews, repeated the bombing of Vunakanau and dropped all bombs in the target area.

On 12 November, 11 more aircrew moved from Gurney to Vivigani by air. Squadron Leader Dick Thompson and crew and Squadron Leader Herb Plenty and his crew, who had arrived at Gurney a few days earlier, also moved to Vivigani. Dick Thompson had rejoined the squadron for another tour of operations and Herb Plenty, who had earned a DFC while flying in 2 Squadron, had been posted to 100 Squadron. Herb was a very experienced pilot, known as one of the 'early birds' (flying before the outbreak of World War II).

When taking off from Gurney, Flight Sergeant Ron Caffin narrowly avoided a serious accident. Just as he was airborne in A9-187, the starboard motor cut out and he was forced to re-land. By that time he was well down the runway and heading for a group of natives working at the end of the airstrip. To avoid hitting them he ground-looped the aircraft, which ran off the strip, causing a considerable amount of damage. The crew members were unhurt.

Meanwhile, 44 maintenance staff, together with two barracks officers and 32 support staff, travelled to Goodenough on board the Liberty ship *George S. Boutwell* without incident.

Vunakanau airfield, which was easily identified as an all-weather air strip 1100 feet above sea level, received attention again on the night of Saturday 13 November. Six of 100 Squadron's aircraft bombed the airfield's dispersal bays successfully. All bombs landed in the target area resulting in a large fire being observed. Vunakanau was always viewed as an alternate target when prevailing weather conditions prevented raids on Lakunai or Tobera. Lakunai was the main airfield right on the edge of Simpson Harbour and by far the most heavily defended. Tobera was the fighter airstrip and a regular target, while Keravat on the eastern seaboard and Rapopo on the western side of Blanche Bay were of lesser importance.

On 14 November, Air Commodore Hewitt ordered a combined Beaufort squadrons strike on Simpson Harbour. Both 6 and 100 Squadrons sent ten bombers each, and 8 Squadron sent seven bombers and five torpedo Beauforts. Squadron Leader Thompson, in A9-213 was intercepted by fighters, and had to jettison his bombload. He took violent evasive action while fighters attacked, and the crew fought back for some agonising 20 minutes. Upon striking a severe storm, and being low on fuel, A9-213 diverted to Kiriwina. Meanwhile, A9-321, with Flying Officer Warden and

crew, had engine trouble and was forced to return to base, along with a plane from 6 Squadron.



Map – Rabaul Airfields

Over the target area, numerous searchlights illuminated most of the Beauforts, resulting in concentrated and close bursts of ack-ack, as they made their bombing runs. Some were attacking shipping in the harbour, while others bombed the western and north-western foreshores, starting a fire. Flight Lieutenant Cliff Tuttleby of 100 Squadron, in A9-211, found the glare from the searchlights disconcerting and tried rapidly altering altitude, but the searchlights were always locked onto him, together with very close ack-ack. Boyd O'Brien of 100 Squadron in the turret of A9-190, which had also been caught in the searchlights, reported:

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

We dropped our bombs while medium and heavy ack-ack peppered the sky from 10 000 to 20 000 feet. Rows and rows of searchlights groped the sky for us. On our way home a Nip fighter attacked us. He had his lights on for some unknown reason and we saw him. I let him have a burst but did not claim a hit.

Flight Sergeant Ron Caffin of 100 Squadron, in A9-432, had a particularly torrid time when suddenly lit up by two searchlight beams (an indication that the Japanese were probably using radar). Then perhaps as many as 40 searchlights locked onto the aircraft for at least four minutes. During that time, which to the crew seemed like an eternity, the aircraft was blasted with ack-ack. Shrapnel hit the windshield in front of the pilot leaving a jagged hole, which allowed a strong wind to pervade the whole aircraft. In the melee, Colin Newberry recalls losing his powerful torch down the flare chute, as the aircraft shook and bucked with each near miss. Remarkably, there was no direct hit, but then, all good flyers are entitled to some good fortune.

Flying Officer Titus Oates of 6 Squadron in A9-390 made a daring dive-bombing attack on an 8000 ton ship through intense ack-ack, while his turret gunner, Arthur Cane, fired an accurate burst into the nearest searchlight to put it out of commission. Two of Oates' four bombs entered the water beside the vessel, while the next two struck and penetrated the ship, resulting in dense smoke pouring out of the stern section. Flying Officer Norm Lennon of 6 Squadron also scored a direct hit on another merchant vessel. Later that night, five torpedo Beauforts from 8 Squadron attacked shipping in the harbour, but results were not observed. A9-217 failed to return from the torpedo attack.⁷⁰

Aircrew generally adjusted to living dangerously, almost becoming fatalistic with the attitude that 'whatever will be, will be'. It was necessary to be like that, for each member of the crew had his tasks to perform and had to have a clear head and a steady hand. Together they had to overcome fear, although they did not dwell on the subject. No civilian could really understand the close bonding of a bomber crew on active service. They became accustomed to each other's idiosyncrasies. They lived together, ate together and drank together. They even knew the smell of each other's sweat. They instinctively knew how each other would react in any situation, and it was that closeness in danger and adversity that welded them as a crew into a single entity in operations. Even the apparent disadvantage of mixed crews, having officers and NCOs, did not divide the aircrew bonding. Each crew member accepted and respected each other in much the same manner as mature siblings accept and respect each other.

The intensity of the Beaufort bombing raids continued. Air Commodore Hewitt ordered a repeat raid on the Lakunai airfield dispersal area. All three Beaufort squadrons took off in the very early hours of 17 November and dropped their bombs across the airstrip and in the target area, which was almost on the well-defended foreshores of Simpson Harbour. A9-429, flown by Jim Birt, developed engine trouble

on the return trip but landed safely at Vivigani. A9-427, flown by Chas Walsh, also became unserviceable and Walsh was forced to land at Kiriwina.

Later that same day, Ray Smith and his crew in A9-189 carried out a reconnaissance in Area 'B' to within sight of the New Britain coastline. On the return leg of the search, the turret gunner, Alan Overland, was aghast when the turret guns fired accidentally.⁷¹ The starboard tailplane, including the elevator trim tab, was damaged, and the hydraulics system was ruptured. With considerable difficulty, the pilot gained control of the aircraft, while navigator John Ryan gave him a course to steer to Woodlark Island airfield. Ray Smith continues:

The rudder and elevator control wires, which were under tension, ended up as spaghetti in my cockpit. What was worse was that, unbeknown to me, the hydraulic line to the retractable tail wheel had also been cut allowing the oil to bleed out, thus preventing me from opening the bomb doors and getting rid of the bombload. Fortunately I was able to steer the aircraft by using the motors and use the trim tabs to make a bellylanding without exploding the bombs.

By this time Air Commodore Hewitt's ordering of the torpedo attack, in which Squadron Leader Owen Price and crew had perished, and his rancour with Wing Commander Nicoll and other senior officers was brought to notice. Air Commodore Hewitt, OBE, returned to his former position of Director of Intelligence, and Air Commodore F.W.F. Lukis, CBE, took over the position of Air Officer Commanding No 9 Operational Group.

Further afield, news came at this time that the Americans had taken Tarawa Island in the Gilbert Island Group after bitter fighting. Because of the ongoing attacks on Rabaul, Admiral Koga, who had not been able to give air support in defence of Truk, had again not been able to help at Tarawa Island. The Japanese at Tarawa were left to their fate. When 5000 US Marines attempted to land, following a supporting naval pounding of the island, they met fierce opposition from some 3500 well-entrenched enemy soldiers. When the battle came to an end, the Americans had lost 760 killed and 2000 wounded. Out of the whole Japanese garrison, only 17 soldiers and a group of Korean labourers survived.

When it was learned that the Japanese were expecting a landing at Gasmata and had moved reinforcements there, General MacArthur decided instead to capture Arawe to the west of Gasmata on New Britain. Meanwhile air raids on Gasmata continued. In the early hours of 23 November, four crews from 100 Squadron raided a supply dump beside a bridge over the Anwek River, Gasmata. All crews reported that bombs were dropped in the target area without incident, but, apart from clouds of dust from the exploding bombs, no resulting damage was observed.

On 25 November, the remnants of 100 Squadron left Milne Bay by Liberty ship for Goodenough Island. Flight Lieutenants Paine, Lyle and Padre Debenham, and Flying

Officer Gilmore, accompanied by 218 airmen, arrived safely after the 17-hour voyage, which was without incident, except that it rained incessantly. The total strength of the squadron at that time was 45 officers and 386 airmen. During the month there had been considerable changes to the squadron personnel. There were 25 officers and 79 airmen posted to the squadron, and 19 officers, including the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Ivor Roberts, and 32 airmen in postings away from the squadron.

Padre Debenham thought it appropriate that the Beaufort squadrons should celebrate being united by participating in an open-air ecumenical church service. The new Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader R.H. 'Dick' Thompson, agreed, together with Wing Commander C.T. Hannah of 6 Squadron and Squadron Leader N.T. Quinn of 8 Squadron. On Sunday 28 November, all troops and Papuans were invited to congregate out in front of the palm-thatched Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul at Dogura. It was a large gathering that participated in a simple reverent service, which featured a sermon on 'Peter, the Rock', the permanence of the Christian faith.

To the reverent and irreverent alike, the harmonious singing of the Papuan choir was much appreciated. Although the Padre gave the outward appearance of being unpretentious, when he spoke he had a charisma that made one listen. For at least a little while, one's attention was tuned to a higher level, giving emphasis to the saying that 'man does not live by bread alone'.

Padre Debenham introduced a Parish newspaper called *Goodenough Guts*. The paper gave the latest news of the Beaufort squadrons' activities, reported newcomers and those posted. Results of cricket or football matches with the other squadrons were reported and chess and card evening competitions received a mention. A review and critique of squadron concert nights were to be taken with a grain of salt, and limerick competitions were sometimes censored before going to press. The book review section was a popular column with recommended works by local authors, such as, *The Return of Mandrake*, an amusing story by Herb Plenty of 100 Squadron about one of his wireless/air gunners, or *I'm Waiting for the Ship that Never Goes South*, a wistful poem by Allan Easter, also of 100 Squadron.

From time to time changes to the topography of the area were reported: 'The new road from 100 Squadron to Rattlesnake Ravine is to be called Corrugation Drive'. The paper was a very real morale booster, and at least 250 copies of each publication were run off on an old hand-operated Gestetner machine to meet the demand. Padre Smith, 'Spider' Craig, Leo Tyrrell and other 100 Squadron helpers compiled the articles, cut the stencils and operated the Gestetner.

GOODENOUGH GUTS

SQUADRON PARISH PAPER

Vol. 1. No. 1. Monday, February 22, 1944

CHURCH NOTES:

Attendances at services are growing larger each week. The series of addresses, "False Foundations" in which the padre has dealt with ideas and practices which have been blots on our social system has provoked a healthy discussion among the nightly frequenters of "Hallakajah Hut" at Amen Corner.

By the way, there's generally a cup of tea and a biscuit on tap at the Hut, so drop in when passing. The P.C. is providing an urn and a few odds and ends which will enable us to cope with a larger number.

I am now providing Church of England Services for all units on the island and cannot always be at the Hut personally, but there's always someone in attendance to do the honours.

P.C. members are provided for by a celebration of Mass each Sunday at 0630 hrs.

SOCIAL

A very enjoyable card and chess evening was held in the Airman's Rec. Room on Friday night. Thanks to the Messing Officers, a pleasant aroma of cigar smoke pervaded the atmosphere, in which 52 players, including members of 6 Squadron, battled for points in a 500 Tournament.

100 Squadron carried off all the prizes, including the Pecky, L.A.C. Roy Smith, with 5420 points, won from L.A.C. Walters, C., who scored 4800. L.A.C. Pat Dabner collected the Wooden Spoon when he landed in a card of 230 points. A special prize for the best score obtained by 6 Squadron player was won by L.A.C. Stewart, N., with 3780 points.

At Chess, 6 Squadron's Cpl. Simpson (Capt) P/Ogt. Stannard, L.A.C. Teggsall and L.A.C. Miller defeated our quartette, Cpl. Mills (Capt) P/O McLaughlin, L.A.C. Puttens and L.A.C. Peters by 6 matches to nil.

Cheer up, 100 Squadron! You can't do the major share of the operational work in the area and win at Chess every time!

All who partook of the supper of biscuits and cocoa were loud in their praises of the 'Brew' turned on by L.A.C. ("Darky") Roberts. L.A.C. Craig and P/Ogt. Leo Tyrrell did a great

PERSONAL

Padre Smith is in SMO, having 'cracked it for a touch' We wish him a speedy recovery.

Popular Johnny Lewides, our Hill-Billy star, has been posted. How we will miss him and his uke.

Another first-class entertainer, in the person of Laurie Le has been collecting autographs on that pale blue piece of paper, but he has only gone next door to 77 Our Football team will miss his accurate kicking.

P/O's Ray Smith and Harry Lazarus, Ken Overland and Bill Davidson had returned to this land of the vanquished cork-sore after sampling the hardships of life in war-stricken Australia. Personnel must be prepared to 'rough it' when they return home. It's a common spectacle to see people forced to drink whisky out of beer glasses, we are informed.

A Bridge and Backgammon Tournament will be held on Monday night Feb. 21st, at 1930 hrs.

SCIENTIFIED RESEARCH

Personnel should not sample food plants which are said to be 'goodies for kai-kai' by the natives. There is an officer in the squad who acts as Official Taster of such commodities.

AGENT COLUMN

A lonely officer with a name famous in the history of survival would like a pen-friend. Would some kind airman please oblige!

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"Dee". No, Ironsides is not his correct name.

Goodenough Guts

A news bulletin introduced by Padre Debenham

December opened up with a strike on fuel and ammunition dumps in the Amgen River area, near Lindenhafen, which seemed to indicate that the month was going to be a very busy one for the squadron. The Amgen is one of many short rivers on New Britain, flowing down from the volcanic range of mountains, and one of the two, which flow into the sea near Gasmata. Six aircraft from each of 100 and 6 Squadrons

took off in the late evening to fly individually almost due north to the target area. In very turbulent flying conditions with low cloud, and the target area hidden in jungle reaching to the river's banks, only three crews found the target. This was the result of some very fine navigating and map reading by the respective 100 Squadron navigators, John McKay in A9-427, Max Warren in A9-429 and Ray King in A9-432, who then bombed the lightly defended target, while the other crews found alternate targets to bomb. The thick jungle swallowed the bombs, muting any explosions, and prevented any resulting fires from being observed. The only problem encountered was A9-371 becoming unserviceable, which John Baker nursed back to base.

The Beaufort squadrons were united again in attacking Rabaul on the night of 4 December. While 6 and 100 Squadrons were to bomb Lakunai airfield, 8 Squadron would be attacking shipping in Simpson Harbour with torpedoes. In threatening weather, 11 aircraft from 100 Squadron were airborne and on their way individually by 1830K, and 10 from 6 Squadron followed shortly afterwards. A number of crews, including three from 100 Squadron, encountered a severe weather front, which caused them to abort the flight and return to base. The attacking Beauforts dropped rod extension, general purpose, bombs from between 8000 and 10 000 feet, and all recorded hits in the aircraft dispersal areas, which started fires. All bomber aircraft returned without incident except A9-315, with Tony Warden and crew, which experienced engine trouble on the return trip and was forced to land at Kiriwina.

Meantime, Squadron Leader Quinn led six torpedo-carrying Beauforts from 8 Squadron in formation to attack an enemy convoy approaching Simpson Harbour. While flying on the starboard side of Squadron Leader Quinn, Ralph Finlay and crew made a successful attack on a ship of about 7000 tons. Quinn's Beaufort, however, was hit and forced to ditch heavily in the harbour. The Japanese captured two of the crew,⁷² while the other two crew members perished. This torpedo attack was the last one in which the Beaufort fraternity was engaged.

With the Allies' planning for a landing in south-western New Britain well advanced, it was not surprising that Air Commodores Lukis, Hewitt and Boyce (RAF) were calling at Goodenough Island on 6 December. They spoke to the squadron commanders about their supporting role in harassing the enemy airfields within range of the proposed landing areas. Shortly after 1900K that same night, 10 aircraft from 100 Squadron were joined by Beauforts from 6 and 8 Squadrons to fly beyond Rabaul and across Saint George's Channel to raid Borpop airfield on the other side of New Ireland. No searchlights were displayed and only light ack-ack from the enemy 13.2 mm guns was encountered. The bombloads on most of the Beauforts comprised general purpose (GP) 500 and 250 pound bombs with rod extensions and with instant fuzing. Other aircraft carried, in addition to the GP bombs, some incendiary and fragmentation bombs. These armaments were designed to start fires, and two large fires in the Borpop aircraft dispersal area were well alight as the Beauforts left the area.

When a coastwatcher reported that a Japanese supply submarine was on the surface in a well-protected bay near Gasmata, Dick Thompson, Herb Plenty and Cliff Tuttleby took off to find it on 10 December. Tuttleby and his crew in A9-347 found it silhouetted on the dull olive-grey water close into the shore at map reference 06° 48' S 150° 25' E, shortly after sunset. Making a dive-bombing attack, Tuttleby released a stick of six bombs (total weight 2000 pounds) at a low level. Navigator, Colin Bourke, saw the bombs hit and explode underwater about 20 feet from the submarine as it crash-dived. In the meantime the other two aircraft had arrived on the scene. They all circled the area and watched a large oil patch spread across the water, together with debris. Tuttleby and his crew were credited with its destruction.

At about that time, Lieutenant General George Kenney, Commander of the Fifth Air Force, wrote to the editor of *Wings*, the RAAF Association magazine. In his letter dated 4 December 1943, he said he would like to express to the officers and men of the RAAF his pride in and appreciation of their efforts:

In combat you have been consistently aggressive and your achievements have had a pronounced effect on the results gained by our Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area.

At Buna, at Rabaul, in the battle of the Bismarck Sea, in the slashing of the enemy's barge supply lines, and in the important field of long-range reconnaissance your forces have been tenacious in attack and persistent in effort.

Perhaps no other element of modern warfare requires the precision teamwork which is essential to the success of the air arm. That is especially true in this theatre where airpower must, of necessity, be the predominant offensive weapon. It is even more true in an area where the combined force is comprised of officers and men of two nations.

In the twenty months Australian and American flyers have been waging war together, the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation, both among air and ground components, has been one of the outstanding characteristics of our association.

I am proud to have the Royal Australian Air Force as an integral part of the Allied Air Forces.

I confidently look forward to the day the spectacular results achieved at Wewak and Rabaul will be overshadowed by the even more conclusive defeats our concerted airpower will inflict on the Japanese in our drive to victory.

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED AIR FORCES
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

December 4, 1943

The Editor,
"Wings,"
St. Kilda Road,
Melbourne. C.I.

I would like to express to the officers and men of the Royal Australian Air Force my pride in and appreciation of their efforts.

In combat you have been consistently aggressive and your achievements have had a pronounced effect on the results gained by our Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area.

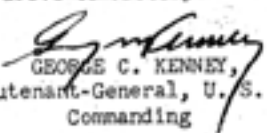
At Buna, at Rabaul, in the battle of the Bismarck Sea, in the slashing of the enemy's barge supply lines, and in the important field of long-range reconnaissance your forces have been tenacious in attack and persistent in effort.

Perhaps no other element of modern warfare requires the precision teamwork which is essential to the success of the air arm. That is especially true in this theatre where airpower must, of necessity, be the predominant offensive weapon. It is even more true in an area where the combined force is comprised of officers and men of two nations.

In the twenty months Australian and American flyers have been waging war together, the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation, both among air and ground components, has been one of the outstanding characteristics of our association.

I am proud to have the Royal Australian Air Force as an integral part of the Allied Air Forces.

I confidently look forward to the day the spectacular results achieved at Wewak and Rabaul will be overshadowed by the even more conclusive defeats our concerted airpower will inflict on the Japanese in our drive to victory.


GEORGE C. KENNEY,
Lieutenant-General, U. S. A.
Commanding

**Lieutenant General Kenney's letter to *Wings*
(the RAAF Association Magazine)**

The Beauforts continued their raids on Rabaul at night, while American fighters confronted Japanese fighters over Rabaul in daylight. On 14 December, 100 Squadron sent 11 Beaufort crews to bomb Lakunai aircraft dispersal areas again. It was a maximum effort by all Beauforts with 6 and 8 Squadrons bringing the total number

committed to 30. They faced the usual searchlights and ack-ack, but unloaded their bombs accurately to start several large fires. As 100 Squadron returned at 0200K, an unobserved enemy aircraft followed them. During the landing period, the enemy plane bombed and strafed the airstrip area. A9-472 was hit by the close blast of a bomb, which shattered all the perspex and tore the wings to pieces, just as it had been taxied to its dispersal bay.⁷³

Tony Booth, fitter 2E (100 Squadron), takes up the story:

Our duty crew was in attendance that night and one member had just finished closing down and was covering his aircraft in its dispersal bay, when there was a huge orange flash nearby. When our truck took us to the next bay, where my plane, A9-472, had been parking, we found both tyres punctured and holes all over the fuselage with oil everywhere. The aircraft was like a colander. The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Barry Fuller, was climbing from the cockpit in a dazed state, the two wireless/air gunners were on the ground, one of them with a very bad leg wound.⁷⁴ On opening the front underneath, we found the navigator, Flying Officer Wilf Jackson, dead at his desk.

The following night saw 100 Squadron setting off to attack the Vunakanau airstrip and dispersal bays with 10 Beauforts. Five of the crews did not reach the target due to appalling weather conditions. A tropical front whipped up strong swirling winds and clouds that reduced the visibility to instrument flying. Three crews managed to reach and bomb the target area, but did not see any result. Herb Plenty and crew in A9-427 diverted from the planned route and bombed Gasmata without seeing any result.

Tony Warden and crew in A9-437 landed at Kiriwina, while the others returned to Vivigani, except A9-211. All crews reported hazardous flying conditions due to the atrocious weather conditions. Next morning A9-211 was reported missing on operations. The crew, missing believed killed, comprised John Kenny, pilot, Thomas Burrowes, navigator, and Arthur Davies and Murray Fairbairn, wireless/air gunners.

In the meantime, the American squadrons had been repeatedly bombing Arawe on the south of New Britain across the channel from Finschhafen. Then, on 15 December, the Americans went ashore and secured a beachhead, but not without sustaining significant casualties. Another landing was made on nearby Pilelo Island, and held after wiping out the Japanese defenders. Included in the landing were the men of No 335 Radar Station, who then set about finding a suitable place to establish their station on the island.

The weather had improved by 19 December when 10 crews participated in another early morning raid on the Anwek River supply dumps. Three of the aircrews were recent arrivals to 100 Squadron. In A9-418 was Tony Treverton with his crew. A9-437 had Kev Nightingale and crew and Colin Macnaughtan and crew were in

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

A9-474. The bombing into the passive green jungle was accurate, with glimpses of fires being sighted. All aircraft returned safely to base.

This was the last bombing mission for the year, and 100 Squadron then reverted to reconnaissance in specific areas of interest, but there were also some convoy patrols carried out, which were mainly to and from Buna. New crews engaged in these patrols included Peter Potts and crew, Allan Ditchburn and crew, and John Sterndale and crew.

The first exercise for new aircrews to 100 Squadron was to make a familiarisation flight around the area. George Lewis, navigator for Ditchburn, reports on his first flight out of Vivigani in A9-371:

While making a landing at Kiriwina, we burst a tyre on the port wheel. The tail wheel also locked in the crosswise position and speared us into the bank of coral at the side of the strip. That meant we had to spend the night there until a new prop, etc. arrived. During the night we copped a bombing raid. The Japs were evidently targeting the stores depot adjacent to our tent! The American anti-aircraft guns went into action and there was shrapnel going everywhere. We needed our tin hats, but they were still in the 'kite'. We returned to Vivigani next day.

Just before dawn on 20 December, the air-raid siren sounded at Vivigani as searchlights came on and the anti-aircraft guns opened up. Fitter 2E Neil Phelan recalls that early morning raid:

Fifteen aircraft came over to drop about 200 small bombs, which killed one airman and injured seven others. I was on duty down at the strip and the bombs dropped not so very far from where I was working on the 100 Squadron aircraft, but you couldn't hear them coming down. Kiriwina was also raided at the same time and you could see the ack-ack bursting in the air.

Christmas Day 1943 at Goodenough Island was celebrated in fine weather. No doubt those rostered for duty were envious of the others being able to relax in the cool water of the nearby pool, while others enjoyed a game of chess in a shady nook. Peter Potts and crew, for instance, were airborne at 0634K in A9-432 for a sea patrol. 'Tiny' Sterndale and crew were rostered to relieve them at 1027K and Flying Officer Fuller, with his new crew, were to complete the patrol from 1425 to 1825K. Allan Ditchburn and crew were also engaged in a reconnaissance over the Solomon Sea, south of Jacquinet Bay. Beer had been flown in from Port Moresby and Townsville, as the opportunity arose over the past two months, and saved for Christmas. All received a bottle of beer and there was enough to share with 75 Squadron across the creek. There was also a 'Comforts Fund' parcel for every one, which included a slice

of Christmas cake. There was no flying on Boxing Day and the main attraction was a cricket match being played at the end of the airstrip.

In operations for the past 12 months, 100 Squadron had carried out 1806 sorties, the majority of which were convoy or reconnaissance patrols with an average of 17 serviceable aircraft. This entailed a total flying time of 7094 hours. The number of strikes against the enemy for 1943 totalled 324, of which 298 were by bombing and 26 by torpedo attack. More than half the bombing sorties were made in the last four months of the year. November and December, in particular, showed a marked increase in strikes—120 strikes were carried out, when 65 tons of bombs were dropped during those two months. The cost to the squadron in 1943 was 45 aircrew members killed, or missing believed killed, and three wounded, together with the loss of 15 aircraft. The Operations Room staff also claimed a world record for 100 Squadron, for any 30 days flying hours by any one squadron. From 20 August to 19 September inclusive, 1615 hours were flown to cover approximately 260 000 miles on 438 sorties. As at that time the squadron was short of aircrews, the average flying hours per crew for the 30 days was 80 hours.

This record superseded the previous 31 days record claimed for July/August. Other statistics revealed that:

Aircraft of 100 Squadron were airborne for 9,358 hours during 1943. In that time they made 3,406 flights and covered approximately one and a half million miles. Since the first detachment of aircraft from the squadron arrived at Milne Bay on 6 September 1942, a total of 10,473 hours had been flown in the SWPA on sorties.

Again, as in the previous month, there were a number of postings from 100 Squadron, including Chas Walsh and crew, and Jim Birt and crew. The strength of the squadron at the end of the year was 60 officers and 342 other ranks.

There was no flying on New Year's Day 1944 and the quietness and lack of any organised activity was a welcome change. The opportunity was taken by many to write letters to loved ones, while others looked out over the tranquil sea and perhaps dreamed of their folk back home. Others couldn't sit still, so wandered across the creek to one of the other squadrons to meet a mate or two from their training days.

For the more diligent, it was time to do the laundry by boiling their sweat-stained clothes in a cut-down 44-gallon drum with a petrol fire under it. The petrol fire was an ingenious device of the blowtorch principle. An elevated tin of petrol gravity fed a length of copper tubing with the end forming a coil. The outlet at the end of the coiled tubing was almost sealed to form a fine jet for petrol to escape. When lit, the squirt of petrol from the jet heated the coil, which in turn vapourised the petrol to produce a strong blue flame. Because of the noise accompanying the process, the device was called a 'Choofer'.



In Flight – Towards the Target

Beauforts were ordered out in strength on Sunday night 2 January to strike at Lakunai dispersal areas. No 100 Squadron put 12 of 14 aircraft in the air after two were declared unserviceable. No 6 Squadron and 8 Squadron, which had now converted from torpedo carriers to bombers, brought the total attacking bomber force to 35. Each crew was to attack individually, with bombloads comprising 500 and 250 pound GP bombs with rod extension fuzing and 250 pound incendiary bombs with fragmentation attached. Between 2124K and 2210K, ten of 100 Squadron Beauforts reached the target after flying through a series of storms. Flying at varying heights from 9000 to 13 000 feet they experienced the usual numerous probing searchlights, accompanied by both heavy and light ack-ack. The pilots endeavoured to fly straight and level as the navigators, prone on the floor of the aircraft, gave instructions, 'steady ... left ... steady ... steady ... bombs away'. The turret gunners, peering into the darkness, sighed with relief as the bombs dropped, while the wireless operators continued to scan the radar screen for a telltale blip of enemy aircraft. The bombing was accurate, causing large fires accompanied by explosions of black smoke mushrooming and curling skyward. Several of the crews also reported a ship on fire off Sulphur Creek.

A number of crews, including two from 100 Squadron, diverted from the planned target because of the adverse weather. The two from 100 Squadron bombed enemy settlements on Brown Island and at Cape Kwoi. All told, 32 Beauforts from the three squadrons hit the nominated target area with 32 tons of bombs. Unfortunately, one

No 8 Squadron Beaufort, piloted by Flying Officer Goodwin, was caught in a cone of searchlights and was shot down.

On the following Tuesday, Air Commodore Lukis called for another joint Beaufort effort to bomb Vunakanau, in the centre of the Gazelle Peninsula, and Rapopo airfield to the west of Rabaul. Ten crews from 100 Squadron were allocated to strike at Rapopo. They were airborne by 1830K but, within an hour, the aircraft were engulfed, yet again, in a violent tropical storm, forcing three crews to return. Another aircraft, endeavouring to battle the turbulent weather, could not reach the target and bombed Cape Saint George. Six crews reached the target area to drop their bombs, but clouds and rain obscured any chance of observing the result.

On the return trip, Ray Smith and crew had a motor fail in A9-433. As the aircraft lost height, it entered cumulous cloud, where it was caught in a terrific vertical current which threw the aircraft onto its back, and then into a steep dive. By the time the pilot had eventually gained some control of the Beaufort, it had spiralled down thousands of feet and the other motor had stopped. As Ray pulled the aircraft into level flight, the port motor started and then the other one restarted. The crisis was over.

During what had seemed an eternity the wireless operator, Bill Davidson, sent out a distress call, while he clung to his desk with his fingers and used his thumb on the morse key as the plane spiralled down. There was also some drama when A9-394, with Geoff Castleden and crew, ran short of fuel and were forced to land at Kiriwina to refuel.

At the debriefing session in the Operations Room,⁷⁵ the crews remarked that the weather conditions were the worst that they had experienced since the night raids on Rabaul began. Bill Davidson was pleased to find that his message had been logged and his position fixed, so that, if the Beaufort had gone into the sea, a rescue crew would have known where to look for survivors. Padre Debenham then treated the returning crews to coffee and toast, as they recounted the night's events. Toast with coffee, for aircrews returning from sorties, was an innovation introduced by Squadron Leader Roberts shortly after he became the Commanding Officer.

Discussion on the day's events carried over into the Officers Mess that night. Herb Plenty, DFC, O/C 'B' Flight, and Cliff Tuttleby, O/C 'A' Flight, who were always trying to upstage each other, argued about the efficiency of a Beaufort on one motor.

At his first opportunity a few days later, Herb Plenty 'shot up' the airstrip on one motor, banked and turned again to make a classical three-point landing. Incidentally, while Herb Plenty was indeed a meticulous and brilliant flyer, he was not particularly popular with the maintenance crews. When the squadron had a mission planned for the next morning, the maintenance crews would have the planes ready that evening. Herb would regularly decide to test the aircraft he was to fly next morning when the ground crew had finished work for the day and were about to leave the airstrip.

Consequently, they would have to wait for the return of the plane to its dispersal bay.

Not to be outdone by Herb's one-motor performance, Cliff Tuttleby also put on a one-motor spectacle by thoroughly 'shooting up' the campsite. He had barely landed when Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Roberts, called him in for a reprimand, which was heard well outside his office!

While the squadron conducted sea patrols and reconnaissance during daylight, the Americans and New Zealanders were carrying out bombing raids on Rabaul with fighter protection. The night bombing continued to be left to the experienced night-flying Beaufort squadrons of 71 Wing. They were out again on 7 January to attack another two of the Rabaul airfields. This time, 100 Squadron's target was the dispersal area at Lakunai, right in the heart of the Rabaul district and, therefore, the most heavily defended. Dick Thompson, flying A9-454, was first in the air at 1815K, followed quickly by nine other aircraft until Ross Geue in A9-427 was airborne at 1822K.

Nine crews successfully arrived over the target area with dozens of searchlights swinging into action accompanied by the ack-ack. Flying between 8000 and 11 000 feet they ignored the hostile welcome as much as possible to unload their lethal cargo, but no fires were observed.

In A9-427, the intercommunication system, which is vital to a successful bombing mission, broke down before reaching the target, and the crew returned to base with their bombs.

The action was repeated on the following night, when nine Beauforts from 100 Squadron bombed Tobera airfield and dispersal bays. The bombloads included incendiaries and fragmentation bombs, which all hit the target area. Two fires were started south of the airstrip. The larger fire was in the north dispersal area, and a smaller one at the southern end of the dispersal bays.

This raid was the last of the Beaufort night attacks on Rabaul at this time. The targets for 9 Operational Group were then switched to central New Britain, primarily the Gasmata area. The Rabaul area had now become the responsibility of the Americans operating out of the new airfields at Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville.

During the next week, there were a number of changes to the squadron personnel, with postings to and from 100 Squadron. Commanding Officer, Ivor Roberts, was posted to No 1 Embarkation Depot, and Dick Thompson was appointed to command the squadron. Other postings from the squadron included Cliff Tuttleby and crew, Tony Warden and crew, and John Baker and his crew. With the change of command, the strength of 100 Squadron was 56 officers and 327 airmen. There were 27 operational aircrews using 19 aircraft.

The week also carried a full program of reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols for the squadron, which was free from any enemy intervention. Stormy weather, however, continued to plague the patrols. On one convoy patrol, Ross Geue and crew had to assist the convoy to rendezvous with the US Submarine *Gato* by means of Aldis lamp signalling due to the weather closing in. Bad weather also forced Kev Nightingale in A9-227 to abandon a reconnaissance patrol after four hours, and to divert to land at Kiriwina.



Ross Geue and Crew

(L-R: Keith Crooks, Ross Geue, Joe Johnson and Bill Armstrong)

When 100 Squadron was called to make a daylight raid on Lindenhafen Plantation, eight crews were briefed on 17 January. It was known that the plantation was an enemy bivouac area, which also contained several ammunition and fuel dumps. The eight aircraft, led by Dick Thompson, took off at midday at 30 seconds intervals. At the rendezvous point with the other two Beaufort squadrons, the attacking force amounted to 32 aircraft. When the escort fighters arrived, comprising 33 Kittyhawks from 76 and 77 Squadrons, and 8 Spitfires from 79 Squadron, it brought the total number of aircraft to 73, which was the strongest RAAF force yet to attack a selected target. This strike was declared by many of the aircrews as a 'piece of cake'. No-one saw or felt any ack-ack. Most of the bombs, including incendiaries, were seen to hit and explode in the target area although a few burst westward towards the riverbank.

The only casualty was a 6 Squadron aircraft, which lost power in one motor about 10 minutes after take-off and couldn't maintain height. It was A9-387, with Horrie Wade and crew, known to several of the 100 Squadron crews from serving together

earlier in 14 Squadron in Western Australia. Wade ditched in the sea after jettisoning the bombload. The belly of the plane was ripped open in ditching and the life raft release mechanism was jammed, so the crew had to rely on their individual Mae West life preservers and debris from the bomb-bay doors to stay afloat. Tich Grant at the wireless had sent off a distress call together with their position, which enabled an American Catalina to find and rescue them some five hours later.

The same target received attention again from the Beaufort Wing on 21 January. Twelve aircraft from 100 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Plenty, took off an hour earlier than the previous raid. The Kittyhawks and Spitfires provided top cover and the raid went off without incident, with eleven of the 100 Squadron Beauforts dropping bombs on the target area. The bombs in the bomb bay of one Beaufort failed to release during its bombing run, and after repeated attempts the bombs were eventually shaken off into the sea.

The next day, six Beauforts led by Squadron Leader Thompson in A9-454 repeated the exercise together with 6 and 8 Squadrons. This time the crews reported explosions on the northern part of the target area. Unfortunately two of the Kittyhawks were reported missing after the mission. 'Junior' Borbidge in A9-371 carried out a search for five hours that afternoon but failed to find either of them. However, later news came through that both pilots had been found and were rescued from the sea.

Meanwhile, American marines had consolidated Arawe and were making forays into the Cape Gloucester area, which was forcing the Japanese to retreat eastwards in an endeavour to link up with the Japanese airfields and settlements at Talasea and Cape Hoskins. No 9 Operational Group turned its attention to these settlements and mounted an early morning raid on a supply dump area at Cape Hoskins on 24 January.

Herb Plenty, flying A9-427, led eight Beauforts from 100 Squadron in formation over the mountain range, with the escorting fighters patrolling above them. There was no sign of enemy fighters, but the enemy ack-ack batteries were active. On this occasion, the squadron bombing overshot the target. Some fell north of the Talasea Road and nearly all the remainder landed in the sea. The squadron had to take a ribbing from the crews of 6 and 8 Squadrons, who landed bombs on the target and referred to the 100 Squadron raid as a 'fish bash'. The two other squadrons reported rendering the airstrip unserviceable and knocking down the control tower.



No 100 Squadron, Goodenough Island, January 1944

Front Row, L–R: Flight Sergeants White, Osborne, Eggleston, Dubber, ?, ?, Neill, Scheller, Godfrey, Partington, Maugher and ?; Flying Officer Macnaughtan;
Flight Sergeants O’Sullivan and Slingo

Second Row, L–R: Pilot Officers Liddell and Webster; Warrant Officer McKenzie; Flight Sergeant Edwards; Flying Officer Swann; Flight Sergeants Geer, Reid and Armstrong; Flying Officers Scott and Warren; Warrant Officer Mahoney; Flying Officer Treverton; Flight Sergeants ?, Bennewith, Hitchins and Perkins

Third Row, L–R: Flying Officers Spalding and O’Brien; Flight Lieutenant Fitzgerald; Flying Officer McAlpine; Flight Lieutenant Gray; Squadron Leaders Plenty and Thompson (CO); Flight Lieutenants Quinlan and Jilleit; Flight Sergeants Lewis, Hall, Dowell, James, Skinner and King

Fourth Row, L–R: Flight Sergeants Farquhar and Murray; Flying Officer Ingram;
Flight Sergeant Henderson

Fifth Row, L–R: Pilot Officer Reen; Flying Officers Green and Glenn; Flight Sergeants Westphalen, Hattersley, McCann, Garner, Simmons, Hasler and Ditchburn; Warrant Officer Bale; Flight Sergeant Hannaford; Flying Officer Stephen; Flight Sergeants Castleden and Creighton; Flight Lieutenant de Groen

Back Row, L–R: Flight Sergeants Shipway, Bennett, Allen, Wray, Sterndale,
Lazarus and Newberry

Absent: Flight Lieutenant Fuller; Flying Officers Anderson, Davidson, Graetz, Gregory, Hearn, Linton-Smith, McLaren, Overland, Ryan, Smith, Thompson and Tolcher; Pilot Officer Phaff; Warrant Officers Harvey and Mars; Flight Sergeants Borbidge, Caffin, Donald, Foster, Garrett, Grabbe, Gray, Maloney and Pressey

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

No 100 Squadron's commitments during February continued in the same pattern, with convoy patrols, reconnaissance, and intermittent strikes on the enemy in southern and central New Britain. The first strike in the month by the No 9 Group took place on Thursday 3 February. Nine Beauforts from 100 Squadron, led by the CO, participated in an attack on a bivouac at Amgen River. The crews were warned at the briefing that they could expect some concentrated anti-aircraft fire. Reference was made to a raid on Lindenhafen four days earlier, when a number of 22 Squadron Bostons were damaged by enemy fire. One Boston caught fire on being hit and crashed with the loss of the crew.

The strike with the Beauforts, however, went off without incident and all bombs hit the target area, although one of the escorting Kittyhawks was hit by machine-gun fire from the ground and suffered some superficial damage.

The same target received attention again on the following Tuesday and Thursday when 6, 8 and 100 Squadrons made additional massed daylight raids on a camp area at Amgen River. Fighter protection was again provided and some light ack-ack was experienced. Herb Plenty led a flight of nine aircraft on the Tuesday and Dick Thompson led the way on the Thursday in successfully striking the target, while Wing Commander Nicoll of 8 Squadron led the bomber Wing on both occasions.

The target was then switched to a bivouac in the Pora Pora area on 11 and 14 February. This was the beginning of a 'softening up' program preparatory to Allied landings along the north coast from Cape Gloucester, and eventually moving on to capture the airfield at Talasea.

A raid by 26 Beauforts on supply dumps in Wunung Plantation, Talasea, which took place at midmorning next day, was particularly effective. Barry Fuller, flying A9-478, led seven Beauforts to strike at the plantation buildings. There were no intercepting aircraft, the enemy guns were ineffective, and all the buildings were demolished. Nine Beauforts took off, but 'Jock' Green in A9-382 and 'Tiny' Sterndale in A9-474 reported their aircraft unserviceable and returned to base. Sterndale tried again in A9-437 but again was forced to return with an unserviceable plane. A blitz on the same plantation was repeated on 16 February with Dick Thompson leading a flight of nine Beauforts. Again all squadron flights reported good results.

The wet season had threatened to arrive for some time. Suddenly, thunder and lightning hit Goodenough Island with a vengeance, shortly after lights out on 16 February. Gale force winds lashed the island, followed by torrential rain. The campsite was inundated and many of the tents collapsed as the water gushed down the mountain slope. There was bedlam as collapsed tents and contents were abandoned and the fugitives sought shelter in tents still standing. The storm raged on through the night with vivid lightning flashes and crashing thunder. Next morning, the rain eased to reveal roads and bridges washed away.

The maintenance crews, however, rose to the occasion and, before long, temporary bridges and road repairs gave access to the all-weather Vivigani airstrip. At the airstrip, lightning had struck the American Red Cross coffee stall, and it had burned down. As soon as the storm abated, the sun appeared again to bring with it the oppressive heat.

On Friday morning 18 February, 30 Beauforts from 6, 8 and 100 Squadrons of 71 Wing went out in poor weather to attack the Japanese held village of Gavuvu, near Cape Hoskins. Fighters from 77 Squadron accompanied the Wing and the attack was highly successful. Dick Thompson reported, 'The weather was particularly unpleasant and it was a notable performance that the fighters were able to stick by the bombers throughout the strike'. The six Beauforts from 100 Squadron came in from the shoreline and scored direct hits on the village. As far as they could tell there was no ground fire from the enemy. The attack was coordinated with aircraft from 73 Wing so that a total of 75 RAAF aircraft took part. In reporting on the success of the raid, Wing Commander Thompson praised the efforts of the ground crews:

The ground crews were magnificent in attending to their duties, particularly the armourers. In 24 hours the prospective target was altered three times. This involved the removal of all the bombs and their replacement by other types. Their spirit of cheerfulness did not fail those men who worked throughout the night to keep pace with the changing situation.

A repeat raid on Gavuvu was carried out the next night, when Squadron Leader Thompson led nine Beauforts in formation with 2000 pound bombloads. Using parachute flares to light the target, eight of the crews dropped their GP bombs on the village, although one 500 pounder went into the sea. One crew opted to bomb one of the supply dumps at Amgen River.

On returning to Vivigani, one Beaufort, coming to a halt after landing and parking, accidentally dropped a parachute flare from the bomb bay. As the flare fell, it became armed and the delay fuze was activated. Fitter/armourer, Bill Thomas was the nearest. Knowing full well that he had about five seconds before the flare charge exploded, generating a withering heat of thousands of degrees centigrade, he grabbed the flare and ran clear of the aircraft towards a bank of earth. There he pointed the nose of the flare towards the earth and threw it as the ejection charge exploded. The flare casing was hurled into the dispersal bay area as the burning candle brilliantly lit up the area away from the aircraft. Bill was unhurt. For his gallantry and quick thinking he earned warm praise from the aircrew and a Mentioned in Despatches.

On 22 February, 71 Wing attacked Pora Pora camping area in the morning. No 100 Squadron supplied nine Beauforts led by Herb Plenty to drop general purpose and incendiary bombs. All bombs hit the target area damaging the camp and destroying vegetable gardens. The following night Dick Thompson, flying A9-454, and 'Jock'

Green in A9-488 hit Palmal in the Cape Cormorant area. The two Beauforts hit the area, but result was not observed. This was the last of the bombing raids for February.

By this time, the constant bombardment of the Japanese positions in New Britain had given the Allies the upper hand. The Australians had reached as far as the plantations around Wide Bay, where the enemy was entrenched. Meanwhile the 36th Battalion had reached Open Bay on the other side of New Britain, forming the neck of the Gazelle Peninsula. The offensive power of Rabaul had been overturned, and this had been partly due to the efforts of the Beaufort squadrons implementing their part in the *Elkton Plan*.⁷⁶ Their part had been to attack the enemy in western New Britain so as to isolate Rabaul and the Gazelle Peninsula. Another important event on 17 February directly concerned the air power at Rabaul. For months, Truk had been reinforcing Rabaul with aircraft and, when the Americans launched a heavy raid by carrier-borne aircraft on Truk, the Japanese were handicapped by a shortage of aircraft. Consequently a large portion of air power at Rabaul was returned to defend Truk.

Tokyo then ordered the transfer of the remaining aircraft at Rabaul to Hollandia,⁷⁷ leaving Rabaul without air cover! The Japanese policy had changed from aggression to defence, where outlying garrisons were left to fight to the last, to give the strongholds closer to Japan time to prepare their defences for a decisive battle. As part of this defensive plan, Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi with his 18th Army of some 55 000 troops had strengthened his positions in the Hansa Bay and the Wewak area.

Included in the movements of squadron personnel, during the month, were Phil Harrison and crew on posting south, and the arrival of Bill Scott and crew. Altogether, three officers and 49 other ranks left the squadron, and one officer and 31 other ranks arrived. The strength of 100 Squadron at 29 February was 58 officers and 303 other ranks, with 18 serviceable aircraft.

A raid on the north road at Bertha channel, which had been cancelled a week previously because of bad weather, took place on 2 March. It was a combined Beaufort squadrons' effort in 'softening up' the area for a planned American landing. Dick Thompson flying A9-454 led nine aircraft in the morning raid to bomb enemy troops entrenched beside the road. This was followed on 4 March with an evening raid, when Herb Plenty in A9-427 led another nine Beauforts to bomb Hospital Point. The bombs from eight aircraft hit the area, while one crew bombed the Talasea aerodrome.

Next morning A9-480 took off at 0618K on a convoy patrol to assist HMAS *Glenelg* rendezvous with the US Submarine *Bounder*. Unfortunately, the aircraft stalled on becoming airborne and burst into flames when it crashed about two miles south-east of the Vivigani airstrip. Those killed were Peter Potts, Geoff Wiblin, Fred Easton, Jim Hammersley, and an auxiliary gunner, Bernard Duggan. Their bodies were recovered and buried in the American Cemetery at Goodenough Island. A Court of Enquiry,

which was the usual procedure, was convened to determine the cause, which cleared the pilot and maintenance crew of any criticism.

Tony Booth remembers the fatal prang and adds:

Even more devastating for one of Peter's mates was when he visited Peter's mother while on leave a few days later only to find that she had not yet been notified of his death. As the padre told him later, it takes at least two weeks for details to be checked by Air Board before next of kin are advised.



Chess Game, Goodenough Island, February 1944

Standing, L–R: Colin Macnaughtan, Fred Easton*, Peter Potts*, Jim McAlpine,
Les Jilleit, Max Warren, Geoff Liddell, Barry Fuller and Herb Plenty

Seated, L–R: Alan Overland, John Gregory, Syd Anderson*,
'Mandrake' Wynn Webster, Doug Phillips and Ron Flanagan

(* – indicates member later killed in action)

That same evening, the Beaufort fraternity, including seven aircraft from 100 Squadron, raided Gavuvu village in the Cape Hoskins Area with devastating results. What had been left of the village from previous strikes was demolished.

At 0900K on 6 March, another combined Beaufort strike hit Talasea village in support of a landing of American marines on Willaumez Peninsula. During the next few days, while the marines secured the Talasea air field, the Beaufort squadrons pattern-bombed the ammunition and fuel dumps in the Bertha channel, with Dick

Thompson and Herb Plenty taking turns to lead the flights. Light ack-ack was experienced on each occasion without causing casualties, and all bombs hit the target area to start fires.

While the strikes continued, the number of reconnaissance patrols had also increased to ascertain enemy shipping movements. Continual flying began to take its toll on the aircraft, as the ground crews worked around the clock to service and arm them. It was frustrating to aircrew and ground crews alike when an aircraft was apparently ready for take-off, only to find an instrument indicating a fault. It was not a common problem but did happen from time to time. On 9 March, for example, both Gordon Bland in A9-429 and John Pressey in A9-432 found their planes unserviceable, as they were about to depart on patrols.

On 11 March, Barry Fuller flying A9-478 was the flight leader for eight Beauforts to strike at installations in the Kamalgaman anchorage of Jacquinot Bay. It was a combined attack with the other two Beaufort squadrons, designed to strike at sunset. About one hour into the flight, A9-437 flown by Allan Ditchburn had trouble with the port engine running erratically. At times he was lagging the formation and at other times he overtook the flight leader. Allan changed to a fixed propeller pitch without success and had to continually switch the pitch control to maintain position in formation. A9-437 was left behind during the bombing run and had to do an individual approach to the target. The electrical fault causing the propeller pitch problem was also found to extend to the bomb-release switch, which failed to operate for navigator George Lewis.

Eventually Ditchburn dive-bombed the target to release the bombs. All bombs hit the target. George Lewis adds:

We finally set course for home, but struck a fierce electrical storm. Allan's gyro was spinning like mad and the radar gear and IFF were U/S. Then the Yanks fired on us as we passed over Kiriwina. Signalling with the Aldis lamp made no difference and they continued until we were out of range. Meanwhile, with the gyro playing up, I was still giving Allan a course to steer on my bombsight compass by voice. We finally made it back to Vivigani.

The Beauforts repeated the strike on the Kamalgaman anchorage buildings again two days later. Nine aircrews from 100 Squadron participated. No enemy aircraft were encountered, so the Beauforts followed up the bombing with a strafing run. Several of the crews reported smoke rising from the ruins of the largest building, and Allan Linton-Smith in the turret of A9-382 flown by John Gregory reported that he could still see the smoke rising 20 minutes after leaving the target. It was during the strafing that A9-517 from 6 Squadron was shot down. Horrie Wade and crew, who only two months earlier had been rescued after ditching in the sea, perished in this raid. It seemed somehow unfair to see the fickle finger of fate at work—lucky in one instance and damned unlucky the next.

It was almost a full moon in the very early hours of 16 March, when Squadron Leader Herb Plenty and his crew led eight Beauforts over the other side of New Britain to raid the Japanese held village of Obili. As they flew in formation, the planes were silhouetted against the moon. The flight comprised Colin Macnaughtan, newly commissioned 'Junior' Borbidge, Allan Ditchburn, John Pressey, Bill Henderson, Geoff Castleden and 'Jock' Green, and their respective crews. All bombs hit the target causing widespread damage to practically all the buildings. Nos 6 and 8 Squadrons also successfully bombed two other enemy-held villages nearby.

The following night, it was the Commanding Officer's turn to take eight Beaufort crews with him to attack Kalai Plantation in the Wide Bay area south of Rabaul. The target was a large building and campsite. When a severe electrical storm broke over the mountain range, the Beauforts opened up formation and were ordered to make individual bombing runs. The building received thorough attention from the first three crews. Their bombs blew off the roof and set the building on fire. Seeing smoke pouring out of the building, the remaining five crews then concentrated on the enemy camp in among the trees. Trees were uprooted and the ground became littered with debris. All crews returned to land safely by 0300K.

Early morning strikes by the three Beaufort squadrons on plantations where the enemy had established camps continued. On 19 March, Pondo and Toriu Plantations were bombed. Following the bombing of Pondo by the eight Beauforts from 100 Squadron, Tony Treverton in A9-429 dived down to treetop level, despite the ack-ack, to assess the damage while also strafing the area. Treverton described the damage as being 'substantial'. When all aircraft returned safely, there was evidence that A9-429 had flown at treetop level, for the ground crew found a palm frond caught in the port aileron. Treverton had earned a reputation for low flying, having earlier hit a bird, and his escapades led to his notoriety being featured as a cartoon in *Goodenough Guts*.⁷⁸

The Palmalal Plantation was bombed again on 21 March, and all crews reported that the intensity of the ack-ack was more severe than previously. Craters from the earlier bombing pockmarked the remaining campsite, which was pounded again and completely destroyed it. The round trip took just over three hours and all planes landed safely.

While the pressure was being applied to the enemy in New Britain, another element of the Fifth Air Force had also been carrying out heavy bombing raids in the Hansa Bay-Wewak area. In one week, more than 1500 tons of bombs were dropped on the Wewak airfield. Tremendous damage was caused to the airstrips but at a cost of 16 bombers and 18 fighters.

Reconnaissance, anti-submarine and convoy patrols were also being undertaken during the month without serious incident. On 22 March, Tony Treverton in A9-513 returned with an unserviceable aircraft after being airborne for only 15 minutes into

an anti-submarine patrol. However, he was airborne again in A9-429 ten minutes later to complete a four hour search.

That same morning Laurie Glenn and crew in A9-470 assisted submarine *Bluegill* to rendezvous with the convoy escort, and Geoff Liddell and crew in A9- 474 assisted submarine *Cero* to find its convoy escort. Having ASV radar to show the separation of the convoys from the submarines made the task quite easy, and after exchanging recognition signals the submarines were pointed in the right direction. There was no enemy sighted during these patrols.



**Treverton Cartoon in *Goodenough Guts*
Inspired by Tony Treverton, who was renowned for low flying**

The last strike for the month was carried out on the evening of 28 March. The target was enemy activity on a small, unnamed island in Nixon Bay on the Gazelle Peninsular. It was a combined attack with 6, 8 and 100 Squadrons. Herb Plenty led eight Beauforts to successfully hit the defensive installations on the island, while A9-513 had to jettison bombs in the sea and return to base after 40 minutes, being unserviceable.

By now Rabaul, although still a huge supply base for submarines and heavily defended, was virtually isolated from the rest of New Britain, due in no small way to the activities of No 9 Operational Group. Over the past six months, the three Beaufort squadrons had carried out almost 2000 sorties, involving 1 500 000 miles flown to plaster the enemy strongholds with 2 000 000 pounds of missiles. Many of those missions were flown in tropical storms over hundreds of miles of turbulent sea to strike at night on heavily defended targets. Through laying siege to the Gazelle Peninsula, the Allies had cut off 80 000 Japanese troops and had destroyed an enormous amount of military equipment.

Consequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved General MacArthur's *Cartwheel* plan of operations to press on towards the Philippines through the north coast of New Guinea. If the Allies controlled the air and naval bases in the Philippines they could cut Japan off from supplies of oil and rubber and other essential commodities coming out of Malaya and the East Indies.

The first step was to choose the Admiralty Islands in the Bismarck Archipelago as a substitute for Rabaul. Plans were made to capture Momote airstrip on Los Negros Island and Lorengau airstrip on Manus Island, which would give cover for shipping using the fine Seeadler Harbour. These objectives were secured by the end of March after stiff opposition from the enemy, and also a heavy wastage of men from tropical diseases, particularly an outbreak of scrub typhus.

Having completed their role in isolating Rabaul, the Beaufort squadrons were switched from strike operations to full convoy patrols and reconnaissance. Thirty-two sea patrols, averaging five hours twelve minutes, were carried out during the month, which kept the ground crews very busy in maintaining the 17 serviceable aircraft.

On 14 April there was a problem with one aircraft requiring a ground crew to work well into the night. Once the problem was corrected, the ground crew sped back to the camp at about 11 pm. In their haste, the American Weapon Carrier, in which they were travelling, clipped a boulder on the side of the road and overturned. Ross Pointon and Eric Wallis were killed. The driver and wireless mechanic were injured, but both survived.

Two new aircrews had arrived and quickly settled into the routine of squadron duties. They were 'Hank' Pearce and crew, and Sid Wright and crew. Joe Pryor also arrived at this time to take up adjutant duties, replacing Flight Lieutenant Quinlan on his posting to No 3 Embarkation Depot. The new Adjutant brought with him the latest promotions listing, and wireless/air gunners featured prominently. Three of them received commissions and two were elevated from Flying Officers to Flight Lieutenants. The Officers Mess celebrated these promotions along with Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Dick Thompson, who had been awarded the DFC for distinguished service in the SWPA.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Personnel changes during April included the posting of four aircrews away from the squadron on completing their operational tour. They were Gordon Bland and crew, 'Grassy' Green and crew, John Gregory and crew, and Kev Nightingale and crew.

An operational tour in the tropics for aircrew, up to that time, was usually nine months. For ground crews it was from 15 to 18 months. Within a few months this system was to change, at least in 100 Squadron, to follow the American system. Operational aircrews would be given two to three weeks leave in Australia after six months operations in the tropics and then serve another three months before a further longer rest period.

An advance party comprising four officers and 40 other ranks proceeded to Nadzab by air on 28 April in preparation for the Group to move there in the near future. General Kenney had ordered that the Bostons of 22 Squadron, 30 Squadron Beaufighters and 100 Squadron Beauforts move to Nadzab to be assigned to No 10 Group, commanded by Air Commodore F.R.W. Scherger.⁷⁹ This Group was known as the First Tactical Air Force, and was designed as a mobile force operating within the American Fifth Air Force. Shortly afterwards, 8 Squadron was also to be included in the move to Nadzab.



Hank Pearce and Crew

(L-R: Hank Pearce, Brian Cantwell, Jack Sommers and 'Kitch' Philpott)

NADZAB

*Do what you can,
With what you have,
With where you are.*

Theodore Roosevelt

Nadzab aerodrome, in a generally open area, was a complex of five separate airstrips laid out on the floor of the Markham Valley in mainland New Guinea. The RAAF Airfield Construction Squadrons had built the runways and dispersal bays in the record time of 27 days. There was only one interruption—a kunai grass fire, which set off a massive explosion at the ammunition dump. Exploding bombs and bullets together with magnesium flares made a spectacular display. Fortunately, there were no casualties.



**Nadzab Landing, September 1943
Following the taking of Lae on 4 September**

Both 8 and 100 Squadrons were encamped near the Markham River adjacent to the No 4 Newton airfield, named after Flight Lieutenant W.E. Newton, VC, of 22 Squadron. Newton airfield, situated at latitude 06° 33' 40" S and longitude

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

146° 46' 20" E, was the most easterly airstrip of the aerodrome. Twin bitumen runways of 6000 feet had been completed and operational since mid-January 1944. The flat fertile valley is bounded on the south by a tangle of rugged ranges, spectacular gorges and permanent waterfalls. On the north is the Finisterre Range, which has an almost continuous line of peaks reaching 11 000 to 13 500 feet. This range rises sharply from the valley floor to knife-edge ridges and descends just as abruptly to the northern coastline.

In contrast to the mountain peaks swept by freezing winds, the valleys are very hot and humid. The head of the Markham Valley, barely 100 feet above sea level, passes almost imperceptibly into the wide expanse of the Ramu Valley.



Map – Nadzab-Lae Area

The Erap and Markham Rivers drain the Nadzab area and crocodiles were plentiful in these rivers. Tales about confrontation with these formidable reptiles were sometimes raised at the Mess table. One story was told of Army engineers engaged in removing snags from a stream to make a navigable channel. Finding a large snag, they sent a

native boy over the side of the boat to place a charge of gelignite under the offending log. The boat was then paddled to a safe distance and the engineer exploded the charge. The native was visibly shaken, and momentarily turned white, when a large crocodile was blown out of the water.

Alan Gardner points out that there was an interesting magnetic anomaly in this area:

There is a local compass variation of 25 degrees. If one flies north-west up the Markham Valley, in cloud and trusting a magnetic compass, it is likely that one will encounter a 'Cadbury Cloud'—one with a hard core centre, also referred to as a stuffed cloud.

As General MacArthur was keen to establish bases further north, the preliminary bombing of Japanese-held bases on the north coast of New Guinea commenced again in April 1944. It was now a different war for the Beauforts. Daring torpedo attacks or bombing warships were history. The war zone was now on the land and the targets were airfields, with their associated fuel and ammunition dumps, and troop concentrations. General MacArthur planned to take Wewak. However, warned by intelligence reports that Wewak was a heavily defended port, and should be bypassed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff persuaded MacArthur that Hollandia⁸⁰ and Aitape could be taken to lock up the enemy in New Guinea. Very careful planning for simultaneous attacks and landings at Hollandia and Aitape was given the ironic code name *Reckless*.

Hollandia (Djajapura), some 400 miles from the Admiralty Islands on a course of 261 degrees and Aitape 170 miles eastward along the New Guinea coast from the Dutch New Guinea border, then received special attention from No 10 Group. Lightnings, fitted with extra fuel tanks, took the enemy completely by surprise. The Japanese aircraft at Hollandia were lined up wingtip to wingtip. The raid destroyed 340 of these planes on the ground and another 60 aircraft were destroyed in combat. The Americans claimed to have lost four Lightnings.

While the earlier raids went off smoothly, the fickle tropical weather on 16 April proved to be more hazardous than the enemy. A raid on Tadjji airfield (five miles east of Aitape) had been successful, but, while returning from the strike, dense low clouds and fog descended over a wide area completely obscuring Nadzab, and Gusap airfield, 60 miles north-west of Nadzab. Thirty-one fighter aircraft and pilots of the American Fifth Air Force failed to return.

A convoy of 80 vessels, including two aircraft carriers, left Manus Island on 20 April, and on the following night the combined flotilla with some 30 000 troops divided into two invasion forces.



Map – Aitape-Wewak Area

At dawn on Saturday 22 April 1944, the Allies went ashore at Tanahmerah Bay and on the white beaches of Humboldt Bay, Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea (now Djajapura). Hollandia's three airfields were secured four days later, after some desperate resistance. While 3300 of the enemy were killed and 600 were captured, almost 7000 escaped northwards to the Japanese bases at Maffin Bay.

A naval 'softening up' from a variety of warships supported the landing at Tadj in British New Guinea, while carrier-based aircraft strafed anti-aircraft batteries and the airfields with a tremendous number of rockets. The rocket barrage was so severe that it confused the assault troops, who came ashore about 1000 yards east of their intended landing. Although stiff opposition had been expected, the enemy was taken by surprise and the airfield was lightly defended. Tadj and the Aitape area were captured and secured on the same day, although a brief savage counter attack had to be repulsed.

RAAF 62 Works Wing and the American 331 Aviation Engineer Battalion, under the command of Wing Commander W.A.C. Dale, set to work immediately on the Tadj airfield. They had already surveyed the land and cleared away wrecked aircraft to commence work on a new airstrip, when Air Commodore F.R.W. Scherger and Group Captain C.D. Candy, together with American commanders, arrived to view the progress.

Working day and night under heavy guard, the airfield reconstruction team laid 4000 feet of steel Marsden matting, 100 feet wide, to have the airstrip operational by the morning of 24 April. Even the control tower was resurrected, with many native hands hauling on ropes to pull the framework into position. The bomb-cratered Japanese coral strip to the north of the new airfield was patched up for use as an emergency 'crash strip'.

Later that morning, two Lightnings were the first Allied aircraft to be guided in by wireless mechanic, Corporal H. Clements, to land at the newly established airstrip. Then midafternoon, the first duty pilot, Flight Lieutenant B.R. Moody, was ready with his signalling lamp to bring in another flight of aircraft. Group Captain Pearce, Senior Air Staff Officer of 10 Group, who was recovering from a bout of malaria, led the way in a Beaufort for 20 Kittyhawks from 78 Squadron to land. He brought with him the news that the Australians had captured Madang and were advancing on Alexishafen.

General MacArthur was pleased with the gains made, and war correspondents were admitted to Tadjj some days later to interview the RAAF ground forces involved in the landing. Members of the press included Doc Quigg of United Press, F. Schaefer, an Acme photographer, and Harry Summers from the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Back at Nadzab, another party of aircrews and ground staff, together with eleven 100 Squadron aircraft, arrived under the command of Squadron Leader Herb Plenty. The Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Joe Pryor, arranged the necessary accommodation for the new arrivals.

By 7 May, 100 Squadron was operational, and an attack was carried out on an enemy command post at Cape Pus, north-west of Wewak. Nine 100 Squadron Beauforts, flying in formation, dropped their payload from 10 000 feet, which was too high for light ack-ack to do much damage, and hoped that the bombing run would be finished before the heavy guns could get the range and distance. All bombs hit the target except one 250 pound wing bomb, which had to be shaken from one aircraft into the sea. Ron Caffin and crew in A9-432 and Ross Geue and crew in A9-454 then remained in the area to carry out a reconnaissance of Dagua and But airfields.⁸¹

With some 30 000 troops in the Dagua-Wewak area, the enemy had the capability of attempting to retake Aitape, about five miles west of Tadjj, and the sweeps over the area were to search for signs of troop movements or other heightened activities. All planes returned safely to land at Nadzab.

Strikes were again carried out in the Wewak area on the next two days. Dick Thompson, DFC, led nine Beauforts to hit a stores depot at Mission Point, when 80 per cent of the bombs burst on the target.

Maintaining two widely separated bases at Vivigani and at Newton was a busy time for the Commanding Officer. He was constantly commuting between Goodenough

Island and Nadzab, and each time he welcomed the opportunity to fly on a strike as a break from his administrative duties.

Following a rest day, Herb Plenty led seven of eight aircrews to successfully bomb a concentration of troops in the Wewak area. A9-470 had engine trouble about 20 minutes into the flight. John Gregory couldn't maintain height until he jettisoned the 2000 pounds of bombs, and even then he struggled with a very sick aircraft to land back at Nadzab.

After bombing their targets, the aircrews reported strafing their respective areas, which included the still smoking Boikin Village, a fuel dump, vehicles and grounded aircraft. No concentrated ack-ack was encountered and all planes landed safely. Barry Fuller and crew were first in the air and last to arrive back.

Next morning, nine Beauforts from 100 Squadron raided Boram airstrip, to inflict considerable damage to the runway and revetments. All aircraft again returned to base unscathed.

The reading of Daily Routine Orders revives memories of the workings of any operational squadron. Squadron Leader H.C. Plenty, temporary commander of 100 Squadron Detachment, issued the first of the Daily Routine Orders at Nadzab on 11 May. There were four parts to the Orders:

Part 1 – Duties. General Duties Officer for the week 12–19 May was Flying Officer E.G. Green and his assistant was Flight Sergeant A.C. Ditchburn. Pilot Officers G.C. Maughan and J.R. Osborne were appointed the Duty WAGs. The Orderly Officer for 12 May was Flying Officer S.D. Turnbull and for 13 May Flying Officer P.R. Smith. Flight Sergeant E.C. Reid was to be the Orderly Sergeant, followed by Flight Sergeant W.C. White on 13 May. The Duty Transport Drivers were respectively LACs L.R. Cowell and J.R. Harden. Duty Cooks were LAC J.V. Lyons and Corporal C.H. Mills. Duty Electricians were LACs N.E. Jackson and S.K. Lightfoot. Duty Medical Orderly for the next two days was to be Corporal J.F. Hannah.

Part 2 – Appointments. Flight Lieutenant Linton-Smith was appointed Adjutant of the detachment on and from 11 May 1944.

Part 3 – Transport. Personnel were not to use transport without proper authority. Anyone requiring transport was to contact the Adjutant.

Part 4 – Pictures. Trucks would be made available for conveying personnel to pictures three nights weekly, viz., Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

Serial No.....
Page No.....
Date 11th May, 1944

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
DAILY ROUTINE ORDERS

by
SQUADRON LEADER R.C. KELLY

V/ COMMANDING NO. 100 SQUADRON (DETACH) BARRAB

PART I ROUTES **11TH MAY, 1944**

<u>S.A. OFFICERS</u>		
ASST C.O. CPT.	0800 Hrs 12/5/44 0900 Hrs 19/5/44	Flying Officer R.G. GREEN 409708 W/PT MITCHELL A. G.
<u>DUTY W.A.C.S</u>	" "	Pilot Officer O.C. BARRAB Pilot Officer P.R. BARRAB
<u>RELIEF OFFICERS</u>		
Next for duty	13/5/44	Flying Officer S.D. TURNELL Flying Officer P.K. SMITH
<u>REPAIRY AIRCRAFT</u>		
Next for duty	13/5/44	413662 W/PT REID R.C. 406018 W/PT SMITH R.C.
<u>DUTY ENGINEER ENLISTED</u>		
Next for duty	13/5/44	129692 LAC COXELL L.R. 129179 LAC HARRIS J.R.
<u>DUTY OILER</u>		
Next for duty	13/5/44	126150 LAC LYONS J.V. 35353 CPL HILLS G. H.
<u>DUTY MECHANICIAN</u>		
Next for duty	13/5/44	40544 LAC JACKSON H.K. 422595 LAC LIGHTFOOT H.K.
<u>DUTY MEDICAL ORDERLY</u>		
Next for duty	13/5/44	74264 CPL BARRAB J.F. " " " "

2. APPOINTMENTS

Flight Lieutenant LINTON-SMITH is appointed Adjutant of No. 100 Squadron (Detach) on and from 11th May, 1944.

3. TRANSPORT

Personnel are not to use transport without proper authority anyone requiring transport are to contact the Adjutant.

4. PICTURES

Trucks will be made available for conveying personnel to pictures three night weekly viz., Monday, Wednesday, & Saturday.

(Signature)
(T.A. LINTON-SMITH)
Flight Lieutenant

Daily Routine Orders 11 May 1944
The stain at the top of the document shows where a drawing pin held it to the notice board

On 13 May, Colin Macnaughtan and crew in A9-572 were diverted from squadron activities for courier duties. Taking on board AIF Captain E. Hourn and American

Lieutenant J. Gallagher from 33 Fighter Section, at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, the navigator, Laurie O'Sullivan, gave the course to steer for Tadjj.

When approaching Tadjj runway some 2 hours and 20 minutes later, 'Wheezy Tower'⁸² instructed the Beaufort to circle the airfield, while a number of Dakota aircraft landed. Twice the control tower gave the green light to land and the pilot lowered the undercarriage, and twice he was given the red light. As the aircraft banked at a height of about 100 feet, with the undercarriage being again raised, the starboard engine caught on fire and dense smoke began to fill the cockpit. Col Macnaughtan continues:

I had raised the flaps to approx 35 degrees, my airspeed was 110 knots and the aircraft was banked at 20 degrees to port. Then the port motor cut and the aircraft reached 60–70 degree bank and the speed dropped to 100 knots. I immediately cut both engines, levelled aircraft and decided to ditch. WAG switched on emergency IFF and called out on the R/T we were ditching 1 mile off Tadjj. Everyone in the aircraft was in correct positions and approx one minute after the motor cutting I had ditched the aircraft some 6–800 yards offshore. Everyone escaped and I was the last to leave the aircraft. It sank in 1½ minutes.

The turret gunner Jack Slingo acted quickly to inflate the dinghy from which they were eventually rescued.

When a report came through that the Japanese had repaired the Boram airstrip, Barry Fuller in A9-478 led a formation of nine Beauforts on 14 May to again render the runway unserviceable. Seated beside him was Wing Commander R.H. Moran, the newly appointed CO of 71 Wing. Leaving Newton airfield the formation, in flights of three, on a bearing of 300 degrees, left the Ramu Valley with the 15 000 feet Mount Wilhelm on the port side. On reaching the coast between the Sepik and Ramu Rivers, the formation turned westwards towards Wewak. Barry's navigator, Jack Donald, led the formation on the bombing run over Boram, and Wing Commander Moran estimated that at least 90 per cent of the bombs hit exactly where they were wanted. He described the result as excellent.

Next day, a strike was called against a wireless station in the Boikin area. Eight aircraft were on their way by 0930K, led by Lyle McLaren and crew in A9-486. Before reaching the target, Ray Smith, flying A9-513, experienced engine trouble and had to jettison the bombs to maintain height. He turned the plane for the return flight, but the aircraft was struggling to stay in the air. Smith and his crew were glad to reach Gusap airfield and to make a landing there.

In the meantime, the attacking aircraft hit the target area with all bombs, but any resultant damage to the station, partially obscured by jungle, was not obvious.

Nadzab was the home to just about every type of American aircraft used in the South-West Pacific area. The air space above the airfield was always busy. A P-38 Lightning and a P-47 Thunderbolt attracted an audience on the morning of 15 May as they practised combat manoeuvres, or dogfighting, at about 5000 feet over Nadzab. They were putting on a great show until the Thunderbolt caught up with the Lightning in a vertical climb and took both tail sections off the Lightning. Pieces of both planes were scattered over a wide area and there were no survivors.

Next day there was more drama. Nine Beauforts from 100 Squadron took off at 0715K to strike at targets in the Boram-Wewak area. A9-486 was forced to return to base shortly after take-off with spluttering engines, later diagnosed as having water in the fuel. Then Ray Smith, in A9-513, found he could not fully retract the undercarriage, which remained stuck in a halfway position. Unable to coax the plane to gain much height, he tried to blow the wheels down with the emergency cartridge, but the wheels would not budge. Still at less than 600 feet altitude, he asked navigator Plute Ryan to jettison the bombload. The release, and the resulting shock wave from exploding bombs, blasted the plane more than 100 feet into the air.

The relief of the crew was short lived, however, when it was realised that a 500 lb bomb in the bomb bay had not been released. Repeated attempts to release it failed. There was only one thing to do and that was to chop the flooring away underneath the wireless operator's position. The wireless/air gunners, Bill Davidson and Alan Overland, set to work with the emergency axe. With some effort they chopped enough flooring away for the bomb, still on its rack, and some of the flooring to drop into the jungle below.

Ray Smith then made his approach for a bellylanding with wheels set at an odd angle and bomb-bay doors open. It was a fine piece of piloting to settle the plane onto the airstrip, where it screeched along with bent propellers and crumpled underbelly to stop in a cloud of smoke and dust. The crew climbed out unhurt to inspect the crippled aircraft and then they turned to shake each other's hand.

Meanwhile, high above the airfield, a Liberator was circling, as the pilot called the control tower to report a similar undercarriage problem. The bombload had been jettisoned, and the pilot had ordered the crew to bail out. Two at a time the parachutes were seen to open as the crew drifted to earth. Practically everyone at the whole air base, by that time, was watching the drama unfold.

Word quickly spread that, once all nine aircrew had jumped from the plane, a flight of Lightnings had been ordered to shoot it down. The pilot was heard calling 'Topline Tower' to report that he had set course for the mountains, that he had engaged the autopilot and he was about to leave the aircraft.

Shortly after his parachute appeared, the flight of Lightnings came on the scene. There was the distant chatter of gunfire and the Liberator was shot down to crash into the side of the mountain range.

The strikes at Boram airstrip to keep it unserviceable continued. On 17 May, eight 100 Squadron Beauforts put more craters in a section of the runway, which had been repaired. Stan Polkinghorne and crew, who had joined the squadron earlier in the month, were taking part in their first strike.

For the first two or three operational trips the crews were on a steep learning curve. While operational training equipped the crew for missions, orientation in new territory sharpened their observation and raised the perception of the crew to the new environment.

A repeat performance with five Beauforts took place on the following morning to cause further damage to the runway at Boram. It was a beautiful day, all-blue sky, making it a good day for bombing. Stan Polkinghorne described the mission as a 'piece of cake'.

Both 8 and 100 Squadrons were called to strike at troop concentrations at Cape Wom on 19 May. Barry Fuller led the way with nine Beauforts from 100 Squadron. Following 18 000 pounds of bombs from Fuller's flight hitting and exploding in the bivouac area, individual strafing sweeps were carried out up and down the Cape. There was no interception by enemy aircraft and only light machine-gun fire was offered. The camp area huts among coconut trees were either destroyed or left as smoking ruins. Japanese soldiers who had come out of their fox holes after the bombing were sent racing for cover when the strafing commenced. The area was left in a complete shambles as all aircraft returned to base.

A similar raid took place the following day in an area from Wom Point to Suain Plantation. Herb Plenty was the flight leader for nine Beauforts after taking off at 0840K. The targets were two Japanese-held villages, one of which was on the bank of the Ninahau River, and the other only a few minutes flying time to the west of the river. The villages were then individually strafed, leaving them in a turmoil. Still flying at only a few hundred feet above the ground, each crew selected further targets for strafing sweeps.

Lyle McLaren in A9-571 selected a building at But Mission for attention. Just as the aircraft completed the strafing, it was hit by anti-aircraft fire. The port motor burst into flames and smoke rapidly began to fill the cockpit. McLaren only had time to turn the aircraft when he was forced to ditch heavily in the surf close to the shore. Hastily the crew, all of whom were suffering bumps and bruises in the crash landing, launched the dinghy. Ray Graetz, the wireless operator, went back into the aircraft to ensure the destruction of the classified IFF equipment before rejoining the other crew members to paddle seaward. As the dinghy left the shelter of the aircraft several Japanese machine-gunners, from an advantage point on rising ground, fired very accurately on the crew. The first burst of about three seconds killed the navigator, Syd Anderson. A second volley of machine-gun fire perforated the dinghy, which immediately filled with water. Another machine-gun discharge killed the pilot and shot away Graetz's right ear lobe.

Official Report No 49 'Escape and Evasion' provides Ray Graetz's report of his remarkable survival:

I started swimming westward from the line of fire and the last I saw of F/Sgt Maloney was a glance of him, which I caught while he was swimming seaward. My flying boots soon came off and were lost, as was a jungle kit that went down with the plane. I started drifting westward with the current, about 200 yards offshore. The Nips were still firing spasmodically and sent patrols along the beach, but some distance back from the water's edge. Because of this they probably could not see me behind the waves. The tide gradually took me towards the shore and I landed on the west side of the But jetty, which hid my movements from the Nips along the beach. A solitary Nip was sitting on the sand about 100 yards westward but didn't seem to see me. When he was looking the other way I crawled into the scrub at the end of the beach. This would be about 1430 hours. Feeling weak from the loss of blood from my wounded ear, I crawled under a nearby bush and just lay there. At dusk I saw guards posted along the beach about fifty yards apart. Fell asleep but awoke again at approximately 2200 hours.

Could hear considerable motor truck activity going both ways along the nearby coastal road. Tried to see what was going on, but was so weak that I collapsed, and lay where I was till dawn. Spent a wretched night being quite naked, having lost my shirt and trousers crawling through the scrub.

21 May: Awakening at dawn I had enough strength to crawl back and locate my clothing, which was close by. Saw P-40s come down in the morning and strafe the Beaufort until it burned in the surf. Felt very weak as my wound had bled right through the night. Later became almost delirious and so lay under a bush for the rest of the day. Also slept there that night.

22 May: In the early morning I decided to make my way to Tadj and set out towards the east end of But drome. At Au Creek I found two large bomb craters partially filled with clear water. Having had nothing to drink yet, except dew from the leaves of bushes, I lay in a crater in the water for several hours drinking copiously. In the afternoon made my way to But drome, finding the runway filled with huge craters and many damaged Jap planes around it. At 1800 hours after inspecting the strip, I made my way to the beach, not having seen any sign of life. Decided it would be best to travel by night. Started westward but at the mouth of the Manib Creek almost walked into a sentry who was sitting down looking seaward. I sat down near him.

He didn't challenge so I crawled off the beach. Just then about 40 Nips, carrying lanterns, came out to the edge of the scrub and commenced carrying large packages. These were being unloaded from trucks, which appeared from the east, and transferred up to a small headland at the east of the creek mouth. Lay watching this for 45 minutes and noticed that some of the loads were very heavy packing cases. When the activity ceased I crawled back to the beach and slept under a bush. Throughout the day I had felt very hungry but had no food.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

23 May: After waking in the morning I tried to build a raft from empty drums and coconut logs but it collapsed on launching. Along the entire track was laid yellow phone lines so cut 200 yards of this in an endeavour to repair the raft, but was unsuccessful. Walking along the beach I located a camouflaged 3-inch gun on wheels pointing seaward in an open-backed emplacement. The barrel was camouflaged with palm leaves. In an effort to disable the gun I put several handfuls of sand down the muzzle and in the breach mechanism. Nearby were several weapon pits designed for machine guns. This was about noon. Spent the rest of the day wandering about the But Strip inspecting the enemy planes. Found a waterproof sheet and the silk from a parafrag bomb there.

Henceforth I used the silk at night to wrap myself in so that my wet clothes would dry. Also that afternoon, while bathing in a bomb crater, saw at least 30 enemy troops moving both east and west along tracks at the foot of the hills on the south side of the strip. All were carrying arms and packs. That evening, after spreading grass over the leading edge of the main plane of an aeroplane, I slept under it.

24 May: At 0600 hours two Nips came walking past the plane but did not see me as the grass provided shelter. They were each carrying a machine gun and had probably come from the weapons pits seen the previous afternoon. Having decided to press westwards, I crossed the strip and found the coastal track that led me to Manib Creek. In some deserted huts, troops had been living, on the east bank of the creek, but as a strafing attack had just been carried out in the area, the dwellings were abandoned. Entering the huts I took a water bottle and towels as well as shirts.

Went through the personal kit of someone, but found nothing of interest. Just opposite this hut a three-ton truck was pulled in under the trees. It seemed serviceable so pulled out the distributor wires. Crossing Manib Creek found a further group of huts. These had been used as a dump for medical supplies, which were scattered everywhere, apparently by bomb blasts. Continued west along the track, keeping to the scrub on the side. Found an apparent motor repair pool where six fuel tankers and an equal number of three-ton trucks were also pulled in under the trees. Just as I pulled out the wiring from the distributors of two of the trucks, I saw two Japs across the track in a hut. They didn't see me so inspected the contents of other nearby huts, finding that they contained spare parts, motor transport tools and aircraft spares.

Had only gone a short distance along the road when a heavy bombing and strafing attack was made by numerous A-20s. Taking shelter under a wide spreading tree, just off the road, I found the experience terrifying as bombs exploded nearby and later a belly tank was dropped on the tree and hit by tracers. The resultant fire burned part of the tree and half an acre of surrounding grass. Unfortunately, there were enemy stores in that area. I lay under a tree off the track for the rest of the day and at dusk watched 50 fully equipped and packed troops start to assemble nearby. Seven trucks came along and picked them up, then headed in different directions. In view of the activity slept under

a large tree, sharing it with two Nips who retired for the night on the opposite side.

25 May: Waking the next morning I found that the Nips had already gone. At 0730 hours I set out along the road to Tadj. The road was very muddy and showed signs of the use of chains on motor transport. During the morning at least six soldiers, walking singly, came east along the track. They seemed to be very weary and I avoided them by stepping into the undergrowth. Earlier in the morning I had seen what seemed to be several gun pits cut out of the scarred hillside in a position that would command the coast road. Continued to walk and started to cross a creek down a steep embankment. Saw an elderly and tired Jap also crossing towards me.

I walked right past and he took no notice. Just across another creek, in a clearing, saw six armed soldiers. Walked right on past them. They merely looked and said nothing. Several more were met, all walking eastward along the track. Everyone seemed tired and unresponsive with arms hanging down at their sides. Some grunted as I passed, so I grunted back a reply. At 1430 hours I rested off the track and drank from the water bottle. Though I had not had any food was now losing desire for it. Tried to eat some fruit looking like apples. They induced a furry taste, as with a green persimmon. Further on in a clearing, on the west bank of a small stream, saw 20 soldiers with arms stacked. All appeared to be smarter than others seen to date. They did nothing but sit up as I passed. That night I slept well on the beach west of Bai, as I was now feeling stronger.

26 May: Started out along the track. At Ninahau River, 20 Nips, working on a bridge near the mouth, sighted me. They yelled out but resumed work when I made no reply. Taking a course parallel to the coast through the thick scrub in the foothills, came across a soldier boiling six billies of tea. He came towards me calling out, but I waved my hand across my face, as if in pain, and walked on. Changed direction back towards the coast.

Reached the Anumb River and found 100 troops bathing, while further downstream there were more swimming and washing clothes. At a narrow part crossed the river and almost walked into a large working party of fresh looking troops, who were constructing a road along a high bank. Camps were also being built, the frames of native-type huts erected and a start made in covering them with grass. I hid in the trees until the road was clear, then crossed it, making for the foothills again. Towards dusk, at the top of a high feature, found a large log. As heavy rain had started I slept under it with leaves laid on each side to keep the rain out. Had lost the desire for food but consumed considerable water during the day.

27 May: The whole of the morning was spent battling through thick bush in an effort to reach the coast again. Near Salaminara Creek I reached the coast road but it was only a foot track and very muddy. Once more had no food but drank at least two canteens of water from the creeks. That night slept just off the road in the bush.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

28 May: Though feeling weak, I continued along the track, which was probably invisible from the air, as the undergrowth was heavy and high. On both sides of the paths was evidence of camp fires. Met the odd lone Nip walking eastwards and several lying on the roadside apparently too tired to be interested in me. Just before reaching Dumbun Creek heard a shot just ahead, but it was apparently someone hunting for game. Rested from 0930 to 1000 hours as I was feeling weaker.

Started again and reached Dumbun Creek. Here noticed a small native hut beside the track with two Japs sitting inside. They looked up, but took no notice as I crossed the footbridge of two parallel logs.

The village of Niap was deserted with two dead Japs in different huts. Pushed on and finally reached the Danmap River. Whilst trying to cross, P-39s flew over me from the west. Later, two came back and circled low down and waggled their wings.

Still having the same small parachute I waved in reply. Waited until late afternoon thinking that perhaps a Catalina would arrive. Was surprised when two PT boats turned up and came towards me. At that moment fire was opened up on them from the previously deserted village. This was just after a raft had been dropped over to float ashore. The boats silenced the fire after a heavy strafing of the beach and village area. They then returned and shot two lines to me. I was too weak to risk being carried away by a strong cross current so did not retrieve the lines. Semaphore signals were sent but I could not read them. Eventually two of the crewmen swam ashore with the raft and brought me to their vessel.

When rescued by the gallant action of the American PT boats' crews, Graetz was not only very weak, but was covered in insect bites. His feet, too, were in bad shape after his eight days ordeal without footwear. Later he was awarded the Military Cross for his outstanding courage, initiative and devotion to duty. Ray Graetz's experience in traversing the area on the ground with all its physical discomfort, which soldiers frequently encounter, made many of the flyers feel privileged to be fighting the war in the air. At least they return each time to a permanent camp to sleep in tents and to be fed regularly. Furthermore, they were not required to trudge through quagmires and thick jungle to engage in hand-to-hand combat with its very personal and cruel confrontation.

Subconsciously however, there is the realisation that on their next strike, as the adrenalin starts to flow, the aircrew have their own confrontations. Taking off with a full bombload, flying in tight formation, encountering adverse weather, and flying in cloud in mountainous terrain is venturesome. It may not be hand-to-hand during the bombing run as the ack-ack is firing, but strafing at treetop level is pretty close to it, when the enemy retaliates with machine guns firing. However, an effective strafing run usually caused the ground gunners to take cover, as the pilot made a shallow

dive firing his wing guns at the same time as the navigator used his two Vickers nose guns.

Then, turning the plane allowed the wireless operator to fire his side gun and the turret gunner to follow through with a long burst from his two Brownings. With the guns pumping out lead at the rate of 16 rounds a second, almost 1000 rounds would be expended in each strafing run.

In the meantime, the squadron continued strikes at every opportunity. On 21 May a morning strike was carried out on Cape Boram by eight aircraft led by Barry Fuller. While the smoke and dust from the exploding bombs covered the target, strafing runs were made before leaving the area. The next day five Beauforts from 100 Squadron and a flight from 8 Squadron again attacked villages in the Boram to But region. Strafing passes following the bombing were again deadly accurate, forcing the Japanese to keep their heads down. When very concentrated ack-ack was encountered in the vicinity of the But airfield, however, an 8 Squadron Beaufort was hit. Fortunately the pilot, Norm Campbell, managed to ditch a few miles to sea, and the crew was rescued by the Air-Sea Rescue Catalina shortly afterwards.

Ross Geue takes up the story:

I was on a travel flight from Nadzab to Hollandia on that day, when I received a message to pick up Norm Campbell and his crew at Tadjji, and to use the old Jap strip, which was nearly U/S [unserviceable]. Took off with nine of us on board, because Norm had taken a photographer with him.

Ditching in the sea offered a far better chance of survival, if the crew endured the impact, than crashing in the jungle, for there was a very efficient Air-Sea Rescue organisation. Surviving a ditching, of course, depended on the prevailing situation, such as whether it was day or night, good or adverse weather conditions, and whether it was controlled or a sudden emergency. The chances of a crew surviving a crash, or a forced landing, in the dense and trackless jungle were much slimmer. The vegetation was so thick it could absorb an aircraft and hide it completely. Survival in the jungles of Papua New Guinea was a hazardous experience. There was the extreme hardship of trying to live in the inhospitable jungle without previous training. Mountains were jagged with precipitous slopes and deep ravines. If a survivor did stumble into natives, his troubles were not over for he could be handed over to the enemy. Few crews, who crashed into the jungle survived, but the 'Goldfish Club'⁸³ is living testimony to many who survived a forced landing or crash into the sea.



Dagua Airstrip, 1944
Another 100 Squadron strike

On 24 May, a flight of six Beauforts led by Reg Green flew to Saidor airstrip on the Rai Coast beside the Nankina River—latitude 05° 37' S and longitude 146° 32' E. It was only a one hour and twenty minutes trip from Nadzab, but it was closer to the action for night operations on Wewak. That night the six Beauforts made a successful strike on the Wewak airstrip. Following reports of considerable activity of troop movements, raids were also stepped up in the Wewak-Boram area. Daily raids, and a raid at night from Saidor, continued until the end of the month. Stores and troop concentrations were the primary targets, while Wewak runway was the night target. All missions were carried out successfully.

After completing his mission in the Wewak-Boram area on the morning of 30 May, Herb Plenty continued along the coast to land at Tadjji. In discussion with Wing Commander Moran, he learned that the Kittyhawks of No 10 Group were moving to Hollandia, and that it was planned to move the Beauforts of No 10 Group to Aitape to be closer to the action. Because of the proximity of a swamp to the camping site, he judged that the incidence of malaria at Aitape might be worse than at Nadzab, but it would be nothing like the situation at Milne Bay. Nothing would ever compare with the malarial plague at Milne Bay. Dysentery, however, was a major problem at Nadzab and news of moving north to Aitape was welcomed.



Wewak Airfield, May 1944

During May, the squadron had completed 146 operational sorties in bombing and strafing targets in the Wewak-But area. Postings on completing their operational tours included Ray Smith, Ron Caffin, John Pressey, and their respective crews. The chances of surviving a tour of operations were always greater for a well-disciplined crew working as a team, where each member knew his job and did it well. These three experienced crews were in that category, yet some undisciplined crews also survived, and some well-disciplined crews perished. Certainly, the element of luck was involved.

Prayer may have helped. Ross Pearson in his book, *Australians at War in the Air – 1938–45*, gives a humorous account of praying:

On one trip the crew was caught in searchlights and having a pretty rough time. They were carrying out evasive action when one of the crew asked the navigator, 'Are you praying Kevin?' 'Yes', he said, 'I'm praying'. A while later the gunner called and asked, 'Are you still praying Kevin?' 'Yes I'm praying like hell.' 'Well shut up and give me a go. You're not getting through.'

At the end of the month, the squadron strength was 24 aircraft, 48 officers and 340 other ranks, including some staff still ensconced at Goodenough Island. This situation still required Squadron Leader Thompson to commute regularly between the two bases. His most recent trip was to attend a court martial of the motor transport driver

charged with causing the deaths of Flight Sergeant Ross Pointon and LAC Eric Wallis in a transport accident in April. The defendant was found guilty and was awarded 75 days detention.

The ground crews had been particularly busy keeping the squadron aircraft serviceable since arriving in Nadzab and it became a problem when the Engineering Officer was taken ill. However, Flight Sergeant Charlie Watson, fitter 2E, stepped into the breach and organised the workload. For his effort, he was Mentioned in Despatches at the end of the month 'for initiative and outstanding efforts in overcoming difficulties and inspiring men, while in charge of aircraft maintenance'.

While Dick Thompson, DFC, who had been elevated to Wing Commander at the end of May, was on short operations leave from the squadron, Squadron Leader Herb Plenty, DFC and Bar, was acting Commanding Officer. Herb Plenty ensured, by leading many of the strikes, that the day and night strikes in the Wewak-Boram area continued at the same brisk pace. From 6 to 10 June some 18 tons were dropped in that area. Using demolition bombs resulted in the destruction of many of the Japanese installations. All strikes were carried out without injury to either aircrew or aircraft. These were the last of the squadron's strikes at the enemy while based at Nadzab.

Discussion on the merit of polished metal surfaces giving greater speed to an aeroplane led to some crews deciding to polish their planes. The crew of A9-488 polished their plane with Johnson's Floor Wax. WAG Jack Slingo was still very sceptical. 'I reckon it probably made the aircraft 'stand out like a beacon' making it more visible to the enemy and their anti-aircraft gunners.'

Jack usually flew in Colin Macnaughtan's crew, but he offered to fly with Laurie Glenn, when he was to carry out a test flight in A9-488 after its 280 hour maintenance overhaul. When the pilot announced that he intended to loop the Beaufort, Jack made sure he was firmly secure at the wireless desk. He also gripped the D/F loop wheel above his head. After getting the plane inverted, all sorts of rubbish—emergency rations, mud, cigarette butts and spent .303 shells—floated down from the floor. The aircraft then fell out of the inverted stall. Fortunately, Glenn managed to gain control of the plane, or perhaps it righted itself in the process, and he landed it without causing any apparent structural damage.

On 11 June, a forward echelon of the squadron moved from Nadzab to Tadj. As part of the move, Allan Ditchburn and crew in A9-382 were directed to pick up a Kittyhawk pilot from Cape Gloucester airfield on the northern most point of New Britain.

After 30 minutes flying, they could easily identify Mount Talawe, rising to 6600 feet. It was the nearest distinguishing feature to the 5200 feet Marsden steel runway at Gloucester. Then, as directed, they flew almost directly north to Momote airstrip on the south-eastern extremity of Los Negros Island in the Admiralty Islands group. The single coral runway was only six feet above sea level but was 7800 feet in length,

making it one of the longer airstrips in the SWPA. Here they took on board an Intelligence Officer, an Operations Room Officer and a great chest of Safe-Hand material for Tadjji.

Navigator, George Lewis, takes up the story:

At Momote I collected a weather report from the Yanks and set off. About halfway, we struck a fierce tropical front that became so grim I directed Allan to fly on the reciprocal course. Over the long stretch of water I kept a still air plot, keeping a tab on Allan's alteration of courses. On a left-hand turn in getting out of this mess Allan had full trim on and the control column back into his body, but we were still losing height.

I gave him a yell and at that very moment the Beauy [sic] took a steep climb and Al was like a one-armed fiddler winding back the trim. After 36 courses I was able to give Allan a course back to Momote. All passengers looked green. Arriving there I flew into the Met Section and gave the Yank a serve (the report was a day old). When we set off again, after refuelling, it was a much more comfortable trip. On arrival we were not impressed with the length and condition of the metal strip. Compared to the runway at Momote, the 5000 feet runway at Tadjji was certainly a lot shorter. We dropped off our passenger and gear, then set off for Nadzab.

On the subject of metal airstrips, there is the story of an American who landed his Mitchell B-25 at Madang, and complained about the coral airstrip. 'What have you done to the goddam Marsden matting?' he asked. 'Well sir, we have never had the luxury of the Marsden here, it has always been coral here at Madang', said the duty officer. 'Don't tell me that—I know Finschhafen when I see it!'



Fred Tolcher in Turret of A9-488

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS



Joe Johnson, Navigator
Joe flew with Ross Geue and crew in A9-535

TADJI

*Bravely they flew in alien skies, and their planes made music sweet,
To our soldiers struggling through the jungle with weary feet.*

Anon (from VJ Day)

Following the arrival of the advance party of 100 Squadron, Wing Commander Dick Thompson, DFC, led the squadron in the move to Aitape on 12 July. The crews ferried their own aircraft and effects, while ground and support staff travelled by air transport with their equipment. The sun had set, bringing immediate darkness before the move was completed, but landings on the Tadjji airstrip continued by light from the flames of kerosene pots placed at regular intervals.

A section of the airstrip ran through a swamp, which caused the wheels of the aircraft to squelch water as they rolled along the metal matting. As with so many of the Marsden matting airstrips, it was noticeably undulating for landing, and also caused aircraft to take two bounds before becoming airborne.

The climate at Aitape was more pleasant than at Nadzab, because of the coastal location, although malarial mosquitoes were plentiful. The squadron was busy settling in for the next few days, so no operational flying was carried out during that time. The camp at Aitape was also situated beside a swamp, about 200 yards back from a beach on the recently captured Japanese campsite. The swamp, with its green slime, smelt as bad as it looked. It formed a foreground to the jungle, which was only a few yards further away.

The walk to the beach was through a coconut plantation, which was topless from the naval bombardment that the Americans had given the area prior to their landing. While officers and other ranks of ground crews and support staff had separate sleeping quarters, each aircrew, irrespective of rank, slept in the same tent. Each aircrew member was issued with a stretcher, a blanket and a mosquito net. A few of the aircrew had acquired a pillow, or cushion, but the majority used their Mae West life preservers as pillows.⁸⁴ When it was fine, each tent had the walls rolled up to allow a flow of air.

Many of the tents displayed descriptive names on a notice board at the entrance—‘Virgin’s Villa’, ‘Lakeside’ and ‘The Tadjji Mental Home’, to name a few. Boots and clothing not being worn grew green hairy mould within 48 hours, and books soon developed a yellow hue and had a distinctive odour. It rained practically every night,

and the drumming on the canvas was soothing in contrast to the noises from the swamp creatures.

Frequently, bloodcurdling screams from night birds made the hair on the back of the neck stand on end, until one became accustomed to it. From time to time, water rats came into the tents at night, and snakes were a common sight near the swamp. On the first 'red alert' at night, the guards captured two Japanese in a skirmish near the Airmen's Mess. Aircrew slept with their Smith and Wesson pistols under their pillows, but they really depended on the guards to keep watch, as there were an estimated 31 000 of the enemy between Tadjji and Wewak.

The Tadjji airfield, the control tower of which had the radio call sign 'Wheezy Tower', was located about five miles east of Aitape, at latitude 03° 12' S and longitude 142° 25' E. The sandy road from Aitape to Tadjji was very dusty in the dry months, and subject to washed-out patches in the wet season. On crossing Whittaker's Bridge, the halfway mark had been reached. Transport to and from the airstrip for a strike was by American three-ton Blitz Wagons. Often the driver had to take evasive action from large US Army trucks, driven at maximum speed towards him, and also had to be warned when about to be overtaken. One of the crew nearest the driver would call down through the wagon's machine-gun hatch in the cabin roof, as the rear vision mirror would usually be coated with dust.

On arrival at their respective aircraft, the aircrew carried out individual pre-flight inspections on the ground, and then climbed aboard to check their particular equipment. The pilot would start the motors and taxi out to take his turn to take off. The WAG would contact the control tower and test the intercom positions. All was then ready for take-off with the navigator seated beside the pilot, and the gunner bracing himself in the vestibule on the port side overlooking the upper wing surface.

Wewak, the old German administration centre, with its associated airfields of Wewak and Boram, was some 90 miles east-south-east of Tadjji. The Dagua and But airfields were 20 and 30 miles respectively almost north-west of Wewak. The intervening terrain to Tadjji was well fed with rivers, and low-lying areas were swampy. Open grass country, interspersed with trees, covered the higher ground, before giving way to the jungle. Forming a backdrop to the coastal scene were the Torricelli Ranges, about 15 miles inland and rising steeply to 14 000 feet or more, while Babelsberg Strait separated the offshore islands of Tumleo,⁸⁵ Ali, Seleo and Angel.

No 348 Radar Station, which had been established on the beach at Aitape at the beginning of May, had moved offshore to Tumleo Island and was operating under the command of Flight Lieutenant J.G. Colley. It was the same Flight Lieutenant Colley who had established 335 Radar Station on Pilelo Island, when Arawe, New Britain, was captured in December 1943.

From Tumleo Island, the radar station plotted aircraft and ship movements in the area. This activity proved very helpful in locating and saving a number of Allied aircrews,

who may otherwise have perished. Sergeants Stan Williams and Jack Fellows were W/T operators at the radar station, and, while exploring the island, they found a bombed out mission, which they assumed had been a Lutheran Mission. Stan recalls:

The four of us on 'D' shift resurrected four beds which had been slightly damaged and assembled them in a tent for our own use. Later, as a present, I received a copy of a book having a brief history of Tomleo [Tumleo] Island. To my surprise it mentioned that six Catholic nuns belonging to a teaching order had run the mission. This means that we four may have been the only members of the RAAF who slept in nuns' beds in the course of duty! The sad part of this anecdote is that the six nuns were never heard of again after the Japanese occupied the island.

The United States 32nd Division was camped at the Aitape Plantation and had a battalion of infantry at the Driniumor River, 13 miles along the coast towards Wewak. The Japanese held a consolidated position on the other side of the river, from which they were confronting the Americans. The Americans also patrolled a small area around Aitape and the Tadjji strip, and their searchlights were a nightly spectacle swinging across the sky, accompanied at times with anti-aircraft gunfire from their 105 mm anti-aircraft battery. Their camp, like every American camp, was far better appointed than RAAF camps. Practically anything could be purchased at their 'PX' store (Post Exchange—a glorified 'canteen-market'). Aircrew, not already dressed in American garb, soon adopted the more comfortable, and more serviceable clothing. Jungle green or khaki, shirts and trousers were popular, as well as sunglasses, and rubber-soled boots.

The American Army rations had the squadron dining in style with Spam, corned beef, baked beans, dehydrated adobe potatoes and dried peas. There were also dehydrated eggs, with a distinctive iodine taste. The soft, crustless bread rolls were always fresh, but the canned tropical butter, better known as 'axle grease' or 'GI lubricant', was poured on, rather than spread on. Coffee was plentiful, although it curdled the dried Sunshine milk, if that delicacy was added. Tea was a scarce commodity. The squadron was also dependent on the generosity of the Americans, at that time, for much of their equipment and plant. It was their vehicles that transported the aircrew to and from the airstrip, and their fuel that kept the Beauforts flying.

The first of the squadron's strikes from Tadjji commenced on Thursday 15 June, when four Beauforts, led by Barry Fuller and crew in A9-486, bombed the Japanese-held village of Nyaparake and left it in ruins. The next day, Dick Thompson and crew in A9-600, the latest of the squadron's Beauforts, led Tony Treverton, Bill Henderson and Hank Pearce, and their crews, on a strike against a supply dump at the Danmap River. All aircrews reported a successful strike, with all bombs hitting the target area.

There were two strikes made on 17 June. At 0900K, six Beauforts again successfully bombed stores depots, and heavily armed troops, in the Danmap River area, using demolition bombs. Four aircraft then took off at noon to bomb a bridge across the Anumb River at Suain West, with a similar bombload. All bombs were seen to land in the target area. However, while the approaches to the bridge were cratered, the bridge was still standing. All aircraft were back at base again within the hour.

Next morning, Barry Fuller led four Beauforts to carry out a strike on the Brandi River bridge at Wewak West. Although all bombs straddled the bridge, and did some damage, it too remained standing. In the afternoon, Dick Thompson in A9-535, with three other aircraft, piloted by John Gregory, Stan Polkinghorne and Geoff Castleden, struck at Japanese held villages in the Suain area on the coast, about halfway between Tadjji and Wewak. It was all over within minutes, with buildings reduced to smoking ruins. The return trip from take-off to landing took less than 40 minutes!

As a result of intelligence reports, three strikes against troop concentrations were made on 19 June. Dick Thompson and Hank Pearce attacked Salata, at map reference 482002 Nanu East, while Herb Plenty, in A9-600, took four other Beauforts with him to attack a camp at map reference 693279. Aircrews from both raids reported that all bombs fell in the target area, but thick jungle obscured any chance to assess the damage. Then after lunch Herb Plenty led seven Beauforts in an attack on a bivouac area in the south-west of Suain Plantation. This raid was very effective as the damage included the destruction of trucks, as well as supplies.

On 20 June, 8 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader C.S. Hamblin, arrived, followed by 30 Squadron Beaufighters, led by Flight Lieutenant J.T. Sandford. These two squadrons, together with 100 Squadron, completed 71 Wing under the command of Wing Commander R.H. Moran, whose operations now came under Air Commodore F. Lukis at RAAF Northern Command. However, both 8 and 100 Squadrons still had ground support staff and equipment at Goodenough Island awaiting transport. It would be another four months before the squadrons would be fully united. While 8 Squadron was settling in, 100 Squadron continued operations with a morning and an afternoon raid. Six aircraft attacked the enemy in a jungle camp area, at map reference 491305 Suain East, and five others attacked a bivouac south-east of Parakovia without incident. In neither raid was the result of the bombing observed.

After a fairly casual day, when only one strike with seven aircraft was carried out on a bivouac area in the foothills west of Suain, the next few days were very busy again. The squadron was regularly carrying out three strikes each day, and four strikes on one occasion. Some targets were camouflaged fuel and stores dumps, but most attacks were on bivouacs at Abau River in the Suain area, and in the Brimbol Plantation. Demolition bombs were used in these raids, which opened up huge craters in the camping grounds and associated roads.

An attack on supply buildings at Wewak West on 27 June was a welcome relief for the aircrews. It was a more tangible target than a map reference in the featureless jungle.

Herb Plenty, in A9-600, took off at 0859K to lead eight Beauforts in formation for the attack. A total of 4½ tons of bombs hit the target area. No enemy aircraft were encountered and no serious ack-ack was reported. All aircraft had returned safely by 1045K. In the afternoon Wing Commander Dick Thompson flew A9-600 to lead a formation of seven Beauforts in an attack on troop concentrations in the Suain area. All bombs struck the target area. While returning to base, Beauforts from 8 Squadron were seen in the distance bombing to the west of Suain.

Next morning eight aircraft attacked targets west of Suain. Squadron Leader Herb Plenty was the formation leader in the bombing of a Japanese divisional headquarters, while Dick Thompson, in A9-328, attacked a recently established W/T station at map reference 240370. In both the raids, all bombs were seen hitting the target area. The bombing of the Japanese headquarters was deemed 'very satisfactory', but the result of the bombing of the W/T station was unknown. That afternoon eight aircraft bombed installations in the vicinity of But Mission, and in the evening Treverton, in A9-432, and Pearce, in A9-214, carried out harassing attacks on targets of opportunity from the Dandriwad River to Wewak Point.

On 29 June, John Gregory and crew in A9-432 located and bombed Musendai village to mark the target for the squadron. Herb Plenty, in his favourite aircraft, A9-600, led seven Beaufort crews onto the target to deliver four tons of bombs, which destroyed much of this enemy-held village. The last day of the month saw three more strikes. At 1700K, six aircraft bombed and scattered a concentration of enemy troops west of Suain, while they were preparing their evening meal. Then at 1830K, Pilot Officers Sid Wright and Bill Scott carried out an armed reconnaissance between Dandriwad and Wewak. While returning to base, they used flares to illuminate and bomb selected targets. Kev Nightingale and 'Junior' Borbidge then followed up with night attacks on targets of opportunity in the same area. It was a few minutes to midnight when they both returned to report successful attacks, with some opposition only from machine-gun fire.

This sustained operational flying meant that the ground crews were seriously overworked in rearming and preparing each aircraft for the next mission. In one day the armourers, led by Warrant Officer George Sparks, loaded 42 000 pounds of 250 and 500 pound bombs on 21 aircraft. The effort by the ground crews, at this time in particular, won the admiration of the whole squadron. It was not surprising that the other squadrons of 71 Wing applauded 100 Squadron for its team spirit, which was emphasised when aircrews were seen assisting the ground crews with their maintenance work.

Those Mentioned in Despatches were Warrant Officer George Sparks and fitters 2E, Flight Sergeant Les Clarke and Corporal Jim Mullaney. Announced in the same bulletin was probably the largest number of promotions in the squadron at any one time. Twenty-four flight sergeants were elevated to warrant officers, two sergeants were

promoted to flight sergeants, one corporal to sergeant and five leading aircraftmen to corporals.

Letter writing was sometimes a problem, because of censorship requirements. Mention of anything that could be of value to the enemy was avoided. The official address of the squadron was Group 623, Airforce Post Office 71 Townsville. Mail from home was always eagerly awaited, so as to catch up on news of family and friends. Occasionally, an airman would get a 'Dear John' letter from an unfaithful wife, fiancée or girl friend, '... I hate to write, but I must let you know that my love for you has died away ...', and it concluded by saying, '... thanks for the memories but I love someone else'. Such a letter often had dreadful repercussions, isolated as the airman was from the mainland, and having his hopes and dreams shattered. Plying himself with alcohol, if it was available, was a common practice. However, there was one scheming sergeant who squared the experience. He went around to his comrades collecting all their unwanted photos of women. He then mailed 15 of these pictures to his girlfriend with the following note: 'I'm sorry I can't remember which one you are, but please take the one that belongs to you and send the rest back!' Mostly, however, a 'Dear John' letter was no laughing matter, and the recipient would become morose. The condition was then serious, because it affected his duties. In one case it was disastrous. Padre Grey had to deal with the tragic demise of a popular officer when his body was found in the bush with his service revolver by his side.

No 100 Squadron opened up operations in July with 18 aircraft bombing a supply dump at Matapau and the enemy's 78th Infantry Headquarters at Suain. All bombs hit the target areas, and all planes returned safely within an hour of taking off. A similar program took place the next day, when 15 Beauforts bombed the villages of Musendai and Matapau. That night Barry Fuller and Ross Geue made harassing raids on targets between Dandriwad and Wewak, followed up at midnight by Noel Thompson and Bill Henderson selecting targets of opportunity in the same area.

This type of operation became the pattern for the next week. The Beauforts struck at the Japanese 20th Division Headquarters at Suain West and various other targets from Suain to Wewak day and night. The harassing night, or early morning, raids on supply dumps and bivouacs included strafing troop concentrations after the bombing. No aircraft was hit by ack-ack until A9-535, flown by John Gregory, was hit on a night harassing raid on 7 July. The crew had used flares for the bombing, and had descended to strafe, when the aircraft was hit. The turret gunner immediately reported the loss of hydraulic power at the turret, and it was soon evident that the whole hydraulic system was out of action.

On returning to base, Gregory had no option but to make a bellylanding without flaps. The crash landing on the white coral emergency strip was noisy, but the crew walked away unhurt. It was the second crash that week, as reported by instrument repairer Alan Kingston:

A Beaufighter had floated on take-off, turned upside down and crashed in flames. Radar mechanic John Sherman was on fire duty that day and he stood among the exploding bullets, squirting a fire extinguisher on the flames, but despite cries for help the pilot died.

Meantime, 71 Wing, comprising 8 and 100 Squadron Beauforts and 30 Squadron Beaufighters, supported by a squadron of USAAF Airacobras, attacked barges between Wewak and Muschu Island. In 21 days they had destroyed 18 barges. The Beauforts also averaged 33 operational sorties daily in the Suain to Wewak area, bombing fuel dumps, stores, motor transport, bridges, gun positions and troop concentrations. This amounted to a total of 495 sorties, of which 100 Squadron flew 280 between 7 June and 6 July.

By this time intelligence reports indicated that the Japanese 18th Army, under General Hatazo Adachi, was preparing to attack Aitape. As a countermeasure, General C.P. 'Chink' Hall, Officer Commanding the Eleventh US Army Corps, moved the 43rd Division to reinforce the 32nd at Aitape, and another infantry battalion to strengthen the position at the Driniumor River.

Alan Kingston remembers word passing around that the Japanese were concentrating for a push on the area:

We were told to be ready at a moment's notice, to all squeeze into our 15 or so Beauforts for evacuation. No luggage or boots were to be carried. Some clown said we would have to leave our shirts and strides behind, which would leave us bare, because we had no underwear! Some of the armourers wanted to stay behind and fight the Japs with rifles and grenades. This pirate gang went around asking for volunteers, and when Ralph [Flight Sergeant Ralph Allen] and I declined, they called us 'squibs' [sensible].

When the enemy attacked at midnight on 10 July 1944 at Nyaparake, east of the river, with their distinctive banshee screaming, the 'Battle of the Driniumor' began. The following day, the enemy, although suffering very heavy casualties from the American machine-gunners, overran the American positions at Yakamul, with a regiment crossing the river and heading towards Anamo on the coast. When the American ground commanders called next morning for a maximum air support, 71 Wing Beauforts responded immediately.

Sixteen aircraft from 100 Squadron struck at troop concentrations at Yakamul and South of Nyaparake. Within 10 minutes from take-off, the aircrews were over the target area, and making their bombing runs. Meanwhile, the Beaufighters strafed troop concentration along the Driniumor River at Afua and Selep. No 100 Squadron then carried out 29 sorties with demolition and fragmentation bombs on troop concentrations in villages between Suain West and the Driniumor River.

Thursday 13 July was a sad day for 71 Wing. No 30 Squadron lost three Beaufighters and their crews in one day. The first Beaufighter was shot down while strafing an enemy barge off Muschu Island, which was a known barge base, and another one failed to return from a similar mission. 'Dead-Eye Dick', an ack-ack gun nest somewhere on Boram Ridge, which was suspected to be responsible, then shot down Squadron Leader G.K. Fenton and his navigator. The Air Force had named the gun battery 'Dead-Eye Dick', but the Americans called it 'One-Shot Charlie'. It was a known 'hot spot' where ack-ack had been reported on previous occasions.

In the early morning of 13 July, three Beauforts from 100 Squadron carried out harassing raids in conjunction with PT boats against enemy barges operating in the Wewak area. The use of flares to illuminate their targets significantly aided the accuracy of their bombing, which severely damaged one barge and forced another out of the water onto the shore.

Kev Nightingale in A9-210 set off on a similar mission. Unfortunately, the thermal overload switch for the propellers was set in the 'off' position. Consequently, the propellers stayed in fine pitch position after take-off and the engines raced away at 3200 rpm. Nightingale returned to land, using the emergency cartridge system to blow down the undercarriage. However the undercarriage was not down in time and it collapsed on landing. The aircraft was badly damaged, but the crew walked away from the wreck.

Later that same morning, six aircraft again bombed and strafed Japanese Headquarters at Suain West with good result, while two other Beaufort crews bombed bridges between Boikin and Karawop to disrupt traffic in that area. The bridge at Boikin seemed to be almost indestructible, or it led a charmed life, for it was again still standing after this last attempt.

Daily, for the next week, the Beauforts bombed and strafed troop concentrations and motor transport along the Driniumor River and in nearby hostile villages. Other Beaufort crews were engaged in spotting for a RAN task force, comprising the heavy cruisers HMAS *Shropshire* and *Australia*, and four destroyers. Beaufort crews from both 8 and 100 Squadrons bombed selected targets along the coast to mark them for the Navy. Then they determined and reported the fall of the shots from the naval guns on those enemy positions. The cooperative effort was very successful, and the Navy thanked the Beaufort crews for their excellent service. Several of the crews from 100 and 8 Squadrons, who were involved in the gun laying exercise, were invited onto the *Shropshire*. One of the crews was Stan Polkinghorne's and another was Col Macnaughtan's. When it proved impracticable to invite all the crews, the Navy supplied the squadrons with some beer, which was well received.

Two of the 8 Squadron crews to be invited were Ken Waters' and Allan James' crews, both of which had previously flown with 100 Squadron while stationed at Milne Bay. Bill Ewing from Ken Waters' crew had recorded in his log book a 2 hours and 20 minutes strike on an enemy position at Anumb River on 14 July in cooperation

with the Navy. Army Liaison Officer, Captain Doug Coventry, accompanied the crew and, between Doug Coventry and the navigator, they were able to give very precise instructions. For example, 'Left 200 yards, up 100', which Stan Webber at the radio would pass on to the *Shropshire*. It was not possible to see the result of the naval bombardment, except to say it was hitting the target area. The whole area was blanketed by smoke from bursting shells. Captain Showers on the cruiser gave warm praise for the work carried out by the Beauforts. He particularly singled Ken Waters and crew for praise, which was reported in the *West Australian* newspaper on 24 July 1944:

... one particular Beaufort engaged for the first time in this work played a big part in a successful attack on Japanese barge hideouts and shore defences between Anumb River and But. The observations and corrections were the most simple and accurate he had received, he said.



Newspaper Reports, July 1944
Regarding RAAF/Navy cooperation and the bizarre use of land mines by the enemy

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

While some crews were engaged in spotting for the Navy, others were engaging the enemy at the Japanese regimental headquarters at Suain West. Squadron Leader Herb Plenty led eight crews to bomb and strafe the village and stores depot. An artillery battery at Parakovia then received their attention. The bombing was accurate and the guns were silenced. Further along the coast road, an important bridge near Niap was destroyed, while troops entrenched at Niap were also strafed.

In referring to these and other raids, war correspondent Ray Macartney reported on 21 July:

Japanese troops east of Tadjji have, for the first time in the experience of the RAAF, been planting land mines in the tops of coconut palms, and firing them by electrical contact as low-flying aircraft pass overhead.

Strafing 20 ft. above the palms, two Beauforts were slightly damaged by mines, but returned to base.



Niap Bridge and Wireless Station

On 23 July, John Gregory and crew in A9-554 were sent on a mission to locate, photograph and destroy a wireless station in the vicinity of Niap. They found and photographed the station and then dropped their payload of 2000 pounds of bombs on the target, but the result was indeterminate. Another photo reconnaissance of the area between Yakamul and Brimbol Plantation led to a raid, with demolition bombs, being made on troops, motor vehicles, ammunition dumps and a stores depot at But West. It was not until later, when ground troops entered that area, that these strikes west of But were found to have been particularly successful. Interestingly, some of the damaged motor vehicles were Fords and Chevrolets, apparently spoils of the Malayan campaign, as they still bore AIF markings. Later reports from the ground forces showed that the results from bombing and strafing were nearly always greater than those claimed by the aircrews themselves.



Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock

The arrival at Tadjji, that same day, of an Oxford aircraft, flown by Group Captain Valston Hancock, OBE,⁸⁶ was a surprise. As Director of Postings, he was making an inspection of operational squadrons and units and had taken off from Nadzab at 0840K. In the Mess that night, he provided details of his flight, which was nearly

a disaster. He flew to the mouth of the Sepik River, skirted well to sea around the heavily-defended Muschu Island. Although the best map he had showed little detail from the Sepik to Hollandia (now Djajapura), all went well until he set course for Tadj and then encountered torrential rain. The turbulent conditions made it impossible to fly an accurate compass course. When the storm eased, he turned towards the coast and sighted, through the rain, what he thought must be Aitape and Tadj airfield. He commenced his approach, only to find, to his horror, that the aircraft on the airfield were Japanese. Putting on full power, whipping up the undercarriage, and turning seaward, he hastily left the area. It had been But airfield! Why he was not welcomed at But with ack-ack is a mystery.

The next day, both Beaufort squadrons were called to attack a large concentration of enemy troops advancing towards the American positions at the Harech River. The Beaufort Wing mounted a total of 57 strikes, in three attacks. Dick Thompson in A9-596 led the first 100 Squadron wave of eight aircraft and also the third wave, while Barry Fuller in A9-554 led the second wave with eight Beauforts to disrupt an advance by the enemy. The bombing was accurate, killing many of the enemy and leaving huge craters within sight of the American defenders.

That night two aircraft from 100 Squadron carried out harassing raids in the But and Dagua area. Using flares, Stan Polkinghorne in A9-557 and Geoff Liddell in A9-432 bombed targets of opportunity without incident.

On 27 July, the enemy had again regrouped and the American ground commanders called for maximum air support. No 100 Squadron responded with four waves of bombing attacks, with 14 crews to fly 51 sorties in the day. Squadron Leader John Kessey, who had recently been posted from 8 Squadron, led the second wave attack, while Wing Commander Thompson led the other attacks. A total of 45 tons of bombs were accurately delivered and the Japanese, suffering very heavy losses, were routed. By the end of July, 71 Wing had flown 1510 sorties, dropping 670 tons of bombs. No 100 Squadron carried out 468 strikes and 8 Squadron 418. At the same time 30 Squadron Beaufighters carried out 120 strikes on barges along the coast and 110 Squadron USAAF Airacobras chalked up 504 strikes. The ground crews had worked tirelessly to maintain, refuel and rearm the aircraft and have each aircraft ready for the next 'bash'.

As the Japanese had been halted at the Driniumor River, bombing of villages occupied by the enemy resumed. On 1 August, Dick Thompson in A9-596 led eight Beauforts to bomb Harigena village. The next day he led seven aircraft to bomb and strafe villages in the vicinity of But East. Both these raids caused fires and obvious damage. This was the last operational mission for Wing Commander R.H. Thompson, DFC, but it was the first strike for newcomers Flying Officer Ken Hovenden and crew and Flying Officer 'Buck' Buchanan and crew.

Shortly after the debriefing, Buchanan and crew were recalled. They were asked to explain why they had not reported damage to their aircraft. 'What damage, Sir?'

There was a hole in the starboard wing and a punctured starboard outer fuel tank, which was fortunately self-sealing. It was important to check the aircraft on returning from any mission over enemy territory, and to report even minor damage. The lives of the next crew to fly the plane may well depend on that procedure.

Alan Gardner, navigator in Buchanan's crew, tells of his arrival at Aitape via Finschhafen:

I fitted my gear and myself into the cargo compartment of the Texan pilot's already overloaded C-47. The take-off used up practically the entire strip to then look down a vertical face of coral 600 feet into the deep blue of the harbour. Staggering along at 2500 feet about 5 miles offshore, I got my first view of Manam and Karkar Islands with lazy wisps of steam and smoke drifting from their cones. Off Aitape point the C-47 approached Tadjil strip. After a circuit and a 'dip' passing the tower, we made the standard approach, 'Land towards the east, take-off towards the west, irrespective of wind'. A heavy landing announced our arrival. The cargo on which I had been sitting consisted of 500 lb bombs completely covering the floor. I casually asked the pilot, when thanking him for the lift, 'How much overweight on the trip?' His answer was equally casual, 'Oh, about 6000 pounds!' Wonderful plane the C-47 [DC-3] and wonderful pilots, Texans.

New aircrews to the squadron at Aitape at that time were often surprised at the apparent informality. When not flying, the CO would often relax by dressing in khaki shorts, boots and a service dress cap. Meeting him off duty at his tent, after exchanging salutes and handshakes, there was usually a very relaxed dialogue, as Alan Gardner recounts:

'I'm Thompson the CO, welcome to our happy band of warriors.' When Buchanan had introduced his crew, he asked each one of us about our service. He was surprised to learn that 'Buck' Buchanan had flown DH-83s, 84s [the flying 'butter box'] and 85s in the tropics. 'My God an ancient birdman from Moresby during the "Do"! In that case you know probably more about stuffed clouds and down draughts than I do. Good man to survive that and come back for another tour. Happy to have you in the team.'

August had ushered in considerable changes to the establishment. Laurie Glenn, Dave Hitchins⁸⁷, Kev Nightingale, 'Jock' Green and Ross Geue and their respective crews had completed their operational tours. Shortly afterwards Herb Plenty, DFC and Bar, and crew, together with Barry Fuller, Tony Treverton and Jim 'Junior' Borbidge and their respective crews were also posted south on completion of their operational tours. When Wing Commander Thompson, DFC, completed his operational tour on 4 August, Squadron Leader John Kessey was appointed temporary Commanding Officer.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Alan Kingston provides a glimpse of the squadron's activities at this time from the ground staff viewpoint:

For a couple of weeks our planes were flying and bombing day and night, doing 10-minute hops and reloading bombs consistently as soon as they returned. Someone reckoned a new bombing record was made, and other rumours had the Japs penetrating either south, east or west perimeters! The sea was north. When the activity slowed down to just day strikes and sea night patrols, we guessed the Japs' push had finished or we had run out of bombs. The CO at that time was Wing Commander Thompson, and after he left Squadron Leader Kessey brought some refined sophistication to the ground staff by ordering us to shave now and again.

Early in August, the American ground forces regained the initiative, and by 10 August all enemy resistance in the Aitape area had ended. The 'Battle of the Driniumor', which was mainly won from the air, was over, with the Japanese 18th Army suffering appalling losses. The Americans also had casualties of 597 killed, 1690 wounded and 85 missing, which they described as *moderate!* In the heat and confusion of battle, not all deadly fire comes from the enemy, and that was also the case at the Driniumor. On one occasion the American artillery accidentally fired on their own troops with dire consequences.

It was an important battle to win, for it finished any chance of the Japanese regaining the upper hand in Northern New Guinea. US Major General G.P. Hall sent a commendation to RAAF Northern Command:

I wish to commend the officers and men of 71 Wing for their courageous and whole-hearted support given the Persecution Task Force. Their support in a large measure contributed to the success of the operation by continual interruption of the enemy's lines of communication and bombing and strafing enemy concentrations and supplies. The officers and men of these squadrons have demonstrated their ability and determination to destroy the enemy.

On 14 August 100 Squadron carried out three strikes. In the morning, John Gregory led eight Beauforts to bomb an ammunition dump at Cape Terebu, but there were no spectacular explosions. Included in the flight were two newcomers, Flight Lieutenant Jack Fowler and Flying Officer Hugh Barton, and their respective crews.

Two strikes in the afternoon were directed at a bivouac and a machinery depot with satisfactory results. Stan Polkinghorne led seven aircraft to bomb the camp and Bill Scott was the leader for seven more Beauforts to bomb the electric power plant. Polkinghorne's aircraft A9-574 was hit during the raid, causing it to crash on landing. Although a lot of dust was raised, no-one was seriously injured. Stan, Harry Marsh,

Ron Merlin and Brian Cook walked away from the prang, remembering the old saying, 'any landing is a good one if you walk away from it!'

On 15 August, referendum voting was carried out. It was a Federal Referendum of 14 parts to give powers to the Government in postwar reconstruction and democratic rights. Like so many referenda to alter the National Constitution, it failed to gain approval. In a poll of 4.3 million people, the referendum was rejected by over three million. Only Western Australia and South Australia had a 'yes' majority.

Wireless mechanic, Corporal Bill Jue Sue, took the opportunity of the rest period, like many others, to visit the American PX store at Aitape. However, he was arrested as a suspected Japanese spy. Bill, an Australian-born Chinese, couldn't convince the US Intelligence Officer that he was from 100 Squadron. The Americans called 100 Squadron Operations Room to identify the suspected spy. Alan Gardner and two other officers present at the time jumped into a jeep and drove across to the US 32nd Division. Gardner, a practical joker, said with a straight face, 'Never seen him before in my life'. Aghast, Bill erupted into colourful language, condemning Gardner and the others, who could hardly suppress their mirth. The American MPs burst out laughing, 'It could only be an Australian who would dare to swear at officers like that'. However, Bill was not amused and refused a lift back to camp.

At this time, three more crews from 100 Squadron were posted south, having completed their operational tours. They were Colin Macnaughtan, Bert Godfrey and Geoff Castleden and their crews. Two new crews to arrive were Flight Lieutenant Eric Crisp with his crew, and Flying Officer Ken Beer and crew. They wasted no time in settling in and commenced operating with the squadron the following morning. The target was a fuel dump at Suain West, and the bombing caused a fire with a pall of smoke rising several hundred feet.

'Junior' Borbidge, in A9-557, carried out a reconnaissance of the villages Dandanain, Drindaria and Charov, all west of Wewak. The enemy was found to be occupying these villages and had fortified them.

Equipped with information gained from this reconnaissance, John Kessey led a flight of 10 Beauforts to bomb newly built huts west of Wewak. All bombs hit their targets with good results. Further attacks continued over the next three days in the Wewak area, with 10 aircraft bombing a concentration of troops at a bivouac at Wewak West, and nine aircraft hitting the villages west of Wewak, including Wanginara village.

Both the fliers and the ground staff were showing signs of fatigue after a very busy schedule, so it wasn't surprising that the Commanding Officer ordered two days off duty. While announcing there would be no flying, the Daily Routine Orders on 24 August showed that Flying Officer Alan Lorimer, navigator for Squadron Leader John Kessey, had been appointed as squadron bomber leader. Also listed were the appointments of Flight Lieutenant Jim Ball, from Ken Beer's crew, as squadron wireless leader; and Flying Officer Arthur F. Goodall, in the CO's crew, as squadron

gunnery leader. Two new crews to arrive at this time were Flight Lieutenant George Charlesworth and Flight Lieutenant Philip Dey and their respective crews.



John Kessey and Crew

(L–R: Arthur Goodall, Roy Dingwall, Alan Lorimer and John Kessey)

Next day, Air Commodore H.F. De La Rue flew in to pay a brief visit to the squadron in his capacity as Inspector of Administration. He inspected the office, Operations Room and hospital, and met with many of the support staff. Before departing, he commended the ground crews, who had special mention in a letter from the Air Officer Commanding regarding their splendid support in the recent concentrated effort by No 10 Group.

When flying resumed again on the Saturday, an attempt was made to locate and bomb the ack-ack guns situated in a well-camouflaged site on Boram Ridge. The CO in A9-627, the latest of the 18 serviceable Beauforts at that time, led nine aircraft on the mission. All bombs fell in the selected area, but results were not observed.

In the afternoon, a flight of nine Beauforts, again led by John Kessey, set off to bomb the Brandi River bridge, which had been repaired. Bombs hit the approaches to the bridge, but there were no direct hits.

While the attack on the bridge was underway, Eric Crisp and crew in A9-328, on completing an armed reconnaissance mission, successfully bombed Harigena village,

known to be in Japanese hands. The resulting explosions set fire to a number of buildings, and some good photographs of the raid were recorded.

On 28 August, the area west of Wom Point received attention when 10 aircraft individually located and bombed targets of opportunity. The best result was when an ammunition dump received a direct hit, which sent Verey lights up through the dense smoke. Then shortly after lunch nine Beauforts raided fuel dumps in Brandi Plantation. The raid started a fire, which spread rapidly, and the crews followed up the bombing with a single in-line strafing run. There appeared to be no significant opposition to the raid.

Air Vice-Marshal George Jones, Chief of the Air Staff, visited the squadron on 30 August. He was the Air Vice-Marshal who had reported to the Advisory War Council in May 1943 that a court of inquiry had found the high rate of Beaufort accidents could not be attributed to any one particular cause. Commanding Officer John Kessey knew that Air Vice-Marshal Jones and General Kenney had often clashed on matters of administrative responsibilities. He was also aware that Air Vice-Marshals Jones and Bostock regularly quarrelled because of the RAAF division of administrative and operational responsibilities. Squadron Leader Kessey, therefore, was careful in conversation. Fortunately, the first beer issue had arrived and Mess discussions that night were convivial.

On the last day of the month, the target for 100 Squadron was a group of new huts at Kairiru West. Kairiru Island was well defended, and known to have a naval garrison and a submarine base with well-camouflaged pens opening off natural caves. John Kessey led a formation of nine aircraft in a successful strike when 6750 pounds of bombs landed in the target area.

In the afternoon Phil Dey was the formation leader to attack a village at Wewak West, which again laid the same poundage of bombs in the target area. That brought the total number of sorties for the month to 209, when 170.5 tons of bombs pounded enemy installations and troop concentrations.

By this time, the Americans had reached the Mariana Islands and captured the strongly fortified island of Saipan. With an air base on the Marianas, the Air Force was now within long-distance bombing range of both the Philippines and Japan itself. Then, in a quick westward movement, the Americans had also stormed ashore on Noemfoor Island, 275 miles from Hollandia on a course of 280 degrees, where the three air strips were quickly seized and repaired. Although it was a small-scale invasion, a heavy pre-invasion bombardment took place. This latest advance changed the structure of 71 Wing. No 30 Squadron Beaufighters were transferred to 77 Wing, now at Noemfoor.

What a contrast the war in the South-West Pacific Area was, compared with the war in Europe, where combat troops were normally engaged in fighting a culturally similar enemy on a continuous front. In the South-West Pacific Area the cultural

difference could not have been more stark, and the environment so very different. There were no large cities with connecting highways or railways, no permanent air force stations with modern facilities, and no leave passes for a rest period or social outings for the armed services.

Furthermore, there seemed to be no main battlefront in the SWPA. Warfare, in and over inhospitable jungle in mountainous terrain, was the order of each day, from Timor Island in the Dutch East Indies through Papua New Guinea and New Britain to Tulagi Island in the Solomons.

Jungle warfare presented numerous problems. Movement of heavy equipment was very limited. Vision was restricted, and infiltration by the enemy was easy.

War with the Japanese was particularly merciless, because of the extreme psychological difference between East and West. The Allies also came to view the Japanese as 'subhuman', because of their bestial cruelty to captives. As if to reinforce the subhuman characteristic, the Japanese soldier wore wide, heavy shoes with a separate big toe. The fanaticism of the Japanese soldiers making suicidal attacks also reminded the Allies of the desperate actions of cornered animals.

Then there was the humid tropical environment, with its insects and tropical diseases. Malaria, dengue or scrub typhus was often responsible for as many casualties as the enemy.

Long flights over the enormous expanse of sea, with ominous low clouds, torrential rain, and unpredictable electrical storms, also added to the hazards of war in the tropics. The vast distances meant that air superiority was the dominant factor. Once that had been achieved, MacArthur's 'stepping stones' plan hastened the day of retribution for Japan. He was now some 1400 miles further along the track to Japan than he was 12 months earlier when the first advance was made in taking Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands.

However, Stephen Taaffe, in his book, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, explains how this advance would have been impossible without the significant contribution from Australia:

... not only in the terms of troops but also with supplies and equipment. Despite its inadequate infrastructure—at one point the north-eastern city of Townsville had 185 ships in its 9 dock port—Australia provided MacArthur's forces with a host of mundane goods a modern army needed: cement, pipe, tar, culverts, paints, sheet metal, wire ropes, explosives, and agricultural equipment like ploughs, mowers and cultivators that aviation engineers used to construct airstrips.

In continuing with his 'stepping stones' plan, General MacArthur was becoming frustrated by the need to employ large numbers of troops to confine the enemy

strongholds, which had been bypassed. His staff estimated that 35 per cent of the American forces were involved in restraining these enemy garrisons in New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville. Additionally, a significant number of Allied Air Force units were required to support the ground forces engaged in these duties. MacArthur needed all the assault troops he could muster for an invasion of the Philippines.

Consequently, MacArthur communicated to General Blamey a plan to reorganise the Allied forces in the SWPA. After deliberations, to which Australian Prime Minister John Curtin was a party, it was decided that the Australian forces would take over the garrison confinement duties of the islands in the SWPA. It was also agreed that only a token force of Australians would advance to the Philippines with the Americans. It appeared to be a rational decision, since it was Australia's responsibility to take charge of the Japanese occupying Australian and British mandates.

While this action was politically expedient, it revealed MacArthur's alter ego. He was well aware of the Australians' conquests on the Kokoda Track and at Milne Bay, which halted the Japanese advance. He knew that the difficult conquest of the enemy at Buna and Gona was due to the presence of the Australians, and that they had given more than their share in the Allied fighting through New Guinea. Yet he was unwilling to share with them the recognition they deserved in the ultimate defeat of Japan. General Thomas Blamey, Commander of all ground forces in the SWPA, had been surreptitiously relegated to command only Australians.

The date for the reorganisation to take place in Bougainville was 1 October. New Guinea and New Britain would then follow suit on 1 November. This agreement meant that No 71 Wing Beauforts within No 10 Group, commanded by Air Commodore A.H. Cobby, would remain at Aitape.

The Beaufort squadrons were still closely supporting the American ground forces, and the first air attacks in September were against villages in the But East area. Nine aircraft dropped 18 000 pounds of bombs and strafed the target area using wing, turret, nose and beam guns. A new aircraft, A9-627, fitted with 0.5 inch calibre wing guns and flown by George Charlesworth, led the strafing, while the other Beauforts fired their .303 inch calibre ammunition to good effect. The RAN patrol vessels, armed with torpedoes (P/T boats), were also striking the enemy in support of the American ground forces at every opportunity.

On 3 September, nine Beauforts set out in the morning to search individually for targets of opportunity in the area between Cape Terebu and the Sepik River. All crews reported successful missions, and also gave positions of enemy installations worthy of further attention. In the afternoon, Flying Officer Sid Wright led seven aircraft to bomb and strafe a stores and fuel dump on the Brandi-Boram road. All bombs exploded in the target area to cause damage, but there were no fires observed.

That night, Bob Buchanan and crew in A9-545 elected to carry out harassing raids in cooperation with the American PT boats based on Tumleo Island. It was a bright

moonlit night—an ideal night for hunting barges in the Kairiru and Muschu Islands area. The technique was to fly at 300 feet looking for telltale ripples on the surface of the water. No sooner had Buchanan sighted ripples on the water, than A9-545 passed over two barges, laden with stores, travelling in tandem at high speed.

Buchanan quickly took the aircraft to bombing height, as he turned to attack. Two parachute flares were released, but one flare failed to drop from the bomb hook. One, however, was sufficient to illuminate the barges. The navigator opted to aim for the leading barge and directed the pilot accordingly. Four 250 pound bombs with delay fuzes were dropped from 500 feet. Three of the bombs landed in shallow water on the nearby beach. The fourth bomb skipped on an incoming wave and landed in the open cargo well. The crew immediately abandoned the vessel, which spun out into deep water before exploding.

Meantime, the second crew panicked and drove their barge ashore at high speed, where crew and passengers made a hasty dash for the jungle.

On returning to Tadj, the aircraft was brought to a standstill with the 40 pound parachute flare still on the hook. Navigator, Alan Gardner takes up the story:

Against all standing instructions the armourer reached up and tripped the bomb hook. The released flare activated the fuzing link and the pistol fired with an ear-shattering bang. The hapless armourer, knowing he had at the most three seconds to dispose of the 40 pound flare canister containing the 3 million-candlepower flare and parachute, threw it diagonally in front of the aircraft. The pilot, despite his bulk, quickly exited through the cockpit hatch and joined the two wireless/air gunners, who had already disembarked, at the rear of the plane. I was still in the nose of the plane when the canister exploded. The brilliance of the flare blinded me. I felt my way to the cockpit hatch, scrambled through and dropped onto the starboard wing. Still unable to see I slid to the trailing edge and dropped to the ground. Getting up I ran towards the rear of the plane but fell heavily over a 44-gallon drum. Getting up again I ran a few steps before falling into a bomb crater at the rear of the hardstanding area, where I stayed while the flare candle burned itself out. The plane suffered some superficial damage, such as blistered paint and a softened perspex panel, but interestingly the white coral hardstanding patch had been turned into quicklime.



Bill McArthur
Navigator with Ken Beer and crew

On 4 September Ken Beer and crew carried out a reconnaissance from Dagua to Wewak and took photographs of the Wewak airstrip before bombing and strafing some buildings there. As the result of this reconnaissance, Squadron Leader Kessey led nine Beauforts the following morning to successfully bomb and strafe Augang village. That afternoon, Polkinghorne and Hovenden accompanied the CO in tight formation as far as Dagua before separating to carry out individual bombing of targets of opportunity.

At night, searching for barge traffic continued. This time Sid Wright and crew and Bob Page and crew worked independent areas in cooperation with PT boats from 2120 until 2359K, but did not find a single barge operating. This was not so surprising, as the barges very seldom used lights and were manoeuvrable enough to hide under the jungle overhanging the waterways, or in any darkened nook.

The same pattern of operations continued during the next week with mixed results. At dusk on 9 September, Dey, Charlesworth and Buchanan, with their crews, located and attacked barges in the vicinity of Muschu Island, but no results were observed. The PT boat squadron was alerted and in the early hours of the next morning Bill Scott and Jack Fowler carried out separate searches in and adjacent to the area. Two barges were found sheltering in a narrow cove and Scott and crew attacked. The result

of the bombing could not be observed, but the PT boats had been called and they were immediately on their way to investigate.



**Japanese Barge Depot on Sepik River
The associated camp is well camouflaged**

Practically all the Japanese aircraft had been withdrawn from Wewak by this time to reinforce their bases in the Halmaheras, the Philippines and at Ambon. However an analysis of photographs revealed that much of the Wewak airstrip had been repaired, and camouflaged to appear from the air still to have craters. Group Captain Moran ordered an all-out effort to ensure that it was rendered unserviceable. The aircrews were eager to comply, and Squadron Leader Kessey and Intelligence Officer, Flight Lieutenant Bob Peberdy, saw the order as an opportunity to run it as a competition. Two spotting crews were elected to watch the proceedings, and a scoreboard with the title 'Wewak Welter' was set up in the Operations Room. In keeping with the title, the competition took on the flavour of a picnic race meeting with a map of the course and a race poster. The poster listed the officials, the starters in the race, the 'saddling and stable boys', and the starting times. Arthur Hurst, from the Operations Room, was elected 'Clerk of the Course'. Bill Scott and Hugh Barton and their respective crews were appointed observers to be in position over Wewak to report results.

Nine crews competed, but Scott and Barton also dropped bombs to make 40 strikes on 11 September. Each strike averaged one hour and six minutes, and each Beaufort dropped 2000 pounds of bombs, made up of 500 and 250 pound bombs. The first aircraft was airborne at 0527K and the last aircraft landed at 1710K. All competitors carried out four strikes. In between strikes, Padre Sam Ramsden and radar-mechanic,

John Sherman, offered lemon drinks to the aircrews and then to the ground crews, after they had serviced and armed each aircraft.

Three commentators, Bob Peberdy, Alex Stuart and Roy Smith, were kept busy recording results on the scoreboard, while John Sherman broadcast progress of the event, in racing style and terms, over the squadron's PA system. Eighty direct hits on the Wewak runway were recorded with some of the bombs having delayed fuzing to explode 6 or 12 hours later. Eric Crisp, together with his crew, was declared the winner with 18 direct hits out of 24. In recognition, Eric was presented with a novel 'watch and chain'. Ken Hovenden was second with 17 hits and received a consolation prize of a symbolic piece of 'perspex'. Stan Polkinghorne was third with 15 hits. In the Mess that night, the crews celebrated the event, and cheered Eric 'Poppa' Crisp on being presented with the Wewak Cup. It was a jam tin, suitably inscribed and adorned with two wire handles.

From an outsider's viewpoint this farce in a war situation might bring to mind the expression 'they're a weird mob', particularly when it is realised that fewer than half of those who participated in the 'Wewak Welter' would live to finish their operational tour. However typical Australian humour includes the macabre. Needless to say, the Wewak airstrip was a mess. It was definitely unserviceable.

On Wednesday 13 September, Eric Crisp and crew carried out an armed reconnaissance of the Wewak strip in A9-596. On sighting some activity on the strip, navigator Jack Hughes unloaded 2000 pounds of bombs on the airstrip, while wireless operator Cedric Horne reported the activity to base. John Kessey immediately ordered 10 crews to strike the airstrip. Bill Scott had trouble with A9-555 and declared it unserviceable. He transferred to A9-601, and consequently was last to bomb the target. While the CO and eight of the aircraft successfully bombed the target, A9-612 failed to release all bombs. After several attempts, Bob Page was eventually successful in jettisoning the remaining three bombs in a dive-bombing manoeuvre.

Both the aircraft and aircrews then had a rest day, while the ground crews attended to routine and some overdue maintenance work. Most of the aircrew took the opportunity to swim in the surf at Aitape beach, which was a popular pastime, even though the crests of the breaking waves were very high and dumped heavily on the shelving beach.

At night the open-air theatre, the 'Century Theatre', was the squadron's entertainment twice a week. The stage had been designed by John Sherman and built by a mixture of ground and aircrew members.

Unserviceable 44-gallon drums supported the stage, which was constructed from discarded bomb cases, hessian and bits and pieces to make a very presentable theatre piece. Although designed for live theatre, the stage was used much more often to support a white screen for a picture show.

As with all electrical equipment exposed to the tropical elements, the movie projector succumbed to the humidity. It developed an intermittent fault in the sound reproduction circuitry. For several days everyone within earshot was subjected, over and over again, to the rendition of *Shine on Harvest Moon*. All were sick of the sound of it, while Sherman and the wireless mechanics tried to locate the source of the trouble.



**No 100 Squadron Crews Returning from a Strike
Tadji, September 1944**

R-L: R.B. 'Dick' Webb*, Norman Danes, Sid Wright, Ken Hovenden*, Col Haslam*,
J.T. Hughes*, G.L. Park*, C.A.V. Horne*, Eric 'Poppa' Crisp*, Wal Ellen*,
Roy Corbett and Howard Treloar

(* – indicates member later killed in action)

When Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Air Commodore J.P. McCauley, visited the squadron on 15 September, he brought with him the good news that the Americans had successfully landed on Moratai Island, to the north of Halmahera Island. He saw the squadron take off to carry out 22 strikes on Wewak and its environs during the day. Buchanan and crew, on an early morning reconnaissance, had observed work proceeding on the Wewak airfield. Before leaving the area the navigator-bombardier, Alan Gardner, guided the pilot to bomb successfully the new work being done to the airstrip. Then, from 0729K to 1620K, the Beauforts struck at Wewak in five separate waves, to drop 20 tons of bombs. Two days later the exercise was repeated with 23 strikes in three separate waves of aircraft.

This heavy schedule against enemy troop concentrations continued in the Wewak area, mainly on Cape Moem, where elements of the Japanese 18th Army were bivouacked. Suain West also came under attack. Flight Lieutenant Charlesworth, who had recently been appointed leader of 'A' Flight,⁸⁸ led nine aircraft on a successful strike, where all but one bomb hit the target area.

Meanwhile, the PT boats were busily searching for enemy barges loaded with supplies. Hank Pearce and crew had been coopted to assist the PT boats on an early morning search in the Victoria Bay area. Flying in A9-626, the crew successfully bombed one barge, which was sheltering close to shore in an endeavour to escape the PT boat.

On the last day of the month, Phil Dey led 13 Beauforts to bomb and strafe a stores dump in the Danmap River area, with very satisfactory results. The raid destroyed stores, vehicles and personnel.

Squadron Leader Dey, at this time, was temporary Commanding Officer, while Squadron Leader Kessey was on mid-operations short leave. Among the new arrivals to 100 Squadron during the month were Pilot Officers Bob Maynard, Brian Chapman and Max Hulse and their crews.

A summary of operations for the month included the statistics that, since arriving at Tadj, No 71 Wing had dropped 21 000 tons of bombs and fired 175 000 rounds of ammunition. The end of September also saw 71 Wing being returned from North-Eastern Command to Northern Command, as the two Beaufort squadrons would be operating in close support of operations of the 6th Division Australian Infantry.

A significant increase in malaria cases, which had almost filled the hospital, prompted Flight Lieutenant 'Doc' Rowe to order two Atabrine⁸⁹ tablets to be taken daily. There was also a number of the squadron suffering from a nasty fungus called 'tropical ear', and others suffering from tropical irritations, such as ringworm, dermatitis and tinea.

Bob Maynard, one of the newcomers to 100 Squadron, was given the job of carrying out performance and acceptance testing of recycled aircraft for the squadron. Most of his test flights were carried out at Port Moresby, and his wireless operator reported that most aspects of the tests were enjoyable:

Steep turns, 'landing' on a cloud and alternately running on one motor at a time were exhilarating, but screaming dives tortured my ears. The centrifugal force when pulling out of a steep dive also drained the blood from the brain and everything appeared grey in colour for a few moments. On a few occasions the aircraft was not accepted until faults were corrected. During one test flight in A9-473, a steep dive suddenly became vertical. Fortunately, Maynard had height and therefore time to act. The elevator trimming control had been connected in reverse.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

When not flying due to the weather, crews played chess or cards, wrote letters or fashioned some keepsake from perspex or metal. Jack Shipman, a WAG in Jack Fowler's crew, made a set of salt and pepper shakers from .303 bullets mounted on a perspex stand. The author used the time to fashion a 105 mm shell case, from the local American anti-aircraft battery, into an ashtray and matchbox holder. A sailing ship above a scalloped base was its main feature. Later, when chrome plated, it became a treasured piece of art.

Ron Laird, a WAG in Bob Maynard's crew, took to gardening. He tended a water melon vine, which he had grown from a seed. The vine flowered profusely but produced no fruit, until someone reminded him there were no bees to pollinate the flowers. When he used a toothbrush to crosspollinate the remaining flowers, the vine produced a single melon. As an experiment, he impregnated the melon with whisky, which he claimed from the MO in small doses over a period of time. A piece of pyjama cord, forced into the stem of the melon, soaked up the whisky from an enamel mug. When it was ripe and shared around, all agreed it was delicious.



Bob Maynard and Crew

(L-R: Bob Maynard, Ron Laird, Col King and Arthur Challis)

Throughout October, when not engaged in squadron attacks, individual aircrews continued the bombing of targets of opportunity. When Wing Commander Waddy visited Aitape on 7 October, he flew with 100 Squadron. With the Wing Commander

on board, John Kessey led the way, as 12 Beauforts attacked the enemy-occupied villages in the Barabis Group. Bombing with 500 pounders and incendiary bombs resulted in several fires, which were observed for some time by the leader's crew while leaving the target area. Brian Waddy again accompanied the squadron, two days later, on a similar raid to set fire to enemy-occupied villages situated between Dagua and Boikin. Other targets to receive attention by five or six of the squadron's aircraft at a time were the enemy-held villages in the Maprik area, the Tong region, the Danmap River area, and also troop concentrations at Walum.

With the impending departure of the American forces bound for the Philippines, Colonel Simpson, AIF, and Lieutenant Colonel Neal, MC and Bar, MM, arrived to liaise with 71 Wing. After attending several aircrew briefings, Lieutenant Colonel Neal lectured aircrew on the 'Aitape Area'. With the aid of a map, he disclosed many of the Japanese positions of advantage in the mountainous regions of the Torricelli Ranges, which the Army would be required to subdue before ultimately retaking Wewak. These positions were native villages built on the crests of knife-edge ridges, rising 2000 to 3000 feet from the valley floor on either side.



**Japanese Troops Relax
(from captured film)**

The Japanese occupied these villages, and the terrified natives had been virtually enslaved. The natives despised the Japanese. When talking about the *man belong Japan*, those who had escaped always illustrated their speech by spitting on the ground to indicate their hatred. The natives had originally chosen the ridges for their villages, not only to provide safety from marauding tribes, but also for sanitary purposes.

They were ready-made hill forts for the Japanese, but Lieutenant Colonel Neal was confident that, together with the Beauforts, each objective would be achieved on schedule.

On 24 October, three crews from 100 Squadron were called on to carry out anti-submarine patrols for a convoy proceeding to Finschhafen. Hank Pearce in A9-633 set off at 0500K and provided convoy protection until relieved by A9-554 piloted by Brian Chapman. George Charlesworth and crew then took over from Chapman to complete the convoy duty. All three aircraft landed at Madang to stay overnight. Next morning George Charlesworth had engine trouble and crashed on take-off. A9-632 was badly damaged but the crew walked away uninjured.

The following day, 71 Wing Intelligence Officers sent a Walrus amphibian from No 8 Communication Unit, stationed at Madang, to parley with the natives on Karasau Island. This small sausage-shaped island was situated about five miles off the New Guinea coast, midway between Dagua and Cape Pus. The Walrus, with the pilot, wireless operator and a senior Army Liaison Officer on board, settled on the sea and taxied towards the island, while Warrant Officer Bob Page and crew in A9-633 were overhead covering the proceedings.

The natives in their canoes paddled out to meet them. As they were guiding the amphibian towards the shore, the Japanese opened up with heavy artillery from near the mouth of the Hawain River some seven miles away. Exploding shells splashed into the sea ahead of the Walrus, some as close as the length of a cricket pitch, but the crew proceeded to anchor the amphibian beside a reef on the western end of the island. All the natives, except two in their canoe, which the Walrus had taken in tow, went ashore. The Walrus wireless operator, Tony Brown, called the Beaufort to report that the officers, who were now wading ashore in the wake of the two natives, should be back again within 15 minutes.

Fifteen minutes elapsed, and Bob Roberts in A9-633 called the Walrus, but there was no reply on the wireless. Instead, red Verrey pistol shots were fired from the amphibian and rifle shots from the island were hitting the Walrus. Page dived very low over the stricken Walrus and came under fire from a machine gun on the island, while Roberts reported the situation to Tadj. When making a second run over the Walrus, which was now well alight, a second Beaufort piloted by Brian Chapman arrived on the scene. Chapman and crew in A9-616 immediately came under machine-gun fire as they circled the Walrus. Page and crew lined up the gun nest and silenced it with a successful bombing run. A9-371 piloted by Max Hulse, who, like Chapman, was out looking for targets of opportunity, then arrived to survey the scene. The Walrus, by now was a smouldering ruin. There being no sign of survivors, the Beauforts proceeded south-west across the bay of the island to bomb the island's only village.

During the last week in October, the 19th Brigade of the 6th Division Australian troops began arriving at Aitape to replace the two American Divisions, who were now advancing to the Philippines. It was both amusing and annoying to hear, on Bill Jue

Sue's homemade short-wave radio, Tokyo Rose announcing, 'When the Australian 6th Division attempted to land at Aitape, they met stiff opposition from the Japanese Imperial Army and suffered severe losses. They should get back to Australia, where the Americans are with their women.'

Meanwhile, plans were well advanced for Australian troops to a land at Jacquinot Bay on New Britain. General Blamey's plan was to regain control of a major portion of New Britain. As George Odgers reports in his book, *Air War Against Japan 1943-45*, the aim was '... to drive the enemy patrols back to the Gazelle Peninsula ... and contain a large force in the northern end of the island with a considerably smaller one'.⁹⁰

Leading up to a successful landing, the RAAF would be required to wage a 'softening up' program of disruption on the Gazelle Peninsula to restrict Japanese activities at Rabaul. This responsibility rested with Wing Commander Waddy, who had recently been appointed to command 6 Squadron. He sought reinforcement from the two Beaufort squadrons operating out of Tadjji, and both squadrons complied. No 100 Squadron sent five crews and their aircraft. The captains of the five crews on detachment to 6 Squadron were Wright, Polkinghorne, Fowler, Buchanan and W. Scott.

The reinforced 6 Squadron was airborne at 1708K on 26 October for a night raid on a stores depot in the dispersal area of the Tobera airfield, which was on the eastern side of the peninsula. The route required the navigators to sight Cape Orford and the Warangoi River. The bombing run was to take place east to west and to break away to the north-west. Unlike many previous flights from Vivigani to the Rabaul area, the weather was fine, and as darkness fell a waxing moon overhead illuminated their way. As expected, searchlights probed the sky. Spasmodic ack-ack sent curved tracers toward the aircraft. However, because the planes were flying at 12 000 feet, the aircrews were not unduly concerned for there was none of the intensity of the firepower of earlier raids. Then as two searchlights illuminated A9-559, Flying Officer Buchanan took evasive action to escape the lights. Consequently he had to make a second run for his navigator/bombardier to aim and bomb.

The bombing runs, at one-minute intervals by the aircraft, went smoothly and the crews reported, 'most bombs on target and others slightly to the north of the airstrip', although results went unobserved.

The formation turned at Crater Point for the return trip, and used the signal from the radio beacon at Kiriwina to home towards that island. On sighting Kiriwina, the wireless operators tuned to the Vivigani beacon for the home course. The average time in the air was 4 hours 30 minutes.

Wing Commander Waddy was satisfied with the previous night's work, and called for a raid on another stores depot north of Rabaul Township. All aircraft were on their way by 1610K and they had an uneventful flight to Rabaul. The Beauforts arrived

over the target area shortly after sunset to be greeted again with searchlights sweeping the sky. Flying again at 12 000 feet, however, the ack-ack guns had only small chance of hitting them. The majority of the bombs fell in the target area, which started fires on the north shore of Simpson Harbour.

While the Australians were preparing for the landing at Jacquinet Bay, another successful raid was carried out on the west of Rabaul on 29 October with very little opposition. HMAS *Vendetta*, *Swan* and *Barcoo* bombarded the shoreline unopposed. Flight Lieutenant Koch, MC, a coastwatcher, had earlier reported that there were no Japanese in the area and that the Bay was unprotected. Precautions were taken, however, when the landing took place on 4 November. The Beauforts had been placed on the alert but they were not required. The Australians landed without incident and set about establishing their camp.

The Beauforts were called on two days later to attack enemy troops in the Wide Bay region, which forms the eastern neck of the Gazelle Peninsula. The 23 Beauforts had departed Vivigani at 0400K and arrived in formation over the target area shortly after dawn.

Breaking formation, Waddy took the 6 and 100 Squadron aircraft into the throat of the Bay to bomb troop concentrations at Kalai Plantation. Meanwhile Wing Commander Conaghan took his 8 Squadron crews to bomb installations at Waitavalo Plantation to the north of the Bay. The Navy then took over and shelled the two target areas for the next 20 minutes.

When the five crews on attachment to 6 Squadron returned to Tadjji, they found that 7 Squadron had arrived and had joined 71 Wing in operations. The Wing was now under the command of Wing Commander Eric Cooper, AFC, on Group Captain Moran's promotion to control the Aitape Air Task Force. They found, too, that almost all the Americans had departed and that the 17th Brigade had joined the 19th Brigade of the 6th Division AIF to take over operations in the Aitape-Wewak campaign.

Although the Beaufort squadrons and the Americans had worked very well together, there was a greater sense of 'team spirit' to be operating in an all-Australian force.

Intelligence reports revealed that the enemy had dispersed troops away from the coastal strip at Dagua into the Torricelli Ranges. From Wewak, too, the Japanese had fanned out into the valleys leading into the Prince Alexander Ranges. The Army would, therefore, be engaging a widely dispersed enemy on the coastal plains, and in thick jungle on the mountain ridges and ravines. In anticipation of the requirement to provide close air support to the Army in the mountains, a flight of Boomerang aircraft from 4 Squadron had also been seconded to 71 Wing.

While the destruction of the enemy barge traffic had drastically curtailed supplies reaching the Japanese in the Wewak area, there had been reports of submarine sightings and indications that supplies were getting through to the enemy. Consequently sea patrols were introduced, and each crew took turns to carry out night patrols.

On an armed reconnaissance on 7 November 1944, wireless/air gunner Colin King describes how the crew in A9-627 became lost at sea:

It was the blackest night imaginable, when we took off at 2330K. There was no moon or stars because of heavy cloud cover. We had been doing a square search for some two hours, until there was a radar indication of a fleet of ships. When we investigated and came directly over the indicated vessels, we dropped three flares, only one of which worked. However, it proved to be an American convoy on a westerly course for Hollandia, so we turned away to resume our search pattern. The pilot asked the navigator for a course to steer. We soon realised there had been a misunderstanding about headings as we circled the convoy, for 'Tanglefoot', the navigator, hadn't a clue where we were. We were lost at sea.

No-one spoke while we all silently cursed 'Tanglefoot'. Maynard asked if I could do anything on the 'Jesus Box', as he always called the radar. I suggested that we climb to a much higher altitude and fly two minutes on each leg of a square search, while I scanned the radar screen. On the second leg of the search I picked up what could be a landmass at the extreme limit of the screen range. We headed in that direction to confirm that it was indeed the New Guinea mainland. When we sighted the mouth of the Sepik River, we followed the coastline home.

On Friday afternoon 10 November, Commanding Officer Kessey received a call for the squadron to assist in a rescue mission off Wewak. Three low-flying American Mitchell B-25 aircraft had been shot down, undoubtedly by 'Dead-Eye Dick' at Boram Ridge. Only the day before the guns at Boram Ridge had also shot down a Boston A-28 in the same area. The pilot of one of the Mitchells had managed to ditch his aircraft, and the crew, having inflated the rubber dinghy, was endeavouring to prevent it drifting towards the shore. A9-559, piloted by Warrant Officer Bale, was dispatched to cover the Mitchell crew and prevent any approach by an enemy boat, until help arrived. When machine guns on Muschu Island began firing on the dinghy, Bale dive-bombed the gun nest and silenced it.

At 1650K a rescue Catalina from Madang arrived and circled the area, as a flight of Beauforts came on the scene. Being a very dangerous rescue mission for the Catalina crew, 71 Wing had called for six aircraft from each of the three squadrons to cover the operation. While the Catalina alighted on the water and taxied towards the dinghy, the Beauforts began bombing and then strafing the known coastal gun positions.

Dr Hilarie Lindsay, MBE, has written a full and vivid eyewitness account of this incident, entitled *Rescue at Wewak*. Her husband, Sergeant Phil Lindsay, was one of the Catalina blister gunners and he takes up the story:

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

We sighted the Beauforts, which were flying low in formation, about two hundred feet. They came in two abreast and flew over the Japanese camp, bombing and strafing. Each one had four 250 pound bombs, and was blazing away with their guns. Under cover of the bombing, we landed on the water between the shore and the dinghy. We were so close that even though we were on the water we felt the impact as the bombs landed.

The resulting barrage allowed the Catalina pilot to cut both motors. This procedure was needed to give the Catalina crew, and the six in the dinghy on a very choppy sea, the opportunity to secure the rescue safely. Phil Lindsay continues:

One man was lost. The wireless operator had gone down with the plane. They could hear him scratching trying to get out. It was a metal-bodied plane and he was trapped. It was he who had sent the SOS. The rescued men were very emotional about being saved and him not getting out. I think they said his name was Joe.

By this time the sea swell had increased, but the pilot was observed to bounce and skip the aircraft very skilfully on the crest of the waves to time his take-off on a final ridge cap. Sergeant Peter Fletcher, the wireless operator on the Catalina, was still busy on the wireless answering questions from the Beaufort captains, and then, as the flying boat became airborne, he thanked the Beauforts for their assistance. Later he commented, 'We probably owed our lives to them'.



**Air-Sea Rescue Catalina
B-25 crew rescue, 10 November 1944**

The captain of the Catalina, Flight Lieutenant Ian Wood from 8 Communication Unit, had carried out a number of previous missions, but none as daring as the Wewak rescue, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

USAAF Colonel Brandt commended Air Commodore Lukis at RAAF Northern Command on the outcome of the rescue, and thanked all the men who participated. He went on to say that the rescue 'was another example of the splendid co-operation between the RAAF and USAAF. The efficiency and despatch with which this operation was carried out reflects great credit on all concerned.'

Sea patrols continued, while bombing and strafing attacks on enemy-occupied villages were being carried out. Warrant Officer Johnson and crew completed a five hour anti-submarine patrol in A9-601 on Wednesday evening, 15 November. As Johnson came in to land, he did the usual glances sideways from time to time to help gauge the approach. As he touched his Beaufort onto the Marsden metal airstrip, the sides of which were lit with kerosene flares, the aircraft swung very sharply to starboard. The starboard leg of the undercarriage collapsed, and the aircraft carried one of kerosene flares along with it as it ground-looped and came to a halt. The whole starboard wing was well alight, as the crew scrambled through the plane's exits onto the ground and hurried away. Their hasty retreat was well timed, for a loud explosion sent pieces of the aircraft hurtling into the air after them. The Beaufort was totally destroyed.

A new activity for the squadron began at this time. Army units were setting up staging points along the coast and in the Torricelli Ranges beyond the source of the Driniumor River. In close support of the Army, the Beauforts were dropping supplies into the staging points instead of bombs on the enemy. On 16 November, Maynard and crew demonstrated a method of supply dropping to the troops. The procedure involved flying very low and very slowly with the bomb-bay doors open, to drop supplies into a marked area. Next morning Buchanan and crew successfully carried out the first of the supply drops to the 19th Brigade at Niahlau and at Babiang about two thirds of the way along the coast to Niap.

Some of the supply drops included pigeons. When a commando platoon moved deep into enemy territory, homing pigeons were often used to carry messages. Four birds, in a crate attached to a parachute, would be dropped. Portable wireless sets were heavy, and a map reference, sent by wireless, was not as sure as a good sketch, sent by pigeon, showing the enemy position. Supply dropping was an interim measure for the Beauforts and soon became the responsibility of the Boomerang and Dakota 'Biscuit Bomber' squadrons.



**Nos 8 and 100 Squadron Crews Returning from a Strike
Tadji, November 1944**

The Army drive was soon underway, with the 17th Brigade proceeding into the Torricelli Ranges, to engage the enemy in the mountains at altitudes above 5000 feet, while the 19th Brigade advanced on the coast to the Danmap River.

On 19 November, 10 aircraft from 100 Squadron attacked troop concentrations at Suain East in support of the Army's progress along the coast. Meanwhile another six of the squadron's Beauforts bombed the enemy further inland at the Maprik villages with general purpose, fragmentation and incendiary bombs.

Providing air support to Australian troops waging jungle warfare in the deep valleys and steep ridges of the Torricelli Ranges was very satisfying, but it was no easy task. One ridge looked very much like the next, and each village had a sameness about it. The Japanese were experts at camouflage, which also made it difficult to locate an enemy stronghold in the jungle. Often it was the enemy that disclosed its position by firing on the aircraft.

The quality of life in the RAAF at Aitape very quickly deteriorated following the departure of practically all the Americans for the Philippines. On moving the squadron from Goodenough Island to Nadzab and then Aitape, much equipment and stores requiring ship transport had been left behind and delivery was still awaited. The squadron had become accustomed to the generosity of the Americans but now the RAAF ground crews were left short of vehicles and equipment. Perhaps the greatest loss was the use of the two American road tankers. Fuel drums were now manhandled,

and hand pumps were used to transfer fuel. There was also a shortage of food, and rationing was enforced.

By late November there was practically nothing else to eat but baked beans, because an Australian supply ship had not arrived on time. WAG Vic Tucker, from Ken Beer's crew, takes up the story:

We had beans raw, heated or in soup. We called it 'submarine soup'—a lot of water with a few beans. The popular reply to the question, 'How are you?', was 'full of beans'. When Ken drew the short straw to bring in fresh fruit for the squadron, I flew to Goodenough Island with him to operate the wireless. We stacked the plane with bananas, papaws and custard apples. I had to sit at the wireless desk to have fruit stacked around me and packed into the back of the aircraft. Fortunately we arrived over Tadjì four hours later without incident.

Ironically, the supply ship arrived at Aitape the following day. Rumour persisted that it had approached the coast within range of the Japanese shore guns at Wewak and was forced to change course farther seaward.

From time to time individual crews carried out reconnaissance of the airstrips at Dagua, Boram and Wewak, and also of suspected munitions or stores depots. Photographic reconnaissance missions at low level were always a 'dicey' venture. When the enemy gunners commenced firing, the pilot would take violent evasive corkscrew action and 'hightail' it out of the area. Several aircraft from 100 Squadron experienced ack-ack damage on these missions.

On 21 November, during a low-level reconnaissance of the Wewak airstrip, which was still a regular target to keep it unserviceable, Bob Brett in the turret of A9-554 saw five Zeros in camouflaged bays. There were numerous wrecked planes at one end of the airstrip from previous bombing, but the camouflaged aircraft were new sightings.

On that occasion Lou Aitken nearly lost the camera he was using, when the plane was hit, and the pilot struggled to keep the plane in the air. WAG Kevin Taskis takes up the story:

We were hit by light ack-ack fire. One shot came through the navigator's window and passed through the back of his chair to explode in the hydraulic lines in front of Jim's legs. Fortunately Lou was down the back with the camera, otherwise we'd have had a dead man on our hands. We came back to base knowing we had no hydraulics. Fortunately the emergency landing gear charge worked and blew the wheels down.

Jim Forrest arrived back with a piece of shrapnel in his right leg and made a fine landing considering the loss of the hydraulics and damage to his instrument panel.

This incident occurred at midday and there had been no telltale flashes from the ground or smoke puffs in the air, although one of the guns positioned somewhere on Boram Ridge was thought to be responsible.

Off-duty servicemen in the tropics were confined to their camp environs. Consequently, they organised their own recreation. At the 'Century' open-air theatre, films were always the main attraction, but stage presentations were also very popular. The 43rd Division American Army Military Band, although restricted on the stage, gave an excellent farewell recital. A week later the 6th Division Military Band took the stage to play to a large and supportive audience.

No 100 Squadron Adjutant, C.J. Amos, then organised an amateur and professional talent quest, which caught the imagination of the soldiers and airmen and was a huge success. John Amos, who had been a radio personality pre-war, was the compere. The items from the competitors were broadcast over the RAAF 'Century Radio' broadcasting station—'The voice of Aitape'—which had been established by voluntary labour and direction from radar officer 'Spike' Svensen.

Among the competitors was George Charlesworth, OC 'A' Flight of 100 Squadron, who surprised everyone with his recitations, especially his monologue of *The Zoo*. With so much talent on offer it was not surprising that a concert party, 'The Century Players', was formed. Their initial presentation, produced by Sherman, was a first-class vaudeville show.

Surfing, of course, was a very welcome pastime, but there had been casualties, particularly in the Army, until beach patrols were formed. Before long an Aitape surf lifesaving group was formed, but, as all servicemen surfed in the nude, there was the problem of wearing a badge of office to recognise the authorised lifesavers. The problem was resolved by the lifesavers wearing caps. Subsequently, enthusiastic training sessions were held to the Bronze Medallion standard until there were more than 100 medallion holders in eight clubs.

The success of the lifesaving league at Aitape is summed up in the book, *A Nation Grew Wings*, by Burton Graham and Frank Smyth: 'Over the past three weeks prior to the formation of the branch there were five drownings, and for the same period afterwards nil deaths, but twelve rescues were made in the first five days'.

Sport was always an important part of any serviceman's life, and games and competitions were always taking place at every opportunity. Cricket, with improvised equipment, had been played on the coral emergency airstrip at Tadjji, but the constant airfield activity interfered with full concentration on the game. When the Americans departed, their softball patch in the jungle was enlarged into a full cricket oval, and an Army-Air Force Cricket Association was formed. In time the Australian Comforts Fund and Service Amenities supplied full cricket gear. A premier competition was conducted over several months with fourteen teams competing, which was won by an 8 Squadron airmen team, captained by Corporal Bill Campbell.

Baseball games continued to be popular after the Americans had gone, particularly among the armourers, and competitions resulted in the 100 Squadron armourers becoming the premiers.

'Swy', or 'two-up' gambling, took place in secluded venues because it was officially forbidden. There were the legendary fortunes made and lost on the toss of the two pennies, but as IOUs were unacceptable it is doubtful that anyone became destitute.

When a boxing ring was erected and boxing competitions were introduced, many of the two-up players changed to betting on the boxers. Joe Caldwell, one of the Intelligence Officers in 100 Squadron, was a promoter, who arranged some very competitive matches in all divisions from bantamweight to heavyweight. One of the most popular boxers was Bill Bickley, who had earned the 6th division AMF middleweight championship in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, 100 Squadron had been carrying out daily sea patrols, following a sighting of the Japanese moving fresh supplies of fuel and equipment from the wharves at Wewak. After a week of searching day and night over a wide area, however, no sighting of suspected submarine activity was discovered. Flying straight and level on each leg of a search pattern over the Pacific Ocean for hour after hour, even in daylight, was boring and tedious for the pilot, navigator and gunner, as they scanned the local scene. The wireless operator was more intensely involved. He concentrated with his eyes glued to the screen of a radar set, searching for the presence of any surface vessel. Although using his eyes, his thoughts were free to range. Thoughts of Beaufort crews on night patrols, who had failed to return from the notorious Area 'A' anti-submarine patrols, might pass through his mind. Don Tonbridge and crew from 8 Squadron, for instance, had been the most recent casualty. There had been no messages that they were in difficulties. They simply disappeared.

On 28 November 1944, A9-554 was returning from another sea patrol at about 500 feet above the sea, when the turret gunner, being exceedingly bored, decided to have some target practice by firing on the white capped waves of the sea. The staccato firing could be heard over the noise of the engines. Then a slight jerk to port followed, as bits and pieces suddenly flew off the tail fin and rudder, much to the consternation of the gunner and the rest of the crew. Something went wrong with the interrupter mechanism, which prevented the turret guns firing as they pass the tailplane. There appeared, however, to be no serious damage. The aircraft arrived back to land at Tadjji, with the very embarrassed gunner explaining the situation to the ground crew.

On 1 December, a number of 100 Squadron's officers were elevated to higher ranks, commencing with the Commanding Officer, John Kessey. He had been acting Wing Commander for some time, and was confirmed in that rank, while Flight Commanders, George Charlesworth and Phil Dey, were appointed acting Squadron Leaders. Deputy flight commanders, Stan Polkinghorne and Sid Wright, were appointed acting Flight Lieutenants. Other officers to act as Flight Lieutenants were,

Arthur Goodall (wireless leader), Jim Dean, (gunnery leader), John Amos (Adjutant), J Turnbull (radar) and George Christie (equipment).

The arrival of an Avro Lancaster at Tadjji the next day caused a great deal of interest. It was 'G for George', previously operating in 460 Squadron in the UK. The aircraft had toured Australia to support the fourth 'Liberty Loan'.⁹¹ The aircraft and crew were now at Tadjji to demonstrate the latest in navigation aids, which included the H2S and Oboe radar systems.⁹²

In the meantime, 'Buck' Buchanan and crew, and Ken Hovenden and crew had been granted mid-operations leave. Both crews departed Tadjji in A9-432, which was to be delivered to Laverton on transfer. The first landing was at Higgins Field (originally known as 'Jacky Jacky'), on Cape York, where two airmen requiring transport to Victoria came on board. The aircraft then landed at Cairns to allow Warrant Officer McMahon to go on leave in his hometown. At Archerfield (Brisbane), Alan Gardner left the plane to proceed on leave.

The aircraft arrived over Bairnsdale late in the afternoon of 8 December. On making an approach to land, the pilot was forced to go around again, when another Beaufort, practising circuits and bumps (touch and go landings), came into view on his flight path. On the second approach one engine on A9-432 seemed to cut out, and the aircraft rolled violently and plunged into the ground where it exploded. All seven on board were killed instantly. The fatalities included Robert Buchanan, Ken Hovenden, Robert Thompson, Colin Haslam, Walter Ellen, and passengers James Warren and Edward Willett.

The many rivers and swamps in the Aitape area were shallow most of the time and drained quickly after heavy rain. It was typical crocodile country, but no-one had reported seeing any crocodiles near the camps or the village. However, on 10 December, LAC George Cook disappeared while wading across the river that separated the 100 Squadron camp from Aitape. Two other airmen, wading in single file a few paces ahead of George Cook, heard nothing unusual. An extensive search by RAAF and Americans failed to find any trace of the body.

Copies of the *Dusty Road Daily*, a single-sheet camp newspaper published by the 43rd Division US Army Signal Company, which was one of the few American units remaining in the Aitape area, supplied the latest news. In Vol. 3 on 8 December 1944, the special feature was the third anniversary of the attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor. It then went on to report the latest war news: 'On Leyte, stiffening Japanese resistance indicated that it might bring the campaign into the bloodiest stage. Some US ships were damaged as 8 out of 10 enemy raiders were shot down over Leyte Bay.'

On the reverse side of the newsletter, there was another view of the Leyte landing described by Berlin Radio, 'Japanese bombers had sunk a battleship, five transports and another unidentified warship in the Leyte Gulf in the Philippines'. In lighter vein

to end the local news bulletin, the 'Shows To-nite' column advertised a 35 mm film of *Falcon out West* to be shown at the 'Century Theatre' 100 Squadron at 1900, followed by a viewing at 111 Fighter Squadron and other venues.

For each movie there were usually two reels of film, and, as each reel was shown at the first venue, it was transported to the next squadron or Army unit for viewing. Occasionally a sudden tropical downpour would wash away a road between picture venues, which prevented a reel of film getting from one place to another. The luckless viewers would be left wondering how the remainder of the story ended.

When the *Dusty Road Daily* advertised the presentation of the 'Dusty Road' show by the 43rd Army Special Services on 14 December, the venue near the Americans' camp area was packed. Bob Hope, Carol Landis, Jerry Colonna and their supporting artists delighted the troops with singing, dance band music and comedy routines. The night was oppressive and hordes of insects were attracted to the stage lights, but the artists gave a splendid performance. Together with encores, almost three hours of euphoric entertainment passed all too quickly.

The very hot and humid conditions continued, but within a few days steady rain began to fall about an hour after sunset and continued throughout each following night, which brought relief and a night's rest. While these conditions prevailed, prior to the wet season setting in, the bombing in support of Army advances continued.

When the 17th Brigade in the mountains reported renewed activity with a strong concentration of the enemy at Musimbilim, 71 Wing Beauforts attacked in force over the next few days.

On 18 December, Phil Dey in A9-616 led 12 Beauforts from 100 Squadron in a successful strike, which included dropping incendiaries to destroy a number of huts in Musimbilim.

When the Army called for a strike at Perembil on 23 December, 'Poppa' Crisp led six aircraft to attack the village, which was an assembly centre for Japanese patrols. While no fires were started, the crews could see during their strafing circuit that the bombing had caused extensive damage.

The 2/2nd and 2/4th Battalions of the 17th Brigade in the Torricellis had driven the Japanese from the Tong group of villages, following preliminary attacks by the Beauforts. The Army was then poised to take the enemy-held villages of Sahik and Perembil, which the 100 Squadron Beauforts had already bombed on three occasions during the previous week.

Although these battalions had killed many Japanese during their hard-fought advance, their own casualties had also been mounting. The 2/2nd Battalion had 64 deaths, the same number it had during two years and nine months service in the Middle East and Ceylon. The jungle warfare in New Guinea, where every skirmish was sudden

and close at hand, was very different to their earlier experience of seeing the enemy at some distance over open ground.

As Christmas Day approached, thoughts of the Army engaging the enemy in the Danmap area prompted the aircrews to send greetings to the soldiers, who had been on the offensive for almost three months. They had cleared the enemy as far south as the Danmap River, on the eastern side of which the enemy was well entrenched and held an advantage point at Nambut Hill.

One of the more artistic members of the squadron, Alan Lorimer, designed a large Christmas card for members to sign on the back page. A hamper of Christmas fare was packed to withstand a heavy landing, which together with the autographed Christmas card and a bundle of paperback books, was dropped to the troops on 24 December. It was appropriate that Lorimer, as navigator in the Commanding Officer's crew, should be the one to deliver the parcel after bombing the enemy on the other side of the river.

Christmas Day was celebrated quietly, but each Mess was decorated with coloured crepe paper, which had come from 'The Century Players' concert party kit, and had been cut into streamers. The Christmas dinner was a credit to the ingenuity of the squadron cooks, who camouflaged the usual stodgy dinner with a tasty sauce. In the Airmen's Mess, the airmen were seated, while the officers served them. The Commanding Officer explained that the reversal of roles was being performed as a token of respect and gratitude for the airmen's untiring effort to keep the planes in the air, and to have the squadron running like clockwork.

Red Cross packages added to the festival ambience. Each package contained biscuits, barley sugar, seeded raisins, a quarter-pound tin of chocolate, a pack of cards, a book, a tin of fifty cigarettes, three packets of chewing gum and a razor blade. Parcels, sent by loved ones, which contained pudding, cake or caramel (made by boiling a tin of condensed milk), were also welcome, especially when shared and washed down with an enamel mug of beer.

Next day, the war commenced again, followed by almost daily bombing raids (until the end of the month) on Perembil and Musimbilim, which caused a great deal of damage to both villages. Three new aircrews taking part in their first bombing raid were John Matthews with S. Amott, Cliff Fisher and Rex Green; Ian Fielding, with Rob Fletcher, Ern Negus and Bob Lambert; and Wal Lukeis with Bill Gardner, John McCutcheon and Owen Carrick. Postings from 100 Squadron included Sid Wright with Roy Corbett, Howard Treloar and Norm Danes, who had completed their tropical tour of duty.



No 100 Squadron Christmas Card, 1944

The squadron had flown 195 of the total 515 sorties flown by 71 Wing during the month. Of the sorties flown, 54 of them were bombing and strafing strikes in support of Army operations.

There was no flying on New Year's Day 1945, but the squadron took to the air practically every day of the month from then on, even though the weather was deteriorating. The well-fortified village of Perembil in the mountains was again bombed and strafed on 2 January, while Cliff Scott and crew carried out an armed reconnaissance of the

Matapau area on the coastal plains. On Wednesday evening 3 January, Bob Page and crew carried out an anti-submarine patrol of five hours duration in very wet and turbulent conditions. The rain intensified after dark, and Ted Christensen and crew managed to patrol for only two hours before being forced to abandon the search. On returning from their patrolling, each crew chose a suitable target to bomb, but, due to the foul weather, results were not observed.

When the Army called for a strike on Pelnandu, eight Beaufort crews, including Stan Polkinghorne and crew on their final strike before leaving the squadron, responded by dropping a variety of general purpose and incendiary bombs. All bombs struck the target area. The squadron then descended to treetop level to strafe while circling the village. The Australian troops, who had been watching the air attack, moved into position and attacked the village as soon as the strafing ceased.

While supporting the Army, the squadron had also continued to conduct armed anti-submarine patrols, both day and night as far north as the equator. No sighting of the enemy was reported, and, on returning to the New Guinea mainland, each crew found a suitable target on which to unload their bombs before landing back at Tadj.

When a Japanese submarine, which had evaded detection, entered Humboldt Bay on 12 January and sank an American tanker, the patrols were concentrated seaward from Hollandia for the next three days, but there was no sighting of any submarine. A rumour persisted, however, that the enemy submarine had fired several torpedoes, and that one ran harmlessly onto the beach.

Most of the bombing and strafing missions inland were now being carried out in atrocious weather over mountainous jungle country. There was no point in crew members taking their life jackets or parachutes, but each individual made sure he had his webbing belt with emergency rations, his .38 revolver buckled on and his machete strapped to the lower left leg. All airmen realised that, in one of the most prehistoric lands on earth, with a jungle infested with vermin and the enemy, the chances of surviving were slim.

Once airborne, the planes would assemble in formation and then head for the target area. Flying under low-level cloud was the most hazardous, not only because of the rugged terrain and being more vulnerable to ground fire, but also there was the risk of self-inflicted damage when bombing. The cloud base over the target was often under 1200 feet and the aircraft would jolt from the exploding bombs.

Getting through a gap in the Torricelli Ranges, with ridges hidden by dirty grey clouds, was dicey. The swirling windswept clouds made flying in tight formation very rough, and it was quite unnerving as the wing tips of adjacent aircraft rolled and pitched up and down only a few feet away.

However, once the bombs were dropped on the target, all aircraft immediately descended to treetop level to strafe the target area. The squadron would circle the area

for the nose, turret and side gunners to spray streams of lead into buildings, foxholes and fortified gun nests along the ridges, often making the Japanese keep their heads down and preventing them from manning their guns. These strikes were always in close support of the Army, who rushed to the target area in an attempt to secure the position.

The villages of Salena and Aroa in the Torricellis were attacked on 15 January, when Wing Commander Kessey led eight aircraft in a midday bombing and strafing assault. The same action took place the following day with Flight Lieutenant Crisp leading the way. The timing of the raids was critical. The leading aircraft had to be in contact with the battalion or commando squadron radio operator, who would give precise map coordinates for the target. The soldiers then had to be ready to advance once the bombing had taken place.

Coordination between the Air Force and Army had improved to such a stage, that frequently the dust had not settled as the soldiers moved on the village to attack the enemy. At first the Army would mark the target with mortar shells to give off a coloured smoke. However, the Japanese soon became aware of this tactic and fired the same smoke coloured mortar onto our Army lads. Very careful map reading was therefore required on the part of the Beaufort navigators! On other occasions the Japanese raced from the village into the jungle as the planes approached, and returned in time to defend their position when the planes departed.

The 2/10th Australian Commando Squadron reported:

It was during the 2/10th Squadron's patrolling activities in the Torricelli Mountains that we formed our close bonding with the RAAF. Without the support of the Beaufort bombers our efforts to dislodge the enemy from occupied villages would have been mostly beyond our capabilities. Having air support, the ground troops were able to intensify patrolling and engage in heavy fighting, knowing reliable back-up was always on call.

The RAAF Beauforts provided accurate bombing and strafing, and on many occasions compensated for lack of artillery support. Our casualties in the Torricelli and Prince Alexander Mountains were minimal in comparison with the heavy toll inflicted on enemy, due to air support provided by the RAAF.

During some of these raids, the cloud base descended and enveloped the area. The navigators then had to give the pilots reciprocal bearings to fly blind, to retrace their tracks exactly from the target through the gap in the mountain range. John Matthews and crew in A9-474, who had seen service in Malaya before joining the squadron, decided the risk was too great. Matthews would continue to circle the target and climb to 13 000 feet before leaving the area, and setting course for Tadji.

On 17 January, two reconnaissance Boomerangs from 4 Squadron were making observations over Cape Moem, when the Japanese guns at Boram shot down Flying

Officer Skuthorp's aircraft. However, the pilot of the other Boomerang returned to base with valuable information of the enemy's position. New stores had been dumped on the beach and fuel was stored at the fringe of the jungle at Cape Moem. It was again proof that enemy submarines were still able to assist their beleaguered troops. At 0830K the following morning, eight Beauforts from 100 Squadron bombed Cape Moem with a variety of bombs, including incendiaries.

Although considerable damage was observed, no fires resulted. A second strike was called for the afternoon, when Ted Christensen led nine aircraft to bomb the area. A similar bombload was carried, but two of the aircraft also carried delayed fuzing bombs as well. This time fires were started, which spread rapidly and were burning fiercely as the aircraft departed.

On leaving the target area, Hugh Barton in A9-612, as instructed, successfully carried out a low-level reconnaissance of the nearby Brandi Plantation area. However, one 500 pounder had failed to drop during the bombing raid and was still in the bomb bay, which was a concern for Barton. He tried manoeuvres to shake the bomb free and eventually succeeded. Unfortunately his navigator, Pilot Officer Ivan White, who had been photographing at the rear of the plane at the time, was jerked off balance. He fell awkwardly and broke his leg.

Next morning six aircraft from 100 Squadron and a flight from 8 Squadron attacked a camouflaged stores dump at Cape Moem, which had been marked with incendiaries by the Boomerang pathfinder pilot. This raid was quite spectacular. The bombing caused huge explosions and fires as trucks, well camouflaged under nets in the coconut plantation, were sent somersaulting into the air before bursting into flames. Following the raid Jack Fowler and crew, as instructed, carried out a successful low-level reconnaissance of the Moem Peninsula to assess the damage, which was complete devastation of the enemy stores.

Meanwhile, bombing and strafing strikes continued in the Wom Point to Wewak area, and on the Wewak airfield to keep it unserviceable.

On 20 January 1945, six aircraft from 100 Squadron were on a mission to destroy an enemy fuel and ammunition dump in the Torricellis at Elimi, near Perembil. The flight comprised A9-557, 616, 622, 626, 627 and 655. It was the 53rd bombing strike for Flight Lieutenant Jack Fowler and his crew in A9-557, so they had become accustomed to being shot at. This strike was no different, except that A9-557 was returning with a live 40 pound bomb stuck in the bomb bay. Jack made a series of sharp dives over the sea, hoping to dislodge the bomb, but without success. Finally he alerted the crew that he would attempt a landing without flaps so as not to shake the bomb free. Jack Shipman, at the wireless, advised the control tower at Tadjj of the situation. Navigator Geoff Waite took his position beside the pilot, and Flying Officer Frank Smith, who had earlier eased himself out of the turret, sat braced against the rear fuselage alongside Army Liaison Officer, Captain Cyril Nancarrow.

The Beaufort landed smoothly but was travelling at about 80 knots (148 kph) as it approached the end of runway. Fowler applied the brakes, but to his dismay they failed to operate at all. He swung the aircraft onto an access road and continued until one wheel braked momentarily, which slewed the aircraft into four jeeps parked at the Air Transport Command Office before crashing into the front of the building. The bomb fell from the plane, but fortunately landed harmlessly onto the back seat of one of the jeeps. The aircrew and Army officer were unhurt but two soldiers in the jeeps were injured, one fatally. A9-557 was badly damaged and never flew again.⁹³



Newspaper Reports, January 1945

The sighting of a concentration of motor transport approaching Welubi village, east of But, was the target for 22 January. John Kessey in A9-633 led six Beauforts in the attack. The vehicles were in line astern, because of heavy rain, as the Beauforts attacked. The bombing was accurate and all vehicles were destroyed.

The weather was terrible on 23 January 1945 when six aircraft, led by Flight Lieutenant Christensen in A9-627, flew in twin 'vee' formation through the gap in the Torricelli

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Ranges. Flying in tight formation was necessary, so as to have visual contact with each other in the murky conditions. The target for the day was Amuli Nanu East. During the next half an hour conditions worsened, and it was really rough flying, as the planes pitched and tossed in the clouds. Arriving within the target area, the Beauforts descended to about 1200 feet, and the target appeared through a break in the clouds.

As always there was the welcome sound of 'bombs away'. Almost as the words were uttered, there was a tremendous explosion as two planes at the front of the formation collided. A9-626 had no chance at all. It disintegrated, and the three planes immediately behind, 622, 654 and 655, flew through much of the debris, while A9-627 shattered more slowly before smashing into the jungle.

The remaining crews had time to contemplate the loss of the two aircraft and their mates on the return journey. Hugh Barton, Dick Webb, Ken Pontt, Ken Davis and Loris Epps, a ground crew passenger from 8 Squadron, had been in A9-626. While in A9-627, there had been Ted Christensen, Bernie Buckner, John Chivas, Les Cooke and a ground crew passenger, Ken Gay.

When the first report in Pidgin came through, *big fella balus – all bugger up pinis* (the aircraft was completely destroyed), there appeared to be no survivors. Yet John Chivas, who was in the turret of 627, although injured and burned, was found alive and cared for by natives, until rescued by an Army patrol.

In contrast to concern for the loss of humanity, the callousness of war is revealed in the reporting the losses from this incident in the Unit History Sheet:

A9-627, A9-626 collided and crashed over target area. 6400 x .303 ammo., 56 Signal Cartridges, 4 Illuminating Cart., 2 Aluminium Sea Markers, 2 Smoke Puffs, 4 Marine Distress Signals, 8 Flame Floats, Lost in crashed Aircraft

Corporal Alan Kingston recalls occasions when ground staff flew on missions:

I shared a tent with airframe fitter, nineteen-year-old Ken Gay, who had a brother in aircrew. Ken often went on strikes to check the planes and talked me into going for a couple of rides, but all I saw while peering down the bomb bay were puffs of dust where the bombs fell into the jungle. I don't know if the target was hit or not. I was not very keen on going, as planes often came back with bullet holes in them, and even treetops collected from low strafing. Ken did not return from his last ride; his plane went down over the target with all the crew.

Ken came from Adelaide, and I don't know if his brother returned after the war. With an average of 15 serviceable Beauforts in the squadron, depending on losses and new planes arriving, the ground crews were very busy, and the

aircrews were admired for laying their lives on the line. It is a great pity that the adage, 'the good die young' applied, as many young aircrew did not return.



Officers Mess Aitape, January 1945

The rain continued, and the coastal rivers were in flood. The coastal roads taking supplies to the AIF were impassable. The squadron, however, was up early the next day to attack targets along the coastal plain. Six aircraft were airborne at dawn to bomb and strafe newly erected huts between But and Dagua. Although huts were damaged, the rain prevented any resulting fires taking hold.

Later that same morning, when an enemy barge was sighted operating at the mouth of the Anumb River, Wing Commander Kessey rallied three aircraft to attack at 0900K. The barge was caught in open water and destroyed. After lunch Flight Lieutenant Fowler led four aircraft to bomb and strafe a stores dump west of But. The bombing was accurate, and the strafing penetrated buildings and bunkers.

When the rain eased on 25 January, Bunahoi Nanu East was the target for the next three days. As Flying Officer Maynard led the five Beauforts on the first of the raids, he was aware that Group Captain Val Hancock, flying in A9-612, was in the formation. It was the Group Captain's first raid. The bombs, including incendiaries, hit the target and small fires were observed. Group Captain Hancock again participated in two more similar raids, led by Flight Lieutenant Crisp and Wing Commander Kessey, on the same village and camping area. Each raid included a thorough strafing after bombing with fragmentation and incendiary bombs, which set fire to a number of huts.



**Wewak Airstrip, Eastern End
Reconnaissance photograph**

That natives in enemy-occupied villages would probably become casualties from the air attacks was, of course, a consideration. It was known that the natives in these villages were enslaved. Their main task was to tend vegetable gardens for their Japanese masters, who had taken over their huts for accommodation and to store weapons and ammunitions. The villages became military targets, and there was no alternative but to attack them. No-one spoke about the probable killing of innocent natives, but subconsciously it was a responsibility that every aircrew member had to bear. For most of the aircrews the end justified the means and that was the end of the matter, but, for some, the accountability was to weigh heavily on their conscience.

When Crisp and crew sighted a Japanese transport plane, which had landed overnight at Cape Wom, photographs were taken for analysis. On arriving in the Wewak area, the Japanese pilot would have found the airstrip unserviceable and been forced to

land in the kunai grass at Cape Wom. It would have been virtually impossible to take off again. An attempt had been made to camouflage the aircraft with tree branches, and motor transport wheel tracks to and from the plane indicated that the cargo had already been unloaded.

The Japanese obviously realised that the transport plane had been spotted. As the Boomerang squadron, which had been notified of the situation, arrived on the scene, the Japanese destroyed the grounded aircraft themselves.



Sergeants Mess Aitape, January 1945
Taken outside the Mess

The enemy anti-aircraft gun nest, 'Dead-Eye Dick', or 'One-Shot Charlie' as the Americans called it, was still operating successfully on a hill behind the Wewak airstrip. Attempts had already been made to destroy the guns, but it had not been an easy target to locate. The Japanese concentrated in six-gun ack-ack posts and, instead of firing at individual attackers, usually fired up in a vortex through which the attackers had to fly. Nevertheless, these particular gunners did not follow the usual pattern, probably to conserve ammunition. They waited on opportunities and targeted aircraft they were confident they could hit. John Kessey decided that the gun nest was long overdue for squadron attention. The most difficult job was to place a smoke bomb accurately to identify the target for the squadron to bomb. On 30 January 1945 John Kessey elected to do the job himself.



Boram Airstrip and Ridge
'Dead-Eye Dick', a well-camouflaged gun nest, operated from this ridge

He describes the event:

As Commanding Officer I dispatched the formation off to bomb the gun position from a height of 6000 feet, while I with my crew took off in A9-616 to locate the target and drop the smoke bomb. A9-616 was positioned at treetop height on the ridge just south of the target. We kept as low as possible to avoid detection. As we passed over the gun position with the smoke bomb released, our starboard engine was hit and put out of action. At this point I feathered the starboard airscrew, applied maximum power on the port engine, and climbed as high as I could. I called up the squadron above and told them of our predicament. I asked Alan Lorimer, our navigator, to give me a course for the alternative target we had been given at briefing. It was a fuel dump, at a map reference position on the eastern part of Muschu Island, just off Wewak Point. Meantime radio operator Arthur Goodall was flat out trying to inform

Headquarters of Northern Command at Madang of our situation. He was not having much success, but I think he ultimately contacted Townsville after a frustrating effort. I headed the aircraft on the course Alan gave me, and we approached a mass of jungle only, with our target somewhere below. We had reached 1300 feet from our climb, and I was only able to maintain that height by maintaining maximum power on the port engine, and flying at 96 knots airspeed, just on the stall. As we approached the Muschu Island target I delayed opening the bomb-bay doors till the last moment, due to the extra resistance of the exposed doors causing a reduction in our airspeed and stalling. After Alan had released the bombs over the target, we smartly closed the bomb-bay doors and considered our alternatives!

I did not consider that we had any chance of getting home on the port engine, and that I would be finishing up ditching the aircraft in the sea. I told the crew their best chance of survival was to jump for it.

The crew unanimously decided they would stick with me and try for home, so our next job was to throw out everything that was moveable and not required on our remaining flight.

During this time Roy Dingwall who was still in the rear gun turret, kept lifting our spirits with a running commentary of explosions and bursts of flames and fire erupting from our target. The intelligence report had been correct. We had accurately located the dump and damaged it extensively.

The aircraft would start to quiver, indicating it was just about to stall and fall out of the sky and I would ease the controls forward ever so slightly, gain a few knots airspeed and climb back to where we were. I kept doing this continuously every few minutes or less, and we slowly approached our base at 96 knots—we had 100 miles to cover from Muschu Island to Tadji and we were keeping out to sea to avoid any further enemy anti-aircraft action.

On crossing the coastline into friendly territory, we called the tower and informed them that we could not proceed on a normal circuit and land from the west due to lack of speed and control of the aircraft—our height was now down to about 1000 feet. As we approached the runway, we delayed lowering our landing gear till absolutely necessary. The tower was trying to get an 8 Squadron aircraft to go around again instead of continuing his approach from the west on final for landing—the aircraft continued on its final approach and completed the landing.

Meanwhile we were staggering along on an approach from the east. I did not want to crash land the aircraft, it having got us home safely so far, so decided to land on the runway behind the landing aircraft. Estimating the correct time to commit ourselves to the landing, I dropped the landing gear, put out full flap and treated the Beaufort like a Gypsy Moth and sideslipped it down from our safe height and landed over the top of the 8 Squadron landing aircraft. I then instantly applied maximum brakes, which were not normally as good as we would have liked them to be. In this case, they helped slow the aircraft up to a safe speed to turn the aircraft around at the end of the runway to the right

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

using the port engine to assist the turn. We then came to a halt on the taxiway and everyone heaved a mighty sigh of relief on being home again.

The squadron in the meantime had bombed the gun position without sustaining damage, but whether the guns had been destroyed was unknown. A beer bottle attached to each of the 36 bombs made sure that they would make a squealing noise when dropped.

February opened up with a round of anti-submarine patrols. Maynard and crew in A9-626 set off at 0134K, followed by Crisp and crew in A9-493 at 0430K, to patrol an area north of Wewak. At 0550K, Fielding and crew in A9-655 were airborne to patrol an area east of Wewak, followed at 0610K by Kessey and crew in A9-633 patrolling north-westerly. Val Hancock and crew in A9-626 took over patrolling shortly after sunset. No sightings of enemy submarines, ships or barges were reported.



Balif Airstrip

A typical light aircraft airstrip and supply dropping area, surrounded by jungle

Meantime, Bill Scott and crew in A9-655, which had been flown earlier, carried out an armed night patrol of the coastal strip and used flares to bomb a campsite near But.

During the next 10 days, 100 Squadron resumed the same pattern of bombing and strafing villages prior to the Army launching its attacks. Although the villages of Balif and Malin were taken with only minor resistance, as a result of air attacks, the Army was experiencing very strong resistance at Maprik.

Once the area was cleared at Balif, the construction of an airstrip commenced immediately. The natives had to drag a heavy frame of logs repeatedly to level the ground, but within a few days an Auster ambulance aircraft was able to land.



Papuan Bulldozer
Native power to build an airstrip, in this case Balif

On 11 February, Wing Commander Hugh Conaghan and crew, who had recently arrived on posting from 8 Squadron, accompanied by Flying Officer Maynard and crew on their 45th strike, attacked Nambut Hill. Japanese soldiers were ensconced in zigzag trenches on the southern end of an encampment on the ridge, which was well fortified. Some bombs hit the ridge while others exploded in the valley beside the target.

The attack was part of a regular assignment by 71 Wing, which was leading up to a combined Army and Air Force attack due to take place shortly. Both 7 and 8 Squadrons had already carried out a number of similar raids, but being such a sharp ridge, not all bombs were hitting the target area.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Later the same day, Flying Officer Jim Forrest and crew in A9-612 joined in a sea search between Tadjji and Wakde Island for a missing 7 Squadron crew. However, nothing was found of A9-599 with Flight Lieutenant Ray O'Farrell and crew, who had failed to return from a mission in the Wewak area.



**Hugh Conaghan and Crew
With one of the maintenance crew ensuring all is ready in the aircraft**

The Beaufort Wing was out in strength again the next morning. Hugh Conaghan led four 100 Squadron aircraft in the attack on Nambut Hill with some success, while Val Hancock and crew in A9-612 bombed and strafed the village of Barangabandange. Then in the afternoon Phil Dey led five Beauforts in formation to bomb and strafe Bombita, which left the buildings in smoking ruins.

Meantime the Army had moved into an attacking position below Nambut, and on 14 February a combined bombing, strafing and shelling of the Japanese stronghold took place. Army smoke mortars identified the targets for the Beauforts, and four 100 Squadron aircraft, in formation led by Wing Commander Kessey, dropped their bombs from 1400 feet.

The 16th Brigade, which by this time had relieved the 19th Brigade, reported to the Beaufort Wing, 'Your bombing accurate and effective'.

Two days later, the 2/1st Battalion of the 16th Brigade made a surprise attack and captured a section of the hill. Before the smoke and debris had settled from the bombing by 71 Wing, the soldiers were on the ridge. Yet, it was not until 19 February, that the Army finally occupied the whole of Nambut Hill.

In the meantime, 6 Squadron had moved from Goodenough Island and was now based at Dobodura. A call for 6 Squadron to assist 71 Wing resulted in six Beauforts and their crews arriving at Tadjì to assist in the Torricellis and the Sepik area. At the same time as the last Nambut raid was taking place, Flight Lieutenant Fowler and crew in A9-666 were leading the flight of 6 Squadron Beauforts to bomb and strafe the enemy in an unnamed village near the Marienberg Mission in the Sepik area.

When one of the Beaufort pilots began to drink heavily, it added to the stress of his crew. However, it had its humorous side. Late one night he staggered into his tent dripping wet, and smelling of slime and decayed vegetation. In a drunken state he had obviously fallen into the swamp behind the line of tents, but fortunately it was only knee deep. One of his crew took him along to the showers and put him in, fully clothed, to wash off the scum. 'Mate', he said in a slurred voice, 'I've been swimming for hours. I'm lucky to be here.'

On the morning of 16 February, after another a drinking session, the pilot of A9-654 appeared normal enough as he flew in formation with another five aircraft to attack again the village of Barangabandange near Ilaheta. The bombing run went like clockwork, each aircraft dropping two 500 pounders, four 250 pounders and two canisters of incendiaries. When it came time to go in low for strafing, the pilot flew the aircraft through a hail of lead from the squadron, when he bisected the circling aircraft with their turret and side guns blazing away. Diving the aircraft below the surrounding jungle and flying right down the centre of the village, he fired his wing guns like a fighter pilot. He was firing at the Tambaran,⁹⁴ the tallest and most important of the buildings. His crew continued to blaze away with the turret, nose and side guns as they not only looked into a Japanese machine-gun nest, but encountered a hail of slugs from their own planes. At the end of his run, the pilot did not quite make it in pulling out, and A9-654 smashed through the treetops. The crew were all unusually quiet on the return flight! The pilot's judgement was so faulty on landing that the aircraft bounced three times—20 feet or more each time—before he got it right. The crew was glad to be back on terra firma (the more the firmer the less the terror).

The navigator lay on the ground and kissed the Marsden matting, while the wireless/air gunners inspected the damage. The radio mast and aerial, and a wing radar antenna were gone, but what amazed the crew was the lack of bullet holes, for there were only a few in the starboard wing.

When 10 ground crew airmen had completed their tropical tour and were posted south on 18 February, Northern Command made up for the loss by posting 21 airmen to 100 Squadron from No 1 Reserve Pool. However, the gain in staff numbers was short lived for, within a week, another 20 airmen were posted south on completion of their tropical tour. Instrument repairer, Corporal Alan Kingston, was among this group to be posted and writes:

After 15 months in New Guinea without leave, and after shedding two stone in weight, I was glad to fly back to Australia. On landing in Brisbane I marvelled at the rows of electric lights and a milkman's horse galloping along with cart behind. I then enjoyed my first fried egg and a slice of bread for 15 months.

Cloud cover in the Torricellis was again making flying conditions difficult, as the Army called for support in their push towards Maprik, which was the next enemy stronghold to be subdued. There were still several occupied villages in the same area from which the enemy also had to be cleared. On 20 February, Ilaheta was bombed and strafed by five aircraft at 0900K, carrying a novel type of bombload.

Experience had shown that the normal general purpose bomb, even when fitted with a rod extension to turn it into a 'daisy cutter', only flattened the hut that it hit. A suggestion was taken that anti-submarine bombs, set to blast in the air, would be more effective. The results at Ilaheta showed that the anti-submarine bombs were indeed more effective.

John Kessey led seven aircraft on another successful attack, that same afternoon, on a string of unnamed villages situated on a ridge in the Torricelli Ranges. The Torricelli Ranges comprised a maze of steep valleys and sharp ridges covered in jungle, which required the navigators to search diligently for the target. Although much of the terrain, such as the streams, waterfalls, landslides and significant changes in vegetation, became familiar to aid map reading, a sudden change of weather in the mountains was always the main handicap to identifying a map reference. That was when the navigator had to call on all his experience and resources. Fortunately the target ridge this time was readily identified through a veil of scattered cloud. Again anti-submarine bombs were used, which caused a great deal of damage, particularly to the palm-thatch huts.



No 100 Squadron Officers and NCOs, February 1945

Identified personnel include:

Wing Commanders: John Kessey and Hugh Conaghan; Squadron Leader John Dewar

Flight Lieutenants: Arthur Coulls, Gert Jones, Roly Cooper, Alex Stuart, Bill Lawrence, John Amery, Stan Damman, Eric Gogler, Barrie Blackstone, Col Walters, Alf Short, George Major, Max O'Neil, Allen Langley, Ted Ingram, Col Bastian, Harry Mason, Norm Thomas, C.J. Amos, Charlie Rowe, Stan Carter, Gordon Dun, Jim Birt, Jim Mannix, Bob Ainslee, Bert Jones, Arthur Goodall, Dave Jones, George Charlesworth, Alan Lorimer, Roy Dingwall, Eric 'Poppa' Crisp, Jack Hughes, Cedric Horne, George Park, Jack Fowler, Geoff Waite, Frank Smith, Jack Shipman

Flying Officers: Arthur Orman, Jock McCann, Norm Owens, Charife Gordon, Bill Clarke, Ken Noble, Colin Cameron, John Caddy, 'Spike' Svensen, Eric Hendy, Jerry Reen, Bob McClelland, Bob Maynard, Jack Northover, Jim Jarvis, Des McCormick, Bill Gardner, Alf Tisdall, 'Lucky' Ainscombe, Des Latham, Bill Leabeter, Gordon Hughes, Mervyn Sheridan, Keith Bauer, 'Snow' Palfaman, Geoff Liddell, Gordon Hodgson, Frederick Westphalen, Bill Scott, Jim Dean, Jim Forrest, Stan Polkinghorne, Harry Marsh, Sid Wright, Cliff Scott, Ken Beer, Bill McArthur, Alan Gardner, Paul Goodwin, S. Ivan White

Pilot Officers: Wál Lukeys, Ron Laws, Frank French, Bill Bremner, Max Hulse, Hank Pearce

Warrant Officers: Ian Alanton, Col King, Bob Nielsen, Cedric Hall, Clem Martin, Harry Fennell, Bob Breen, Harry Smith, Merv Hazelwood, Don Milligan, Don Anderson, Jack Stevens, Les Richards, Kev Taylor, Ron Laird, Arthur Chellis, Ian Adamson, ? Kirkby, Cliff Poole, John Mitchell, Tom Scully, 'Blue' Young, Doug Murray, Ralph Bienke, Bill Powers, Bruce Rowe, Len Aitken, Jack Rolfe, Roy Corbett, Howard Treloar, Norman Danes

Flight Sergeants Ivan 'Ippy' Carter, 'Scotty' Ireland, Laurie Martin, John Mathews, Bob Atkinson, Jim Robbins, Jim Stevenson, Bill Halyard, Jock Dickson, Ted Bassett, John Chellew, Don Lankin, Eric Bymes, Jack Abbott, Norm Smith, Don Robertson, S. Amott, O. Fosdike, ? Schneider, ? Gillies, John McCutcheon, Keith Watts, Doug Fletcher, John Coffey, Stan Baker, Eric Schofield, Bob Lee, Owen 'Shorty' Carrick, Howard Iremonth, Pete Thomas, Lou Caulfield, Joe Hall, Des Hair, Ted Earl, Harry Symonds, Vic Threader, Mervyn Nash, Ray Barber, 'Red' Ryder, Allan Davies, John Sanders, Keith Watson, Laurie Toohey, Louis Moore, George Kirkegard, R. 'Bob Brett, Kevin Taskis, Ron Merflin, Brian Cook, 'Kitch' Philpott, Jack Sommers, Jim Ball, Vic Tucker, Colin Haslam, Wál Ellen, Bernie Buckner



John Kessey in the Cockpit

Ilaheta was attacked again over the next three consecutive days in bombing and strafing raids until occupied by the Army on 24 February. On these same days, attacks were also made on villages perched on steep ridges having only map references as identification. When the Army called for a strike on gun positions on one particular hill, indicated only by a map reference, Wing Commander Kessey led six Beauforts loaded with demolition and anti-submarine bombs.

The strike was successfully executed on the position and the guns were silenced. Another call was made to attack enemy concentrations at map reference 575005. The Army described the result as 'complete destruction'. In this bombing and strafing raid by seven Beauforts, there was a wide range of Air Force ranks piloting the aircraft—Group Captain Hancock, Wing Commanders Kessey and Conaghan, Squadron Leader Dey, Flight Lieutenant Crisp, Pilot Officer Forrest and Warrant Officer Lukeis.



**Phil Dey and Eric Crisp, January 1945
Taken in the Operations Room, Aitape**

Altogether the three Beaufort squadrons of 71 Wing flew just under 1000 hours on operations during February, to carry out 456 sorties and drop almost 250 tons of bombs. More than 100 of these sorties were directed at Nambut Hill. The tally would have been even higher if more fuel had been available. For the first three weeks of the month, fuel had been rationed, due to the late arrival of the ship carrying the fuel. Even so, a summary of aircraft service ability for February showed that 91 per cent of the squadron's 19 aircraft were used on operations.

March 1945 saw a change in command for 100 Squadron. At an early morning Commanding Officer's Parade on 5 March, Wing Commander Kessey was farewelled and Wing Commander Hugh Conaghan was installed. Both the Wing Commanders and their crews then joined in the first strike for the day at 0830.

The target was a troop concentration, hidden by jungle, with the only guide to its location being marked on a map. Seven aircraft set out, but the weather deteriorated to such an extent, that all returned to base with their full bombload. A second strike was called in the afternoon to bomb and strafe a cluster of huts in the Maprik region, indicated by a map reference. Eight crews, using demolition and general purpose bombs, demolished the huts and thoroughly strafed the target.

This raid was a prelude to a combined drive by 71 Wing and the 17th Brigade, on the strongly fortified settlement at Maprik.

Maprik had been a goldmining centre before the war, with an all-weather road leading down to Marui on the Sepik River. The Japanese quickly exploited this strategic position as a headquarters. Mountain air and extensive vegetable gardens, tended by natives, presented far more attractive living for the beleaguered Japanese than eking out a miserable existence in the Wewak area. Not far from Maprik on an isolated ridge, the enemy had established a defensive position which was very difficult to bomb because of the mountainous terrain, but it was virtually a shooting gallery for strafing. On 12 March, Wing Commander Conaghan, in A9-654, led six Beauforts on a midmorning strike at this ridge, with the target area indicated by a smoke mortar bomb from the Army. Demolition and incendiary bombs hit the target area, causing huge explosions and covering the area with smoke and dust. No 100 Squadron then flew in echelon around the ridge, blazing away with all guns available before departing. At the same time, 7 and 8 Squadrons could be seen also attacking defensive positions nearby.

Next morning the offensive against the Maprik area continued. Seven aircraft bombed and strafed the enemy entrenched at an unnamed advantage point, denoted by a map reference. There were several villages in the area, and it was often difficult to pinpoint the target until the enemy began firing a machine gun or even rifles. After lunch, six Beauforts led by Wing Commander Conaghan attacked enemy positions at Wora and Milak in the Maprik area, where the enemy was dug in some distance from a group of huts.

During the line astern bombing run, A9-650 exploded in a great ball of fire. Group Captain Hancock, following in A9-655, had to turn hard to starboard to avoid the debris. The squadron had lost another good crew—Jack Fowler, Geoff Waite, MID, Frank Smith, and Jack Shipman—who were nearing the completion of their tropical tour.

At the debriefing, on returning to base, the crews agreed they had become complacent by attacking targets too often at the same speed and height, which had probably given the ack-ack gunners an advantage.

The 2/10th Squadron of the 2/6th Cavalry Commando Regiment, under the command of Colonel Eric Hennessey, DSO, MC, witnessed the loss of A9-650 and reported the event:

The Beaufort exploded without any indication of the impending disaster, as it lined up for a bombing run on enemy positions near Milak. It brought home to all, that casualties were not only confined to ground troops. Those at Milak were unusually shocked at the unexpected sight of the Beaufort turning into a ball of fire in less than a second. 2/10th Squadron had come to look on 100 Squadron as true brothers in arms, and that day cemented our attachment more so than any other particular event associated with both formations. Several aircrew from 100 Squadron had in fact been on patrol with our Sections several

weeks earlier, to witness the method used in targeting enemy positions, using 2 inch mortar smoke bombs and markers made from parachutes.

Three days later on 16 March, Hugh Conaghan was again leading six aircraft on a strike when, to the dismay of the squadron, A9-625 was blown to pieces in a ball of fire. When it exploded, A9-625, with Squadron Leader Dey and his crew, comprising Stuart Lloyd, Cliff Tonge and Gordon Peatfield, was the second plane to bomb the target at But West. Group Captain Hancock was again flying in the No. 3 position, where he had to take evasive action to avoid the fragments.



Phil Dey and Crew, January 1945
(L-R: Phil Dey, Stuart Lloyd, Cliff Tonge and Gordon Peatfield)

Losing a crew was always a sombre occasion, particularly to walk past the empty tent, remembering it was only some hours ago that they were so very much alive. To lose eight of our mates in three days was the same as losing our brothers. Jack Fowler and Phil Dey and their crews were all old friends, having been with the squadron for the past seven months. Stuart Lloyd had been president of the Sergeants Mess. A well-liked Army-Air Liaison Officer, Major Ralph Hopkinson, had also been lost with the crew of 625.

The loss of two crews was a blow to the new CO, Wing Commander Hugh Conaghan. He arranged for an Army concert party, 'Waratah', to stage a show at the 'Century Theatre' that evening, as a diversion from the gloom.

On Sunday evening 18 March, Padre Jim Clarke held a special memorial service at the squadron Chapel, which was fully attended. The service was designed not only to pay tribute to the recent losses, but also to remember all those killed in action while serving in 100 Squadron since its inception.

The squadron had also lost its mascot, a black dog of obscure parentage. He was only a pup when 100 Squadron Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Joe Pryor, brought 'George' to Goodenough Island from Sydney in April 1944. 'George' went with the squadron when it moved to Nadzab and then to Tadj. He was a favourite with every member of 100 Squadron and had many hours on bombing operations. He had more flying hours than some of the crews that he joined on operational strikes. He seemed to know when a strike was listed and would hitch a ride to the airstrip on the first truck available. Legend has it that the mascot was issued with a log book in the name of 'Sergeant George Sarang', WAG, which recorded each of his flights, until he was posted as missing in air operations. However, the log book has not been found.

Wing Commander Conaghan arranged for a committee of flight commanders, together with armament officers, and Group Captain Hancock as the best eye witness, to investigate the two explosions. The common factor was that the explosions had occurred at the point of releasing bombs. Meantime all bombing missions were cancelled until further notice, and strikes were limited to strafing only.

Conaghan and Hancock then flew to Melbourne to report to the Chief of the Air Staff at RAAF Headquarters, who agreed to an experiment that Hancock proposed.⁹⁵ Two old Beauforts were set up at the Werribee bombing range, one fitted with a 250 pound bomb in the bomb bay and the other with a 100 pound wing bomb. Each bomb was detonated, and Hancock identified the wing bomb as the fireball he had witnessed on both A9-650 and A9-625. Back at Tadj, further tests revealed that, in both cases, the explosions were due to faulty No. 30 tail pistol fuzes in the 100 pound wing bombs.

Bombing missions commenced again on 22 March, when Flight Lieutenant Crisp in A9-493 bombed a selected target in the But area with sixteen 30 pound incendiary bombs.

Bad weather then prevailed until 26 March, when 71 Wing renewed its assault in the Maprik area. Hugh Conaghan led seven Beauforts to bomb and strafe an unnamed village, while the other two squadrons attacked targets nearby. The same pattern of strikes continued for the remaining few days of the month as a 'softening up' process, while the Army moved into positions for the final assault.

In the meantime, the 16th Brigade had advanced along the coast after capturing Nambut Hill, and all aircrews rejoiced when the 16th Brigade captured fifteen 75 mm anti-aircraft guns, after driving the enemy from But airstrip. That was one less 'hot spot' to worry about. The But airstrip was pockmarked with many large bomb craters filled with water. Kunai grass covered much of the remaining airstrip

and extended over the whole airfield. Many of the 41 bomber and fighter aircraft, alongside the runway and in dispersal bays, appeared to be repairable, and some of the enemy's earthmoving machinery was also repairable. The Army mechanics soon had the machinery working in preparing an emergency landing strip.



But Airstrip

When the Army reported that several hundred unused bombs had been located, the opportunity was taken to transport many of the Japanese bombs to Tadji. They could perhaps be rearmed and used, as the squadrons were now short of Australian and American bombs. The failure rate, however, was of the order of 30 per cent. At first it was thought that the powder in the fuze had deteriorated. The powder was renewed but the failure rate was still just as high. The Wing Armament Officer, Flight Lieutenant R. Walter, considered the possibility that the marshy ground in the Wewak area allowed the fuze rod to penetrate, rather than striking the ground to detonate the fuze. Adding a pressure plate to the rod seemed to be worth trying. An Australian penny was about the right size, and twelve of them were soldered onto the rods of Japanese bombs for Group Captain Hancock and Flying Officer Macfarlane from 8 Squadron to test. All 12 exploded on impact. Pennies were collected to be fitted as pressure plates to the fuzing rods. Then it was realised that such a modification created a hazard for aircraft taking off with the modified bombs and the idea was abandoned.



No 100 Squadron Operations Room, Aitape

At the end of March, the strength of 100 Squadron was 45 officers and 319 other ranks. While the number of airmen and non-commissioned officers was slightly above the establishment figure, the number of officers was short of requirements by 14. Other statistics revealed that 14 of the 19 Beauforts on strength had been in operations during the month, and that the squadron was well below establishment in mechanical transport, particularly in regard to trucks and jeeps.

The administrative staff of 71 Wing also provided data for Air Minister Drakeford, to announce to the press:

For the ten months that the Beauforts have been operating in the Aitape-Wewak area, 11,034 hours were flown to carry out 5,769 sorties, drop 3,348 tons of bombs and fire well over a million rounds of ammunition.

There was not a cloud in sight on Easter Monday 2 April 1945, when Wing Commander Conaghan took off with five aircraft to strike again at the Japanese stronghold at Maprik. Flight Sergeant Kevin Taskis, normally with Jim Forrest's crew, was in the turret of the leading plane. He remembers that day well:

We were closing up into formation over the bay. It was the first time I'd flown in a 'vee' of five planes. I saw Flight Lieutenant Crisp get in too close to our plane. He pulled off to starboard, obviously forgetting that there was another aircraft (Flight Lieutenant Fielding) on his starboard. I saw the two aircraft

come together. The starboard and port wings of the respective aircraft touched, oh so gently it seemed, but both wings came off and both aircraft spiralled down into the sea and blew up. I still see it as if it was yesterday.⁹⁶

Corporal John 'Jock' Davis of 7 Squadron also recalls the incident:

I was with several others on the beach following a swim. We were watching these 100 Squadron Beauforts, which had obviously just taken off. They were out over the water climbing in formation to starboard when the collision occurred. None of the crew had any hope of survival. No-one said anything for a while. We just alternatively kept looking at each other and out to sea, where the planes hit the water. It took some time to realise what we had just witnessed.

The CO ordered the remaining crews to return to base, and Air-Sea Rescue boats put to sea immediately to search the area. There was no trace of personnel. Both crews had perished. Eric 'Poppa' Crisp, Jack Hughes, Cedric Horne and George Park were flying in A9-493. They were old hands, having almost completed their operational tour. Ian Fielding, Robert Fletcher, Ernest Negus, Robert Lambert and an auxiliary navigator, Graham Manger, were in A9-667. Ian Fielding and crew had only been with the squadron for three months, but they had been involved in practically every strike since the day that they arrived.

When Wing Commander Eric Cooper, AFC, was posted south early in April, Group Captain Val Hancock became the new Commander of 71 Wing. Group Captain Hancock, nevertheless, continued to fly with 100 Squadron in operations as often as possible. April also saw eight new crews posted to 100 Squadron to make up for recent losses. Within days of arrival, new crews had been initiated into squadron procedures and were participating in their first strike. There were further changes to the establishment of the squadron with the posting of numerous ground staff to Australia on completion of their tropical tour.

The bombing and strafing of enemy held villages high up in the Torricellis continued, particularly around the Maprik area. The 2/7th Battalion now occupied the whole of the Apunga villages and were using a cleared area for supply dropping.

Meanwhile, sections of the 16th Brigade were moving effectively along the coast with little call on the Beauforts for air support. On Friday 13 April the Army took Dagua airfield. Like But airfield, it was a shambles, with numerous bomb craters and wrecks of aircraft on the runway. One hundred aircraft, mostly badly damaged fighters, were scattered about the airfield, and under the wings of a few planes were the skeletal remains of their crews. With But, only eight miles away, being made into a serviceable airstrip, Dagua was abandoned.



Dagua Airstrip, March 1945
Results of bombing

Forward observation officers (FOOs) were an integral part of the bomber wing. They arranged close support with the Army, and gave results of the bombing strikes. Flight Lieutenant George Maugher, DFC, from 100 Squadron, together with an Army wireless unit, had been operating in the Maprik area. The forward observation unit had been in contact by wireless with the Army, 71 Wing, and the formation leaders of the bombers, to keep up a running commentary during a strike at the enemy. Back with the squadron on 16 April, George Maugher spoke to aircrew on the subject of 'Army-Air Force Close Support', which explained some of the activities of the unit and some of the difficulties encountered. Within a few days, two more interesting lectures were presented. Lieutenant Hopkins from HMAS *Airwatch* spoke to all flying personnel from 7, 8 and 100 Squadrons on 'Air-Sea Rescue Procedures'. Mr J. Wright from Pratt & Whitney then spoke to pilots and technical NCOs on the Pratt & Whitney engines.



No 100 Squadron Library, Aitape

On Sunday 22 April, 71 Wing sent 33 Beauforts from the three squadrons to attack enemy headquarters close to Maprik, where the 2/10th Commando Squadron reported that more than 2000 well-armed Japanese were entrenched in commanding positions. No 100 Squadron was given the task of silencing a nest of 20 mm guns situated on a ridge between map references 740997 and 749997.

All 10 aircraft were airborne by 0724K, with Wing Commander Hugh Conaghan in A9-659 leading the way and Group Captain Val Hancock in A9-667 flying in No. 4 position. All bombs hit the target area and the squadron then followed with a strafing attack. Both 7 and 8 Squadrons then attacked the enemy headquarters in similar fashion. When the Army captured Maprik on 23 April, they reported that the Japanese, although well armed with mortar and 'woodpeckers' (machine guns), had suffered very severe casualties from the combined Army-Air Force attacks. Surprisingly, the Tambaran house in the village was found to have suffered only superficial damage, so one section of the 2/7th Battalion moved in to make it their home. The Army then set to work to restore the associated light-aircraft airstrip, which was named Hayfield.

While the Beauforts were engaged in Army support strikes, individual Beaufort crews were assisting in the operational training of American aircrews based at Madang. When it was 100 Squadron's turn to provide the crew, Warrant Officer Max Hulse and crew were sent to Madang. As with all crews, who had been flying over the Sepik area from the coast and over the Torricelli Ranges for the past seven months, they were well suited as pathfinders for the Americans on their first operations.

On 13 April, Hulse had led a flight of Mitchell and Boston crews, to bomb Maija Settlement on the Sepik River, and they completely destroyed the target. Following Hulse and crew, when their operational tour was completed, Wal Lukeis and crew took over as pathfinders for the Americans.

During the last week of the month, the Army was still making progress along the coast, after suppressing guns situated on a ridge behind Dagua. The 16th Brigade was now advancing towards the Hawain River with tanks and infantry. Forging the Hawain River, the Brigade came within 14 miles of Wewak.

Meanwhile the Beauforts were repeatedly bombing Waigakim village, at map reference 715940. This was a 'softening up' process for the Army's next move. On the last day of the month, Hugh Conaghan led four of the new crews to participate in the last strike for the month. In another incident, A9-559, which Bob Maynard had tested for acceptance at Nadzab 10 days earlier, crashed on take-off at Tadjji. Fortunately, Jack Northover and aircrew were not injured.

At this time, the strength of 100 Squadron was well down on the establishment requirements. While the number of personnel should have stood at 59 officers and 302 other ranks, the actual strength was 40 officers and 254 other ranks. Similarly, the number of aircraft on strength was 13, whereas the establishment should have been 19.

Shortly after Wing Commander Conaghan became the Commanding Officer of 100 Squadron, he had introduced a daily news bulletin to be read over the PA system. The first news item concerned the European theatre of the war, where the German Army in Italy, under General von Vietinghoff, had surrendered to Field Marshal Alexander.

More encouraging still was the announcement of the death of Hitler. Yet his successor, Admiral Donitz, vowed to continue the war. There was also good news from the Pacific region. The 26th Brigade of the Australian 9th Division, together with a company from the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, had landed at Tarakan Island, off the north-east coast of Borneo.

When senior officers of the three Services met at Lae on 30 April, General Blamey approved a plan to capture Wewak and to destroy the Wewak garrison. The landing of the 19th Brigade would take place after there had been repeated aerial bombardments.

Consequently, 71 Wing began bombing targets daily in the Wewak area. To provide a maximum effort, both 6 and 15 Squadrons sent detachments from Dobodura and Madang respectively to add to 71 Wing. In the next 10 days, 100 Squadron hit defensive positions on the Wewak Peninsula, Cape Wom, Cape Boram, Brandi Plantation, Sauri village, Wirui mission and selected gun positions, known only by map reference.

During this period 100 Squadron carried out 125 strikes, delivered 131 tons of bombs, and expended 15 360 rounds of ammunition in strafing.

After each air strike, the 19th Brigade advanced further along the coast to take Cape Pus and Cape Wom. The combined Beaufort squadrons of 71 Wing then attacked and destroyed artillery operating out of caves and tunnels dug into the cliff faces at Wewak Point.⁹⁷



No 100 Squadron Aircrew, Aitape, May 1945

Back Row, L–R: Cliff Poole, Des Hair, Col King, Barrie Blackstone, John Mitchell, Frank French, ‘Blue’ Young, Bob Atkinson, Ron Laws, Bill Bremner, Bob Maynard, Jack Northover, Norm ‘Strop’ Owens, Gordon Curby, John Matthews and Laurie Martin

Centre Row, L–R: Jack Stevens, Don Anderson, Eric Byrnes, Owen ‘Shorty’ Carigg, Ted Bassett, Bill Lawrence, Allen Langley, Chas Gordon, Jim Jarvis, Col Bastian, Bill Gardner, Alf Tisdall, Eric Hendy, Stan Damman, Doug Murray, Harry Fennell, Ian Adamson, Bob ‘Nobby’ Breen, John McCutcheon and Ted Earle

Front Row, L–R: John Coffey, Harry Symonds, Vic Threader, Ron Laird, Max Hulse, ‘Lucky’ Anscombe, John Caddy, Des Latham, Norm ‘Farmer’ Thomas, Hugh Conaghan, John Dewar, Jim Birt, Alex Stuart, Stan Carter, Eric Gogler, Des McCormick, Roly Cooper and Gordon Dun

On 8 May, the squadron heard that the war in Europe had ended. The Germans had unconditionally surrendered. The end of hostilities in Europe, however, made little difference to Australia’s position. After all, Australia’s contribution to the European theatre of the war had, by necessity, been limited since 1943 to about 30 per cent of aircrew, while the Army, Navy and the bulk of the Air Force concentrated on the war against Japan. Nevertheless, it was good news—a morale booster—but, at this stage, it made little difference to the task at hand in fighting the Japanese.

No 100 Squadron, that day, again bombed defensive positions on Wewak Peninsula. This strike was a prelude to the Army’s advance onto the Peninsula, where they secured gains against strong opposition.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

During the next two days prior to 'D Day'—the planned landing on the Wewak beach—71 Wing ordered a concentrated effort. No 100 Squadron responded with three, and sometimes four, raids each day, with Wing Commander Conaghan leading 14 Beauforts on each occasion, to bomb gun positions on the ridges at Sauri village, Wirui mission and Wewak Peninsula.



No 100 Squadron Officers, May 1945

Back Row, L-R: Barrie Blackstone, Bill Clarke, Frank French, Jerry Reen, Ted Ingram,
Ron Laws, Bill Bremner, Bob Maynard, Jack Northover, Norm Owens,
Jim Birt and Arthur Coulls

Centre Row, L-R: Bill Lawrence, Allen Langley, Charlie Gordon, Jim Jarvis, Col Bastian,
Bill Gardner, Alf Tisdall, Eric Hendy, Stan Damman, Spike Svensen,
Harry Mason and Ken Goble

Front Row, L-R: Max Hulse, 'Lucky' Anscombe, John Caddy, Des Latham, Norm Thomas,
C.J. Amos, Hugh Conaghan, John Dewar, Charlie Rowe, Alex Stuart, Stan Carter,
Eric Gogler, Des McCormick, Roly Cooper and Gordon Dun

On 9 May the Beauforts carried out 107 strikes.⁹⁸ The next day, after an attack by 57 Beauforts on the Peninsula, the 2/4th Battalion of the 19th Brigade fought a pitched battle in heavy rain to take Wewak Point. All had been made ready for the combined ground, sea and air assault on Wewak.

At 0830 hours on 11 May 1945, the Beauforts were in position to see the troops go ashore at Dove Bay, while HMS *Newfoundland* and HMAS *Hobart* pounded jungle targets spotted by the pathfinder Boomerangs. HMAS *Swan* and RAN destroyers HMAS *Arunta* and *Warramunga* also began firing when barges laden with troops came under enemy fire. The troops again encountered further shelling as they approached the beach.

Meantime, Hugh Conaghan had led 15 Beauforts to bomb a secondary target of a troop concentration at Brandi Plantation, because low-level cloud was protecting the guns on Wirui Ridge. Both 8 and 100 Squadrons then returned to Tadj, where they quickly refuelled and rearmed, and were back in position again awaiting orders.

E.W. Tipping, a staff reporter for *Wings*, the RAAF Association magazine, who flew with Group Captain Hancock that day, reported on 26 June 1945:

Capture of Wewak was primarily an RAAF show. In their most spectacular action to date, the Beauforts literally blasted the Japs out of their cleverly concealed pillboxes, and the AMF walked in over their bomb craters to find the enemy's last and most heavily defended northern PNG stronghold strewn with corpses. Ask the 6th Division's veterans now clearing up the unhappy remnants of General Miyaki's once powerful 18th Army what they thought of the Beaufort crews' work in that campaign. You get one answer, 'The RAAF prepared the way; we took our positions as they knocked the Nips out'.

The Army commander formally thanked the RAAF for the surprisingly few casualties suffered by his troops. I counted more than 30 crafts. As the barges beached, the troops, dashing across the beach, met crossfire from Jap gun positions on Cape Moem. The spotter had the naval guns on it in a flash. Hancock then decided to take a look at the clouds over the original target on Wirui Ridge. They had lifted high enough to bomb. We reported to the Air Support Controller, F/Lt George Mauer, DFC, on the flagship with the Army GOC, and in went a dozen Beauforts to silence all opposition from Wirui. A few seconds later came the dramatic moment of the show.

Over the R/T, from the Air Liaison Officer with Major General Stevens' landing forces, came the precise, 'Thank you very much'. We stoged around for four hours, until it was obvious things were going exactly as planned ... The Japs had been there in force. That had been obvious, when we made our first run. The little black bursts around us from the enemy showed that the Japs had concentrated all their ack-ack around Wewak. They deliberately held their fire for weeks, waiting for the main assault. Our Beaufort was holed in two places, but it was the only one hit.⁹⁹ Back at Tadjji, all crews were on immediate call in case the Army struck sudden opposition. 'Tea and sandwiches' on the strip were followed with a call from the Army to bomb and strafe enemy troops on Brandi Plantation, near the neck of Cape Moem.

We were Conaghan's No. 3 and, after we had dropped our bombs, the Army called for a Beaufort to find a Jap gun causing trouble. No. 3 was detailed, and for the next hour and a half, after the others had gone home, we skimmed the trees in maddening circles trying to find that gun. How I regretted my rashness in flying with a Group Captain, who thrives on that sort of thing, and was obviously determined he would not leave those trees until he had found that gun! Particularly when our wireless/air gunner, F/Lt Bill Wilson, of Brisbane reported that the Nips were potting at us with rifle fire. We came across what looked like another bomb crater on the side of a hill. But on closer inspection, we could see slit trenches alongside. Round again, and there was no mistaking it—there was the gun.¹⁰⁰ The Beauforts did their job so well that day, that the Army called for only a few sporadic strikes on the following days, and the Beaufort reinforcements were able to go home two days later.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

While the Dove Bay landing force went about their task of securing Wewak, the 2/4th Battalion reached the Wewak airfield and secured that area as well. At the same time, 100 Squadron bombed and strafed selected targets on Kairiru Island, until called to attack troop concentrations on Cape Boram. On 15, 16 and 17 May, the squadron bombed and strafed entrenched troops, until the Army successfully occupied the area.

Heavy rain curtailed flying the next day, and, when an attempt was made on 20 May to attack a defensive position on Cape Moem, extreme weather conditions forced the 10 Beauforts to return with their bombload. The Dove Bay forces, however, attacked in the pouring rain and occupied Cape Moem. The next day the two Army sections were united at Brandi Plantation.



No 100 Squadron Aircrew on 'D Day' for Wewak Landing, 10 May 1945

Standing Rear, L-R: Flight Sergeants Bob Atchinson, Joe Hall and John Matthews;
Pilot Officers Col King, Max Hulse, Ron Laws and Ted Earle; Flying Officers Jim Jarvis and
Eric Hendy; Flight Lieutenant Allen Langley; and Warrant Officers Ian Adamson
and Jack Stephens

Second Row, L-R: Flying Officer John Caddy; Warrant Officers Gordon Curby and
Ron Laird; Flight Lieutenants Jim Birt and Stan Damman; Flying Officers Bob Maynard,
Des McCormick and Charlie Gordon; and Flight Sergeant Eric Byrnes

Front Row, L-R: Warrant Officer Clem Martin; Wing Commander Hugh Conaghan;
Flight Lieutenant Bert Jones; Flying Officer Alf Tisdall; and Flight Lieutenants Des Latham,
John Dewar and Roly Cooper

The combined Navy, Army and Air Force assault on Wewak had been an overwhelming success, due to the concentrated firepower delivered. The contribution by 57 Beauforts, from 84 sorties at the 'D Day' landing, was 67 tons of bombs and 130 700 rounds in strafing.

Intelligence reports revealed that the major portion of the Japanese Army had now retreated inland from Wewak to the mountain range. This was confirmed, when the Army reported very stiff opposition at Yamil and called for support. Two strikes were carried out, with the Beauforts bombing and strafing the positions.

Six Beauforts from 100 Squadron found difficulty in bombing a Japanese Headquarters situated on an isolated ridge, but it was virtually another shooting gallery for strafing. The six Beauforts expended 14 000 rounds on the first raid and 9000 on the second. At noon the next day, a similar raid was carried out on the village of Malabasakum on a ridge west of Maprik, when Wing Commander Conaghan led 12 Beauforts to bomb and strafe enemy positions. Both these targets again received attention on the last two days of the month, when 12 Beauforts bombed and strafed these positions.

At this time, the supply of bombs, particularly 250 pound bombs, was very low. In recent raids the bombers had carried only two 500 pound bombs. Some of the Japanese bombs, taken from But airfield in March, were tried again but were soon discarded due to their failure to explode. To compensate for the lack of bombs, prolonged strafing took place after bombing, and some 30 000 rounds were fired during the last raid. Although there had been a shortage of bombs, the Beauforts had delivered 1236 tons of bombs on the enemy, while carrying out 1458 sorties in support of the advancing Australian troops.

On the ground, the 2/7th Battalion had finally captured the strategic hill position at Malabasakum, known to the Battalion as 'Malaba Gardens'. The position had been stubbornly defended against repeated ground attacks and two air strikes, until the Battalion took the hill on 31 May 1945.

Some historians view this date as the end of the Aitape-Wewak Campaign. The war against the Japanese in New Guinea continued, however, when the enemy took up new positions in the mountains west of Wewak.

R.A.A.F. Doing Fine Job in Islands

The Royal Australian Air Force has been well to the fore in the news during recent weeks, and the Beauforts have given a great account of themselves in the taking of Wewak.

Heavy and regular bombing aided materially in the victory; powerful formations drawn from five squadrons making a concentrated attack on the Japanese position for three days while the men of the 6th Division were preparing for the assault.

Massive loads of bombs from formations up to 36 strong hammered the Japanese over a wide area. First reconnaissance planes of the Royal Australian Air Force photographed the area and marked all gun positions, then the Beauforts came in with nearly 41,000 lb. of bombs. Two Beauforts, while photographing gun-nests at low level, were hit by enemy ack-ack, but managed to complete the operation safely.

The attack which followed was thoroughly planned. The Beauforts paved the way for the taking of Cape Wom, one formation of 14 battering gun positions on the cape, while another seven struck at a motor transport park and tank hideout in the same area. The strike on the park raised black smoke to 1000 feet, and burnt out the area between the coast road and the beach. Six more Beauforts bombed a 75mm. gun position beyond the cape. The following day 12 Beauforts returned to the attack on the point and Cape Wom fell soon afterwards. A fast drive was then made to Wewak, leading to a concentrated air attack on the area's defences.

During these operations a Wirraway and Boomerangs spotted and provided air cover for Australian naval bombardments of enemy positions on the coastal strip and adjoining islands, flanking the Australians' march down the coast.

American Mitchells, Bostons and Liberators, operating under Royal Australian Air Force, Northern Command, dropped heavy loads of 250lb. fragmentation bombs on camp areas, while Beauforts set fire to a dump of petrol drums and destroyed pillboxes on the islands.

In one day alone, supply-dropping Douglas transports, flown by the Royal Australian Air Force, carried 48,540 lb. of equipment and goods for the Army.

High tribute was paid by Major-General Stevens, General Officer Commanding 6th Australian Division, to the Royal Australian Air Force for its work along New Guinea's northern coast. He also expressed keen appreciation of the spontaneous co-operation given by Royal Australian Air Force squadrons of Northern Command.

Reviewing the work of the Royal Australian Air Force in this area, Headquarters said that Beauforts had steadily smashed Jap. defences there for more than a year. Many hundreds of sorties had been launched against Wewak alone, and the Royal Australian Air Force Beaufort squadrons had played a notable part in wresting this important stronghold from the enemy.

Newspaper Report, 1945
'RAAF Doing Fine Job in Islands'

LAST STRIKE

The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.

Abraham Lincoln

The fall of Wewak, the last of the Japanese held airfields and strategic strongholds in New Guinea, was yet another 'nail in the coffin' of the Japanese forces. During the past 12 months, the war had continued to go against Japan on all fronts.

Admiral Takijiro Ohnishi, in desperation, proposed kamikaze tactics. Fanatical as it was, there was no shortage of volunteers to die for their country. The first successful kamikaze attacks took place in the Philippines towards the end of 1944, and further successes inspired even more suicide volunteers to become part of the 'Divine Wind' (kamikaze). Although the Japanese gained some dramatic successes, the Battle of Leyte Gulf in January 1945 was a decisive victory for the Americans. The taking of Iwo Jima soon followed, and the battle for the much larger island of Okinawa was a desperate last stand by the Japanese.

A new martyrdom weapon was then designed. It was the rocket-powered Yokosuka Ohka (Cherry Blossom), a 2000 kg thrust rocket, which was carried to within sight of the target, and released from a mother plane with a kamikaze pilot to steer it into its intended target. The Japanese suicide pilots flew 1800 of these rockets, many of them inflicting very serious damage on the American naval armada. The kamikaze strategy was a major problem for the Americans. These new suicide missions sank 36 vessels and seriously damaged another 330. As in the case of the first bombing of Darwin in Australia, the American Government hushed up the huge losses at Okinawa at that time.

Meantime, B-29 Super Fortresses were destroying rail and road bridges faster than the Japanese could repair them, and Japan's cities were also being bombed. Tokyo, for instance, was set ablaze on the night of 9 March by incendiaries, and at least 90 000 civilians were killed. Prior to the bombing of Tokyo, the Americans dropped thousands of leaflets on the city, warning the citizens to flee as the city was about to be laid waste. By mid-May 1945, huge areas of Tokyo, Nagasaki, Nagoya and Osaka had been demolished. Millions were homeless, and food and fuel were scarce.

An announcement from 'Radio Japan' that Admiral Koga, who had replaced Admiral Yamamoto as Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, had also been killed, added to their despair. The new Commander of the Fleet was Admiral Toyoda, but the Japanese Navy was now ineffective. The Japanese Air Force, too, was grounded, and the major portion of their Army was confined to pockets of resistance in isolation, far

from their homeland. The Japanese expected an imminent invasion of their shinkoku (divine land). They knew they had well and truly lost the war.

The interception and decoding of radio messages, relayed between Japan and Russia, revealed that Emperor Hirohito and the Japanese Cabinet were keen to end the war, and surrender on any reasonable terms. War Minister, General Korichita Anima, on the other hand, preferred to fight to the finish. He arrested supporters of emerging Peace Movements to reinforce his intention.

The Japanese troops in the Aitape-Wewak campaign had lost the Battle of the Driniumor, and the Australians had taken Wewak. They had no hope of securing reinforcements, and had no means to escape. The Japanese troops had been left behind to 'wither on the vine'. They were starving, having existed mainly on sago palm for months. Many had already perished from tropical diseases, and many others were ill or wounded from battle. They lacked medication and medical treatment. Their position was hopeless. The Beaufort squadrons had dropped thousands of leaflets advising the enemy to surrender. Very few did, probably believing the Australians would kill them.

Perhaps the honourable decision for General Adachi would have been to surrender, to save his remaining 8000 to 10 000 men from more suffering and death. That, however, was not the Japanese way. To surrender was shameful. Of course it was shameful, but when an occasion arises in which someone brings shame on himself to save the suffering and death of thousands of others, then it becomes a noble deed.

The bombing, strafing, shelling, and relentless attacks continued, as the Japanese stubbornly resisted in their consolidated positions in the mountains beyond Wewak.

As a diversion from this carnage, five Beauforts with their crews were sent to Biak on 2 June, following a call for assistance to search for an enemy submarine. The captains of the aircraft were Wing Commander Conaghan, Flight Lieutenants Birt and Gogler, Pilot Officer Laws and Warrant Officer Fennell. The search, however, was unproductive and the aircrews returned with their aircraft the following evening.

At this time, pilots Forrest, Hulse and Lukeis were elevated to commissioned ranks, and several of the support staff were recognised for initiative and outstanding work. Intelligence Officer, Flying Officer C.J. Stephen, was Mentioned in Despatches, together with armourer, Warrant Officer George Sparks, fitter 2A, Flight Sergeant Les Watson, fitters 2E, Sergeant Les Clarke and Corporal John Mullaney, and electrical fitter, Corporal L. Tebbutt. The only movement away from the squadron on posting was navigator, Flight Lieutenant G.A. Hodgson, while Medical Officer, Flight Lieutenant C. Rowe, arrived, together with 28 ground staff from No 1 Reserve Pool. This brought the squadron's strength to 45 officers and 347 other ranks.

On 5 and 6 June, 12 crews were briefed for an attack on defensive positions, at map references west of Wewak. Squadron Leader Dewar led the Beauforts, which paved the way for the Army to advance. The Army could be seen moving up the slopes into

the target areas to gain their objectives on both occasions, while the smoke from the exploding bombs was still settling.

At 1100K the next morning, 71 Wing was out in force to bomb and strafe enemy-held positions in the mountains. Leading the 100 Squadron attack on a position west of Maprik, with nine Beauforts, was Flying Officer Maynard, who, together with his crew, was shortly to be posted south on completion of his tropical tour. Wing Commander Barton and Flight Lieutenant Shakespeare led flights from 7 Squadron to attack Yamil, and Flight Lieutenants Gooch and Grieve led flights from 8 Squadron to hit a defensive position south of Sauri village. All crews involved reported hitting their targets.

For the next few days, while Wing Commander Conaghan and his crew were attached to the 6th Division AIF for air cooperation purposes, Group Captain Hancock flew with 100 Squadron. On 8 and 9 June, he led a flight of 12 and then 11 Beauforts respectively, to bomb and strafe positions offering resistance at Maprik West and at Wewak West. Squadron Leader Dewar, acting as the temporary CO of the squadron, flew as the Group Captain's No. 2 on both occasions, and declared that the raids were now 'milk runs'. While the bombing and strafing was under way, the Army was frequently waiting and ready within 150 yards of the target. The soldiers attacked and secured the positions immediately the aircraft ceased strafing.

From time to time, individual Beaufort crews had been playing a pathfinder role for the operational training of American aircrews based at Madang. The squadron resumed these missions again on 12 June. Wal Lukeis marked several targets, from Cape Moem through to the Maprik area, with smoke bombs for flights of Liberators and Mitchells to bomb, and Lightnings to drop firebombs, with devastating results.

That same day, and during the next week, 100 Squadron continued with its regular daily program of bombing and strafing defensive positions, either marked by Army mortar or indicated by map references.

On 21 June, Wing Commander Hugh Conaghan and crew departed on posting at the conclusion of their operational tour. John Dewar, the acting CO, saw Conaghan off, and then took off in A9-671 with his crew at 1005K to lead six Beauforts in bombing enemy positions entrenched west of Maprik, at map reference A750954. The 2/7th Battalion, which had called for support, reported that the raid was very satisfactory and called for a repeat performance the next day. Flight Lieutenant Eric Gogler in A9-616 led nine Beauforts to bomb and strafe another nearby entrenched position, at map reference A778977. The bombing and strafing commenced at 1500K, which enabled the Battalion to take and occupy the position by 1700K.

The Australian 6th Division was effectively moving in a pincer movement from the Wewak area into the Prince Alexander Ranges, and from the Maprik region, to squeeze the enemy into a smaller area. Consequently, the Japanese infantry was being

subjected to a greater intensity of bombing and strafing from the air, and shelling from the Army.

On 26 June the Army called for a strike on a well-fortified and heavily-defended enemy position¹⁰¹ high on Mount Shiburangu, overlooking Wewak. The three Beaufort squadrons of 71 Wing responded. Squadron Leader Dewar of 100 Squadron led 12 Beauforts, which were all airborne by 0722K. Group Captain Hancock led 7 Squadron to bomb first, followed by 100 Squadron and then 8 Squadron. The raid went to plan, with most bombs hitting the target area. All planes returned safely to Tadjj. The Beaufort Wing raided the same target again the next day, with Group Captain Hancock in A9-677 taking his place in the 100 Squadron formation. The bombing was again accurate, while the soldiers took cover nearby. The Army then engaged the enemy and, supported by artillery fire and mortars, fought furiously against very stiff opposition. By the afternoon of that same day, the Army had secured that mountain position.

During the last three days of the month, the squadron made daily raids on enemy positions in the Maprik area, particularly those entrenched positions on high ground south of Yamil. These missions brought the total number of strikes for June 1945 to 233, when 111½ tons of bombs were dropped, and 143 000 rounds of ammunition were expended. There were also 10 additional sorties, mainly armed reconnaissance and photographic missions, conducted during the same period. Squadron Leader Dewar and crew were lucky to escape serious injury on the last day of the month, when A9-589 lost power on take-off and crashed. Fortunately, none of the crew was injured.

Postings from 100 Squadron at the end of the month, in addition to Wing Commander Conaghan and crew, included Jack Northover and crew, Jim Forrest and crew, 'Dutch' Holland and crew, Max Hulse and crew, and Cliff Scott and two crew members. There were only two postings to the squadron—Warrant Officer R. Nielsen and crew, and Warrant Officer M. Hazelwood and crew. Consequently, 100 Squadron strength was again well below establishment, with 34 officers and 296 other ranks.

Operations in July continued, with 100 Squadron conducting strikes in support of the 2/5th and 2/6th Battalions, on enemy positions east of the group of four villages making up the Yamil area. Following these strikes, both battalions had established bases at Yamil and were probing the strength of the Japanese forces in the villages of Kubulak, Gwenik, Ulunkohoitu and Kaboibus.

On 5 July 1945 came news of the death of Prime Minister John Curtin, aged 60, which caused discussion as to his successor yet to be announced. The discussion in front of the squadron library, however, was cut short, when a severe cloud-bursting storm hit the campsite. The group scattered, as each individual sought his own tent or took shelter in the library. Brilliant flashes of lightning penetrated the drenching rain, accompanied by sharp, resounding cracks of thunder. Surprisingly, there was no wind to disperse the downpour. It was as if the area was standing directly under a mighty

waterfall. The deluge persisted for almost an hour, before abating and settling down to normal, steady rain.



2000 Pounders

After two wet days, the squadron was flying again on 7 July. Squadron Leader Dewar, in A9-671, led four Beauforts to cover the landing of a rescue party in a Walrus aircraft in the Karawari River. A P-38 Lockheed Lightning had been shot down, but the pilot had ditched safely in the river. The rescue was effected without incident.

Later that morning, the squadron was out again with nine aircraft to strike at enemy positions on ridges west of Maprik. The Army had called for the first position, at map reference 804009, to be bombed and the second ridge position, at 802982 to 804995, to be strafed. Both sorties were carried out effectively, and all planes returned safely. In the afternoon, Eric Gogler, in A9-616, led seven aircraft successfully to bomb and strafe an enemy position at map reference 755825. Group Captain Val Hancock joined the squadron in A9-677 on this occasion to fly in the No. 3 position of the flight.

Strikes against enemy positions west of Maprik continued in close cooperation with the Army for the next week. The majority of the targets were bombed and strafed, but, as determined by the Army, others were either bombed or strafed. On the morning of 18 July, Val Hancock led a flight from 100 Squadron to bomb an entrenched enemy position west of Maprik at map reference 815002. At the same time, John Caddy in A9-680 led another flight to bomb Wewak West. Both flights completed their assignments without experiencing any serious opposition. The Japanese in the

positions east of Maprik and Yamil, however, were still stubbornly resisting. Because they were entirely dependent on native food, their lines of communication were widespread, and their forces were dispersed throughout many villages.

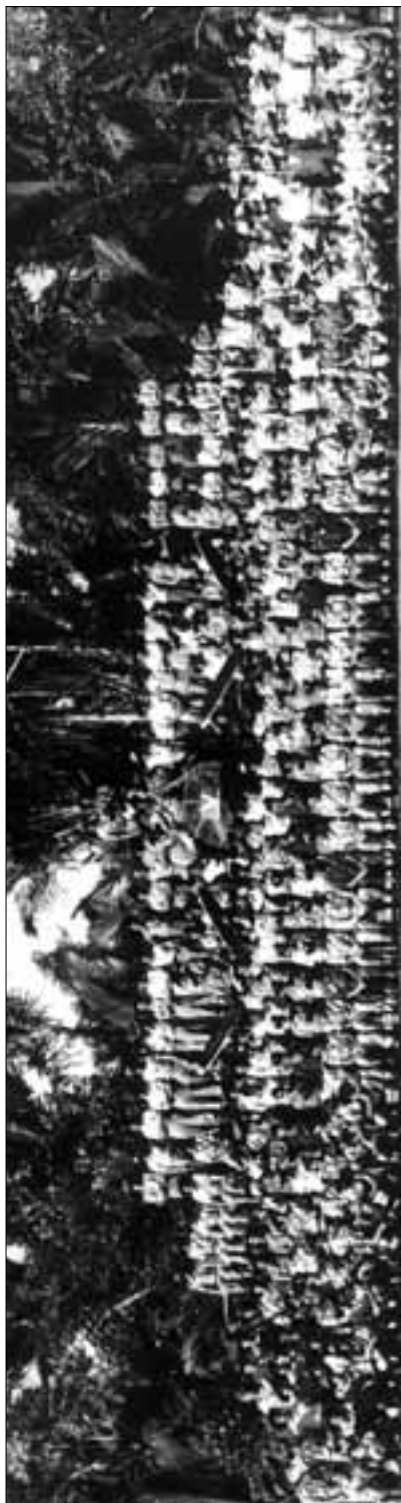
Meantime, news that American warships, augmented by the British Pacific Fleet, were bombarding Kobe on Honshu Island on 14 July, lent support to a rumour that the war would soon end. It was known that the Japanese War Council was expecting an invasion, and General Kawabe, Commander of the Japanese Army Air Forces, had withdrawn all aircraft from the front lines to be ready for the expected invasion. The Allies, however, knew that an invasion would be a costly and bloody campaign, and so preferred a negotiated settlement.

Consequently, the Allies issued the Potsdam Declaration on 26 July 1945.¹⁰² When the Japanese War Council and Cabinet ignored the ultimatum, an invasion of Japan appeared to be the only alternative. The Americans set in motion two massive military operations to be undertaken in succession. The first was a plan called *Olympic*, to invade and capture southern Kyushu Island early in November 1945. The second plan, codenamed *Coronet*, was to land on the main island of Honshu in March 1946.

The Japanese were expected to defend their homeland fiercely, and use tactics of the type that had been encountered in Okinawa, where the Americans had casualties which amounted to one third of the landing force. This pessimistic view was reinforced by the news that 28 million Japanese civilians had become part of a National Volunteer Combat Force, inflamed by the national slogan, '100 million will die for the Emperor and the Nation'. The Americans were under no illusion about the cost in manpower and equipment. Of the estimated 4.5 million American servicemen who would be involved, the expected casualties for them would be 250 000 killed or wounded on Kyushu, and an overall total of one million by August 1946.

What the Japanese did not know, of course, was that the Americans had developed an atomic bomb, which they had been working towards since President Roosevelt ordered the establishment of the Manhattan Project in 1939. Nor did they know that President Harry Truman had approved an order to use the atomic bomb, if the Japanese refused to surrender under the terms of the Potsdam ultimatum, due to expire on 6 August.

When time ran out for the Japanese, Hiroshima was selected as a target in preference to Kyoto, Tottori, or Niigata situated to the east of Hiroshima on Honshu Island. Kyoto, in particular, was not bombed because of its cultural significance.



No 100 Squadron, 2 August 1945

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

The Japanese 5th Army had departed, with pomp and ceremony, from Hiroshima docks on the Inland Sea in December 1941, to take Singapore. Three and a half years later, after mine-laying had rendered the harbour useless, it was a mere shadow of its former prosperity. The population of about 300 000 was well below the number during the early days of war, but factories were busy turning out military equipment and supplies. Hiroshima also had a military training establishment for Marines in preparation for a counter invasion of Okinawa.

Monday morning, 6 August, was fine and crisp, when the atomic bomb, weighing almost four tonnes, hit Hiroshima with devastating result. Next day, President Truman announced:

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.

The Japanese War Council must have realised, or at least suspected, that the bomb, which devastated Hiroshima, was an atomic weapon, but they suppressed this fact from their people. America broadcast the news that the bomb had laid waste the whole of the city of Hiroshima, and warned Japan, by dropping millions of leaflets on all major Japanese cities, that unless surrender under the Potsdam terms was accepted, further atomic bombs would be used. There was still no response, so the decision was made to bomb the Naval Depot of Nagasaki on the West Coast of Kyushu Island on 9 August. Because of the cloud cover at the target, the bombing run was made by radar, but again there was enormous damage.



Hiroshima, after the Atomic Bomb

After the Nagasaki bombing, there was still no response, until the Americans followed up with a dramatic show of air supremacy on 15 August by sending 1000 planes over Tokyo—890 bombers and 186 fighters, to be precise. Before the last plane had returned to base, Japan surrendered unconditionally. In his surrender speech, Emperor Hirohito said, ‘the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb and continuance of the war would result in the ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation’.

All this was taking place while the Allied forces were engaged in the containment, or mopping up, of pockets of resistance in Burma, Timor, Java, the Philippines, Celebes, New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville. In New Guinea the Australian Army was rallying troops in the mountains for a major advance to close the cordon around the remnants of the Japanese Army.

With support from 71 Wing Beauforts, the 2/5th, 2/6th, and 2/7th Battalions were making progress east of Yamil, Kubulak and Saigora. The 2/7th Battalion, augmented by platoons from the native New Guinea Infantry, had been given the task of advancing deep into enemy territory to attack a Japanese headquarters near the village of Kiarivu, about 30 miles from Wewak. Being on the Sepik River side of the mountain range, they had to wade fast-flowing streams. At other times, they elbowed and blazed their way through jungle so thick that it was almost dark by midafternoon. To add to their discomfort, very heavy rain disturbed the soldiers at night, as they huddled under their groundsheets.

No 100 Squadron had kept the pressure on the enemy during the whole of July, which resulted in 284 sorties being carried out, in which almost 20 tons of bombs were delivered and more than 260 000 rounds were expended in strafing. These figures were remarkable, as July had been one of the wettest months since their arrival at Aitape. The strength of the squadron, too, had been reduced at that time. Instead of meeting the establishment figures of 59 officers and 302 other ranks, the actual strength of the squadron was down to 27 officers and 282 other ranks.

On Sunday 5 August, Flight Lieutenant Stan Damman led 10 Beauforts to bomb and strafe enemy troops entrenched at Malabeim village in the shadow of Mount Irup, 12 miles east of Maprik. The raid, which took place at 0900K was successful, and the 2/5th Battalion secured the position without casualties.

At the same time three Beauforts, piloted by Cedric Hall, Harry Fennell and Allen Langley, flew over the range into the Sepik River area on armed reconnaissance, and then attacked targets of opportunity.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS



Pidgin Message to Natives

All people belonging to Maprik, you hear this.

All Soldiers belonging to you and me have plenty equipment belonging to fighting. Aircraft belonging to us, ships belonging to us, and lorries belonging to us, big guns and cartridges too many to count.

Food also, there is enough tin meat, rice, stick tobacco, biscuits, sugar and tea. What little more?

Plus all good fellow knife, now tomahawk too he has. All something belong work, wheelbarrow too, now plenty of spades – ship belonging to you and me he bring everything to Aitape.

All right. You people from Maprik must get away from all the Japanese and run away, now come and find the Kiap he is a Soldier belonging to you and me. Plenty of your friends and old friends of mine have come here. Don't be afraid. You must come and stay safe with me.

Kiap of Aitape

(This message is from the Australian Government)

Translation of Pidgin Message to Natives Courtesy John Kessey

News of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was received at Aitape with amazement. Some wondered whether Japan would surrender shortly, while one airman rather bitterly suggested, that the next atomic bomb should be dropped into the volcano of Mount Fuji or one of the other volcanoes, in the hope of causing an even greater catastrophe. The news, however, made little difference to the activities of 71 Wing. Daily strikes at enemy positions, in mountains behind Wewak and adjacent to the Sepik River, continued in support of the 17th Brigade AIF. On some of these strikes the aircraft carried 1000 lb demolition bombs, with rod extensions fitted to the nose cone, which turned them into devastating ‘daisy cutters’.

The last Beaufort strike was carried out on the very morning of the Japanese surrender, 15 August 1945. The crews were advised at the briefing that a cease-fire signal could be expected at any time, but they were to continue as usual until further notice. The target, in support of the Army, was a concentration of Japanese troops in Kiarivu village, situated on a ridge at map reference 963987. Nine crews from 100 Squadron, led by John Dewar in A9-671, were airborne at 0900K.

WEDNESDAY TASK		BOARD 15 AUGUST 1945									
NO	TYPE	PILOT	COPILOT	DESTINATION	ETD	ETA	STATUS	REMARKS	LANDING PT	ETR	TIME
1	A9	JG 671	DEWAR	TADJI	0900	0900			TADJI	0900	1023
2	A9	HOWARD	DAMMAN		0902						1011
3	A9	UNCLE	GLAWS		0905						1020
4	A9	WATSON	ROGERS		0908						1025
5	A9	ZIMMERMAN	LOVELL		0913						1028
6	A9	MAY	NIELSEN		0919						1034
7	A9	EAST	SWIFT		0924						1039
8	A9	CARTER	JONES		0928						1043
9	A9	SMITH	TAYLOR		0935						1050
STANDBY											
R. ROBERTS & CADDY											
Z. ZIMMERMAN & CADDY 1000 1004 1059											
LEFELET DROPPING											
W. WILLOW & DAMMAN TADJI 1015 1031 TEST 1055											

No 100 Squadron Task Board – Last Strike, 15 August 1945

Scattered low clouds made flying through the Danmap pass in the Torricellis hazardous, as usual, but all aircraft arrived in the target area due east of Maprik. The ridge, with new huts surrounded by a palisade, was readily identified through the scattered cloud. When wireless contact was established between Dewar’s wireless operator and the 2/7th Battalion ground force, the ground operator proclaimed that the war was over. As no official signal to abort the mission had been received from RAAF base, Dewar asked for the smoke marker to be fired. Shortly afterwards, a

mortar smoke bomb burst on the centre of the ridge to mark the target. With final directions to bomb 200 yards east of the mortar bomb, 100 Squadron, flying in three rows of a 'vee' formation, made their bombing run along the ridge from west to east. All bombs hit the target.

As the squadron was leaving the smoking debris, 8 Squadron came on the scene, with 7 Squadron due to follow. Then came the expected wireless signal from the Operations Room at 71 Wing, 'The following signal has just been received from Command HQ. Emergency Immediate – Cancel all operations against enemy forthwith including the missions now airborne'. Apart from acknowledging the message, there was no other comment made.

The aircrews were unusually silent on the return trip, as crew members relished the thought of going home. They could now plan for a future beyond the Air Force, which they had on many occasions brushed aside, as it might tempt fate to intervene.

Meanwhile on the ground, a very different situation was taking place. Ken Evans, in his book, *Japan e' Buggerup Piniis*, tells the story:

A platoon commander in the 2/7th Battalion, Lt. Xavier Connor, was about to advance on the Japanese encampment at Kiarivu, when he heard on ABC¹⁰³ radio, that the Prime Minister of Britain, Mr. Atlee, had reported that Japan had surrendered. He reported this news to his Company Commander and the patrol was called off. He was, however, given permission to approach the Japanese with the news.

Going forward, armed only with a small Japanese/English vocabulary, he called out. Then, in atrocious Japanese, he tried to convey the news to a large Japanese soldier, who appeared, but remained silent. At the noise of approaching aircraft, the Japanese soldier quickly disappeared, and when the bombing began, the peace effort also quickly disappeared! In the words of Lt. Connor, his credibility with the Japanese must have been at a very low ebb.

When the squadron aircraft landed back at Tadj, the aircrews and ground crews congratulated and cheered each other in a partnership of rejoicing, as copies of the latest *Guinea Gold* newspaper were handed around.

The *Guinea Gold Services'* newspaper in New Guinea, which had continued daily production for 1330 days, printed its final issue—Vol. 3, No. 270—on Wednesday 15 August 1945. The headlines proclaimed, 'Swiss Radio reports Japanese have accepted unconditional surrender'. The paper then described reactions to the news from various sources. Officials in Guam said, 'If Japan tried any "double crossing", a reign of terror would be loosed on the Nipponese mainland'. A report from Melbourne stated, 'Australian Army chiefs are planning a widespread round-up of more than 80,000 Japanese facing the Australians in the SWPA should the Japanese surrender be confirmed'. In Tokyo, the *Nichi Nichi Shimbun* newspaper reported,

'Undoubtedly, the worst has come to the worst'. It then warned all Japanese to obey whatever decisions the Emperor may make.

With the end of hostilities, the role of 71 Wing immediately became one of dropping leaflets to spread the news to the Japanese. John Caddy and crew, who had been on standby for the 100 Squadron raid on Kiarivu village, took off in A9-680¹⁰⁴ at 1405K to distribute leaflets to the Japanese located at various positions on Muschu and Kairiru Islands. The squadrons of 71 Wing then took turns to continue dropping leaflets into every known Japanese-held village in the mountains and along the coast until well into September.



**Surrender Leaflet Dropped to the Enemy
'Japan Has Surrendered'**

It was during one of these missions that A9-622 crashed into the side of a hill at Matapau, near Wewak, on 3 September. Cedric Hall, Arthur Orman, John Chellew and Bill Halyard were killed. Warrant Officer Hall and crew, who had been relatively new to the squadron, were buried at Matapau, with both the Anglican and Methodist padres in attendance. This was the last of 115 aircrew fatalities which occurred in the squadron.

No 100 Squadron celebrated the end of the war in a rather subdued and relaxed fashion, as all members enjoyed a well-earned rest from operations. Flying hours were reduced to the absolute minimum, and ground activities were diverted to educational and sporting pursuits. The wheels of administration in the RAAF, however, turned relentlessly, and postings to and from the squadron continued. Wal Lukeis and crew

had completed their tour of operations with the raid on Kiarivu and departed in A9-473, which they were to leave at No 5 Aircraft Depot, Wagga Wagga, NSW. Their replacement was Ian Leabeter and crew. Within a few days, Allen Langley and crew proceeded in A9-482 on attachment to No 8 Communication Unit at Finschhafen, and Bill Power and crew arrived on posting to the squadron.

In his report for the month of August to Headquarters, RAAF Command, Allied Air Forces SWPA, under the heading 'Degree of Success Achieved in Operations', Commanding Officer John Dewar wrote:

Results claimed by crews totalled 39 Huts destroyed, one House Tambaran damaged, and one probable ammo dump destroyed. Reports from ground forces indicate that claims by aircrews do not even approach the actual damage done. This is due to smoke and dust from the bombs of the first two aircraft, making further detailed observation of results impossible.

The American forces began landing in Japan on 29 August, and Japan signed the instrument of unconditional surrender on board the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945.¹⁰⁵ At the time of the surrender the Emperor is reputed to have said, '... the events in our part of the world have not been advantageous to Japan'.

The total Japanese losses had been catastrophic—some 3 million dead and 14 000 aircraft destroyed. There were some 300 warships sunk or seriously damaged, which included 11 battleships, 32 heavy and light cruisers, 23 aircraft carriers, 137 destroyers, 127 submarines, and a large number of small vessels and barges. Japan's mercantile vessels had also been practically destroyed.

Admiral Toyoda said that Japan had made some bad decisions:

Successive withdrawals of our aircraft from Rabaul, Wewak and other bases were nothing less than major disasters. Those ordering hasty withdrawals from advanced bases often overlooked and abandoned the numerous maintenance crews. Men, whose skills represented the experience of many years, were deserted, despite desperate rescue operations by air and submarine.

Consequently we lost forever their ability to contribute to subsequent air operations. The absence of these invaluable mechanics and maintenance crews greatly affected our operations. New mechanics, who were hastily trained, were woefully inadequate. They worked on planes, which had been rushed through pressurised production lines, and often pilots and crews fell prey to enemy guns because vital parts of the aircraft failed at crucial moments.

The two atomic bombs killed and maimed tens of thousands of people,¹⁰⁶ but significantly shortened the war, and undoubtedly, in the long run, prevented an even greater loss of life in Japan. Conventional pattern bombing and then an invasion

of Japan would have inflicted widespread damage and suffering over a much longer period to achieve the same result. The Allies, too, were saved from further casualties.

When the Japanese surrendered in the areas that were the responsibility of the Australian Government, the enemy strength in these areas was found to have been gravely underestimated. The strength of the enemy in the Wewak area had been estimated at 15 to 17 000 in December 1944, but was found later to have been 24 000.

The Japanese losses in New Guinea were enormous, with only one tenth of the Japanese forces surviving the war. By the end of the war, there were fewer than 6000 of the 18th Japanese Army to surrender in the Wewak area. Only 20 of almost 3000 Indian troops, who were slaves of the Japanese at Wewak, survived the war.

Although the formal surrender of Japan took place in Tokyo on 2 September, it was not until Thursday 13 September that General Harazo Adachi, commander of the 18th Army, surrendered to General 'Red Robbie' Robertson at Wewak. At the surrender ceremony, 26 members of 100 Squadron were detailed to attend as a guard of honour at the signing of the surrender documents. The Japanese party, comprising a very subdued General Adachi, Colonel Suziyama, Lieutenant Colonel Tanaka, Major Hosie, an interpreter and three soldiers, had been escorted from Hayfield airstrip, near Maprik, to Wewak in a Douglas DC-3 aircraft that same morning. After the surrender documents had been signed, Robertson offered back Adachi's sword, but the Japanese commander's hands were shaking so much he could not accept it, and the sword was placed on the table.

No wonder his hands shook. Since taking command of the 18th Army in November 1942, he had lost nearly 100 000 of his troops in the conflict and from malnutrition and disease. Furthermore, troops under his command had committed barbaric acts against our servicemen, missionaries and the natives. This savagery also manifested itself in the shooting of their own troops, when they attempted to surrender.



**General Hatazo Adachi Surrenders to General 'Red Robbie' Robertson
Wewak, 13 September 1945**

On 12 July 1947, General Adachi was tried as a war criminal and sentenced to life imprisonment, never to return to Japan. In an interview, while serving his sentence at Manus Island in the Admiralty Islands Group, Adachi said, 'The most efficient phase of the Allied campaign was the cooperation between Allied air and ground forces'. Later that same year, Adachi committed suicide.

To realise the war was over was difficult for many Allied servicemen to grasp. They had served in the Forces for so many years they felt uncertain about the future in 'civvies'. The virtue of war was its simplicity. Civilian life was so full of uncertainties with so many choices to make, whereas during war there was an agreed objective, of victory over the enemy, by all political parties and classes of people. Now that peace had been achieved, what of the future? Everyone in the squadron had changed since putting on a uniform.

All had a new set of values of life, particularly those endeavouring to come to terms with their experiences. All involved in killing the enemy, or experiencing any of the terrors of war, had visions, burned into their memories, that had to be resolved. In most cases their faith, both religious and in themselves, would help them to close the mental scars and successfully re-establish themselves.



SURRENDER OF JAPANESE FORCES

Address Delivered by

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES
GENERAL SIR THOMAS BLAMEY

to

Lt-General Teshima, Commander Second Japanese Army

On the occasion of the signing of their Surrender

MORITAI, 9th SEPTEMBER, 1945

LIEUT. GENERAL TESHIMA, COMMANDER, SECOND JAPANESE ARMY

"The Japanese Navy has been destroyed. The Japanese Merchant Fleet has been reduced to a mere fraction. The Japanese Air Force has been driven from the sky. The Japanese armies have been defeated everywhere and all that remained for them was to await their inevitable total destruction. Japanese cities lie in waste and Japanese industry has been destroyed. Never before in history has so numerous a nation been so completely defeated.

"To escape the complete destruction of the nation, the Emperor of Japan has yielded to the Allied Forces and an instrument of total surrender has been signed in his name. He has charged you to obey the orders which I shall give you.

"In carrying out these orders, the Japanese Army and Navy organisation will be retained for convenience. Instructions will be issued by the designated Australian Commanders to the Commanders of the respective Japanese Forces, placing upon you and your subordinate Commanders the responsibility for carrying out your Emperor's direction to obey all orders given to you by me.

"You will ensure that all Allied personnel, prisoners of war or internees in Japanese hands are safeguarded and nourished and delivered over to the Allied Commanders.

"You will collect, lay down and safeguard all arms, ammunition and instruments of war until such time as they are taken over by the designated Commanders. You will be given adequate time to carry this out. An official date will be named and any Japanese found in possession after that date of any arms, ammunition or instrument of war of any kind will be dealt with summarily by the Australian Commander on the spot.

"Orders will be given for these and other matters as I consider necessary and you will ensure the obedience to all such orders without delay.

"In receiving your surrender I do not recognise you as an honourable and gallant foe, but you will be treated with due but severe courtesy in all matters.

"I recall the treacherous attack upon our ally, China, in 1938. I recall the treacherous attack made upon the British Empire and upon the United States of America in December, 1941, at a time when your authorities were making the pretence of ensuring peace.

"I recall the atrocities inflicted upon the persons of our nationals as prisoners of war and internees, designed to reduce them by punishment and starvation to slavery.

"In the light of these evils, I will enforce most vigorously all orders issued to you, so let there be no delay or hesitation in their fulfilment at your peril."

General Blamey's Surrender Address, 9 September 1945
(Note the sentence, 'In receiving your surrender I do not recognise you as an honourable and gallant foe ...')

Prisoners of war were particularly anxious about going home.¹⁰⁷ Would they be welcomed or scorned? They knew they were not the same men because of their ordeals. How would their loved ones react to their changed personalities? Their prolonged deprivation of vitamins and minerals had made them not only emaciated and impotent, but could also have made them sterile. Going home, for some, was even more traumatic than being captured in the first place.

One wireless/air gunner from 100 Squadron describes his first taste of civilian hospitality:

Arriving in Townsville on leaving New Guinea, our crew made a beeline for the White Rose cafe to order steak and eggs—something we'd frequently dreamt about. The strange thing was that we could only eat a small portion. It was as if our stomachs had shrunk since we last had steak and eggs. While waiting for transport south, we ate at the same cafe frequently. On our last visit, I had a raging headache and I was sweating profusely. I guessed I had a fever, possibly malaria, so asked at the cafe counter for a glass of water to take two Atebrin tablets.¹⁰⁸ The charge was sixpence, but I was too ill to argue.

While members of 100 Squadron, who had completed their tropical service, were proceeding on leave, prior to demobilisation, postings to and from the squadron continued. Squadron Leader John Dewar, at this time ceased to command the squadron, on being posted with his crew to 6 Squadron. Flight Lieutenant Eric Gogler was then appointed CO, until Squadron Leader R. Mullins arrived to take command of the squadron a week later. Other postings included 11 armourer's assistants to 33 Squadron, being surplus to 100 Squadron.

On 8 October, Stan Damman, John Caddy and Harry Fennell and crews departed south, ferrying three aircraft from the repair unit, No 12 Repair and Salvage Unit, at Tadjj to the aircraft depot, No 5 Aircraft Depot, at Wagga, NSW. Caddy and crew, in A9-365, crashed on making a cross-wind landing at Finschhafen. Although a little shaken, they walked away otherwise uninjured. Subsequently flying in A9-190, John Caddy reports:

When we reached the range, the Kokoda Track, which was our intended route, was covered in cloud, so we flew over the range at about 13 000 feet. While still climbing up, oil pressure on the port motor fell to zero, but all the other instruments showed normal so I continued on and throttled back a bit after we crested the range. On arrival in Port Moresby I got the ground staff to check the motor and they finally advised me that the oil pump was OK again. On a test run-up it reached 8 lbs—normal was 90 lbs.

I decided to continue but instead of heading for Cairns I decided to head for Higgins at the top of Cape York. About half an hour out of Port Moresby the oil pressure fell to zero again, but no other signs of trouble, so I presumed the

gauge was unserviceable. I continued, and roughly halfway across Torres Strait the boost and revs began to surge. A few minutes later the engine began to vibrate and shake the aircraft. I presumed it was about to seize and feathered the prop. I soon found that we couldn't maintain height by using as much power on the starboard engine as I could hold. Recommended single-engine speed was 130 knots but I flew at 115 knots to reduce height loss as much as possible.

We then threw out everything moveable from the aircraft with the exception of the radio and parachutes. We received radio bearings from Higgins, and crossed the coast at about 1000 feet. When I saw the strip I was at 300 feet so went straight in—unluckily downwind, and the strip was slightly downhill. I had used all my compressed air trying to jettison fuel, so I had no brakes and no time to manually pump down the flaps. Floated halfway down the strip and did possibly the best landing of my career and we were still doing 95 knots off the other end—went through one small ditch, but the second one stopped us dead. The only injuries were to my navigator, Adamson, who hit his head and had a slight concussion, and to one passenger lying between the main spars, who had been struck by a battery. It was discovered next day that I had whiplash.



No 100 Squadron Officers, October 1945



Tadji Airstrip with 100 Squadron Planes in Line

Ferrying duties continued with Eric Gogler and Ron Laws and their crews proceeding to Wagga with their respective aircraft on 22 October. Then, towards the end of October, three more crews ferried their aircraft to the mainland. Squadron Leader R. Mullins, Flight Lieutenant David Jones, and Warrant Officer Keith Taylor, with their crews and passengers flew in A9-654, 603 and 666 respectively to Wagga. The other role of the squadron, besides ferrying aircraft to Australia, was that of courier duties, mainly to Madang, Finschhafen and Nadzab. While taxiing in A9-483 to commence a take-off at Madang airstrip, Bill Hardy and crew ran into a ditch, when the starboard engine power increased and the brakes failed to hold. The aircraft was badly damaged and was later converted to components, but the crew was uninjured.

In mid-December, Prime Minister Ben Chifley decided to visit the war-torn bases in the South-West Pacific Area. In three days his itinerary included Port Moresby, Bougainville, Rabaul and Wewak. At Piva, on north Bougainville, the Prime Minister was accommodated in comfort, but at Rabaul there were no facilities for visitors at all; the PM had to rough it. A dubious rumour was circulating that the Prime Minister's plane had been sabotaged on Bougainville, 'when the maintenance crew started on the fuel drains, the fuel came out yellow. It appears that somebody put Atebrin in the fuel tanks!' The aircraft then allotted to the Prime Minister to fly to Wewak was A9-744 (ex 420)¹⁰⁹ from No 10 Local Air Supply Unit.¹¹⁰ His few hours spent at Wewak included an address to the servicemen, as he had done at each of the other places on his tour.

As 1945 closed, the squadron was only a shadow of its previous strength, with 15 officers and 186 other ranks. However 8 Squadron was now well advanced in preparing to disband, and the opportunity was taken to post six aircrews, and 69 airmen in

various ground staff musterings to No 100 Squadron. Included in the posting away from the squadron in January was 'Spike' Svensen, who was to proceed to Japan with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Flying Officer A.G. Svensen, from the radar section of the squadron, had also been the officer-in-charge of 'Century Radio' broadcasting station at Aitape, which therefore ceased operation on his departure. Svensen's work in establishing and operating the station was recognised, prior to his departure, in a letter of commendation from Air Commodore A.L. Walters, AFC, the Air Officer Commanding Northern Area.

When stores of bombs from Tadjil and Wewak were being readied for shipping on 24 January, a 20 pound fragmentation bomb was dropped and detonated. The resulting explosion killed LAC Vincent Maloney, a fitter/armourer. This was the last of 100 Squadron's six ground staff fatalities.

As a climax to a very busy month, the squadron packed up all gear and embarked on board LST 303 for transport to Finschhafen on 26 January. The three-day voyage was uneventful, and the squadron settled into temporary quarters at the stores depot, while a new camp was being completed.

Command of 100 Squadron had changed hands several times since Squadron Leader Mullins' time, with Flight Lieutenant Alf Short, Flight Lieutenant Jim Mannix and Flight Lieutenant Stan Damman serving temporarily in that position. The situation was at last resolved with the appointment of Wing Commander L.R. Trewren as CO, with effect from 28 January 1946.

By the end of March 1946, 100 Squadron had settled in at the new camp at Finschhafen. In the interval, there had been a continual shuffling of aircrews, and support staff through the squadron. Wing Commander Lindsay Trewren had also departed, and Squadron Leader John Mercer, DFC, temporarily took command of the squadron.

The aircrews continued to carry out ferry flights and courier runs, as required, and conducted a few necessary test flights, as they waited for instructions from the Department of Air to return to Australia.

All aircraft were being maintained in serviceable condition, as there were still sufficient ground crews to perform the work. Everyone at the station expected, sooner or later, that the Beauforts would be flown to Australia. The Air Board, in its wisdom however, decided otherwise.

On 25 June, the long awaited signal for 100 Squadron to be disbanded in the field arrived from the Air Board. All squadron personnel were to return to Australia by Dakota aircraft once the Beauforts were disabled. LAC Jack Bennett¹¹¹ takes up the story:

When the engines from the Beauforts had been removed and dumped over the nearby cliff into the sea, Dakota transport arrived and we bade farewell to

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

the members of 100 Squadron. When their tents had been removed, the Base seemed bare, and the remaining 50 or so members of our unit settled down to occupy ourselves in the many ways open to us. Among the remnants left behind by the squadron, I found the skeleton frames of two VJ sailing boats, together with masts. With considerable help from two native houseboys and using aircraft fabric from stores I soon had the frames and sails completed.

Thanks to 100 Squadron, many of my friends spent happy hours learning to sail on the lagoon adjacent to the Base.

Then word came through from the Department of Air that the Beaufort airframes were to be destroyed. Being a 'jack-of-all-trades', I was allocated the task. They were to be destroyed by burning down near the airstrip where they were. Wanting to stretch out the task, we decided that one airframe would burn the first night. Members of the USAAF left in the area and RAN members from the Naval Base at Dreger Harbour were invited to the spectacle.

With everyone in position, we saturated the airframe with gallons of petrol and ignited it with a Verey pistol. The fire soon gained hold as the evening rain started to tumble down. Suddenly and most unexpectedly, an explosion boomed out and pieces of airframe came flying towards the spectators. Other explosions soon followed and shrapnel landed among the group, who by this time were already scrambling into nearby muddy ditches. There we lay in the mud and pouring rain. It seemed ages but it was probably only minutes before things quietened down, allowing us to make a hasty retreat from the area.

Upon examining the burnt out remains next morning, I discovered that guns and ammunition belts lay among the rubble. I had been careless, but who would think that these items would have remained in the aircraft? The subsequent fires to burn the remaining Beauforts were much less dramatic for we made a thorough check for further explosive items so there would be no more surprises. As far as I know, the remnants of the fires were never removed and they could still be there to this day.

It was probably fitting that the last of 100 Squadron's aircraft should go out in a blaze of glory—traditionally symbolic, in a way, of the warrior Vikings of old, who set fire to their vessels, as a last rite.

POSTSCRIPT

Two of 100 Squadron's aircraft that were not burned, and survived the war, deserve mention. Their remarkable endurance gives some idea of the amount of work carried by this squadron in the SWPA. A9-427, 'Superman', recorded 145 bombing strikes and A9-486, 'Scotty's Homin' Pigeon', recorded 139. Both planes had returned to Australia before the squadron moved to Finschhafen. A large photograph of A9-427, which had flown with the squadron from October 1943 until February 1945, is on display in the Australian War Memorial.

SS *Montoro* arrived on 1 August and loaded 300 drums of avoil¹¹² and about 900 tons of freight, including wireless equipment. A week later the HMAS *Wilcannia* arrived to load the remaining wireless gear for the Department of Civil Aviation.

The final disbandment of 100 Squadron was completed on 19 August 1946.



A9-427 'Superman'
Veteran aircraft of 100 Squadron





BEHIND
THE
SCENES

AUSTRALIAN BEAUFORT

*Build me straight, O worthy Master!
Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at all disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Building of the Ship*

The Bristol Beaufort holds a pivotal position in Australian history. Using the British Bristol Beaufort as a model, the Australian Aviation Industry stepped into the big league of aircraft manufacture in 1941. Prior to that event, their effort was on a small scale with relatively simple aircraft.

The production of the Australian Beaufort medium torpedo bomber, at a time when a Japanese invasion seemed very likely, was a triumph for the Australian aeronautical engineers. At that time the Australian Beaufort was the heaviest, most powerful and complex aircraft ever built in this country. The Director of the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production (DAP), Mr J.S. Storey (later Sir John Storey), described the project of building the Beauforts as ‘one of Australia’s greatest achievements’.



DAP Staff and the Last Beaufort, A9-700, 30 August 1944
With nose art depicting ‘Thumper’, the Disney rabbit, outside the Mascot assembly shop (Miss Roslyn Flaherty, the first lady from the left, donated the photograph)

The first 90 Beauforts to be produced in Australia were intended for the RAF in Malaya, but the rapid advance of the Japanese in the East Indies and in the South-West Pacific altered that arrangement. Australia became isolated from Britain, America and Canada, and their aeronautical supplies were then no longer available. Improvisation and adaptation became the order of the day, as the engineers quickly realised that they had to become self-sufficient.

The split-assembly design of the Beaufort was well suited to Australia's limited aircraft production facilities. Some 39 000 components were required for each aircraft, and these were manufactured by hundreds of subcontractors for delivery to the two final assembly plants at Fishermen's Bend, Victoria, and Mascot, NSW. It was a remarkable conversion for firms, such as General Motors Holden and Amalgamated Wireless, geared to manufacture domestic goods from motor cars to household appliances, suddenly to produce military aircraft components.

Soon it became evident that the Bristol Beaufort was not entirely suited to operations in the tropics,¹¹³ or even for patrolling the vast Australian coastline. Modifications were required to the airframes and power plant to give it greater endurance, and to be a more stable platform in the air.

Pratt & Whitney 1200 horsepower (900 kW) air-cooled radial engines replaced the 1060 horsepower (800 kW) Bristol Taurus engines. Some Beauforts were fitted with American imported engines with single superchargers, while later ones were fitted with Australian-made Pratt & Whitney engines, having two-speed superchargers.

This modification alone required major redesign features to the engine area. The mountings, nacelles and cowl panels all had to be changed, and the control linkages and wiring re-routed. Curtiss Electric fully-feathering propellers replaced the original Hamilton constant-speed propellers, which could not be feathered. Each propeller had three blades, 1.5 metres in length and 25 centimetres in width.

The vertical tail fin was redesigned, and increased in surface area to give greater stability in the air. The fuselage was widened to prevent yawing, and also to give the aircraft greater stability. Fitting a damping mechanism to the tail wheel reduced a notorious tail shimmy in the original aircraft. The turret, too, was redesigned to give 220 degrees of rotation of the guns instead of 180 degrees in the Bristol design. Another weighty addition was the fitting of armour plating behind the pilot position.

An improved 24 volt electrical system was also installed to accommodate Australian state-of-the-art radio and, subsequently, radar equipment. A generator, driven by the port motor and in association with two 12 volt aircraft batteries, energised the DC system delivering the power for engine starting, wireless, and general lighting to all operating positions. An alternator, similarly driven by the port motor, delivered the AC supply power for the radar system. All these modifications meant that there were various models of the Beaufort, described as 'Mk IIs' and 'Mk Vs' through to 'Mk VIIs'.

At the peak of production in 1943, one aircraft each day was coming off the assembly line. This figure was achieved by employing women for the first time in the aviation industry. Of the workforce who built the Beauforts, 35 per cent were women. By the end of the venture, the whole project had cost some £47 million (A\$94 million).

Although slower than the later and more powerful American Boston and Mitchell aircraft, the Australian Beaufort was more manoeuvrable and certainly less vulnerable. These aircraft formed the backbone of the RAAF bomber squadrons, until the arrival of the American Liberators in 1944. The last of 700 Beauforts was delivered to the RAAF in May 1945. The Beaufort was the workhorse of the RAAF in the South-West Pacific Area, where it proved to be very adaptable, being used for torpedo attack, bombing, strafing and maritime surveillance.

In *War Planes of the Second World War*, Vol. 7, published by MacDonald of London, noted British aviation writer, William Green, said of the Beaufort, 'This bomber's part in the defeat of the Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific was probably of greater significance than any other single aircraft type in the RAAF'.

Beauforts carried out the first and last attacks on the Japanese by Australian-made aircraft. Crews who flew on operations, and whose lives depended on the Beaufort, swore by its toughness and dependability in the air. It also withstood the searing heat, humidity and mud of the tropics, but much of the credit for the Beaufort's great durability under tropical conditions goes to the ground crews who serviced them.

COCKPIT

The pilot had state-of-the-art instrumentation. An airspeed indicator, vertical speed (rate of climb) indicator, altimeter, directional gyro, and turn and bank indicator were the vital instruments used when flying blind. The ancillary instruments included the gyro-horizon, directional gyro, the aileron indicator and the pilot's steering indicator, which was mounted beside the accurate 8-day clock.

Twin RPM gauges, twin manifold pressure (boost) gauges, and a suction gauge were situated directly in front of the pilot at the top of the panel. These gauges, together with gauges to measure cylinder head temperature, oil temperature, oil pressure and fuel pressure (mounted at the bottom of the panel), gave vital engine performance information to the pilot. The master switch was positioned on the left side at the bottom of the panel, beside the ignition switches,¹¹⁴ while the engine starter buttons were located up near the 8-day clock.

The principal flying controls comprised the pendulum-type rudder pedals and the spectacle-type control column, with the firing button for the wing guns on the left-hand control above the brake lever. To the right on the pilot's instrument panel, at the top, were the controls for the undercarriage and undercarriage safety lock.



Beaufort Cockpit

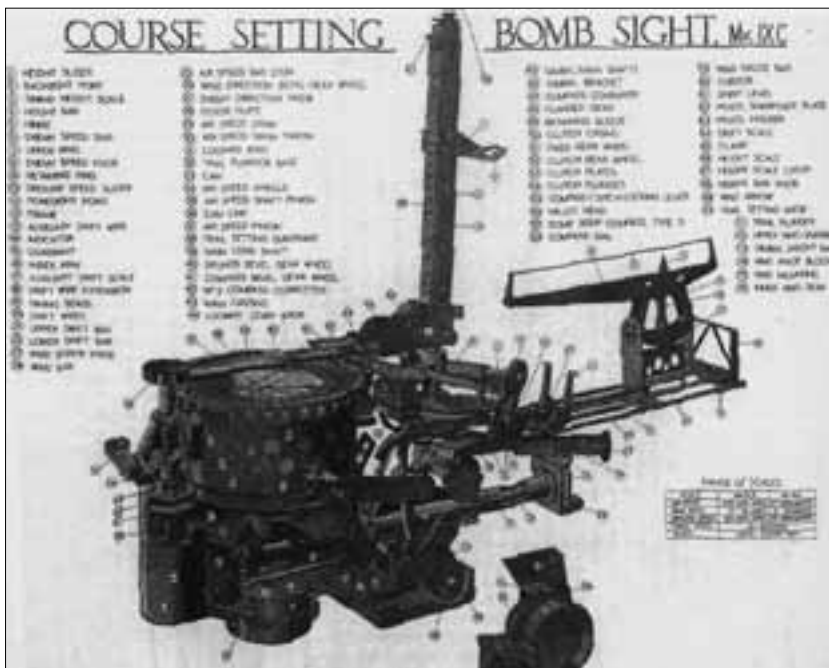
Associated immediately below was a hydraulic selector control, which permitted operation of the undercarriage, turret or the lever-operated bomb-bay doors. Then came the elevator trim and rudder trim controls, flap controls and the emergency flap control. These items were situated in front of the mixture control levers and throttle levers.

There was no autopilot. Flying the aircraft required the pilot's participation at all times. The priming pump and a wobble pump, situated to the right of the throttle controls, were often operated, at the request of the pilot, by the navigator to ensure full fuel supply to the motors, particularly on take-off. The compass was mounted in front of the pilot at about left knee-height level, and the fuel content gauges were mounted on the fuselage wall, on the far right-hand side of the pilot.

NAVIGATION

Navigation equipment in the Beaufort included a replica panel of the pilot's altimeter, airspeed, and air temperature indicators. This panel was to the left of the folding lamp on the navigator's chart table. The navigator's swing seat locked into position for him to operate at his table, or swung aside for him to lie prone for bomb aiming. The course setting bombsight was mounted on a vertical shaft, which also served as a pillar to support the table.

The drift recorder was mounted on the far side of the table near the bomb distributor. The navigator's compass was mounted on the table in the nose of the aircraft near the gimbal-mounted twin nose guns. Additional equipment carried onto the aircraft included a bubble sextant, and Douglas protractor. The protractor was a five-inch square of clear plastic with degree markings around the edge and a central grid of squares. It had a central hole to insert a pencil or to place over a position on a map or chart. The protractor doubled as a parallel ruler. The navigator also found a Dalton computer useful. It was a circular slide rule. Arcs of circles allowed graphical representations of airspeed, drift angle and wind speed, which affirmed calculation of ground speed and direction, after taking into account the angle of drift. Traditional brass dividers were used, where necessary, to mark off distances, or to transfer scales on maps or charts. Binoculars were also carried as standard equipment.



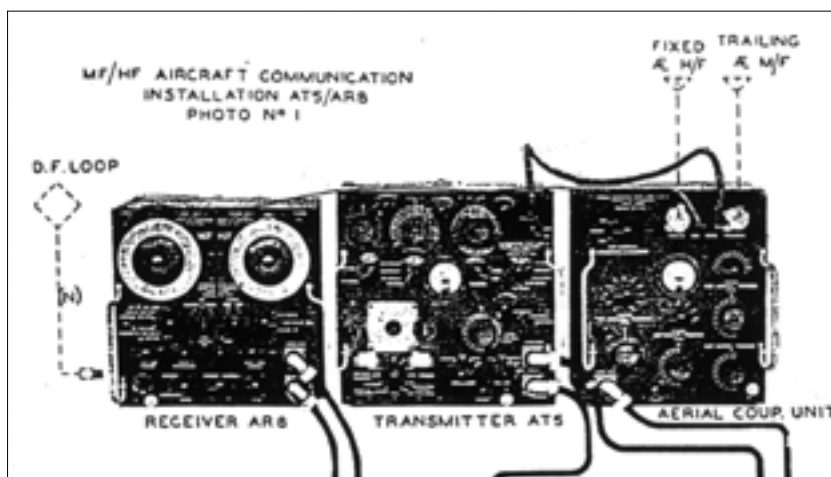
Beaufort Course Setting Bombsight

A Williamson F24 camera was fitted in a well in the vestibule of the aircraft for reconnaissance to secure vertical or oblique line-over photos of target areas. For vertical shots, a remote control device was operated by the navigator, while the wireless operator held the camera at the hatchway to take oblique shots of shipping or targets.

COMMUNICATIONS

Two motor generators, mounted on the starboard wall of the fuselage adjacent to the wireless operator's position, provided the low tension and high voltage supply for the wireless apparatus. The Beaufort was fitted with an AWA AT5 radio transmitter and AR8 receiver, capable of operating with the aid of an antenna-tuning unit on a wide range of frequencies. A master oscillator controlled the choice of low and medium frequencies, while high frequency control was by means of another master oscillator. Alternatively, by selecting one of up to six crystals to replace the high frequency master oscillator, a greater stability of the operating frequency was achieved.

An antenna, strung from the tail fin to a mast rising from the fuselage above the pilot position, served for high frequency communications, while a weighted, trailing aerial could be wound out for low and medium frequency use.



**Beaufort Wireless Installation
AWA Type AT5/AR8**

Direction finding facilities were available by extending a D/F loop, mounted on the fuselage directly above the operator's head, and using the associated sensing section of the AR8 receiver. The direction, in degrees relative to the aircraft's heading, was indicated on a circular drum attached to the column supporting the D/F loop.¹¹⁵

The intercommunication system was vital for any aircrew to function effectively. The intercom system comprised throat microphones¹¹⁶ and headphones, working through the audio section of the radio receiver.

The ASV (Air-to-Surface Vessel) AT300 radar transmitter and AR301 receiver, built by the engineering section of the Australian Post Office, were both mounted in the fuselage, just beyond the turret. Also mounted in the vicinity of these units was the

associated IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) transponder,¹¹⁷ which indicated to Allied aircraft and ground operators that the aircraft appearing on their radar screens was friendly.

Dipole antennae were mounted on each side of the fuselage to transmit and receive radar signals. Two Yagi array antennae, mounted under the outer wings, provided forward scanning. The radar cathode ray display screen was mounted at eye level directly in front of the wireless operator.

An Aldis lamp for signalling was always carried to signal during radio silence, and used to challenge the identity of merchant ships at sea.¹¹⁸

ARMAMENTS

Twin Vickers Mk 1 .303 guns were fitted in the extreme nose of the Beaufort for flak suppression by the navigator during a torpedo run, when the wing guns could not be brought to bear. They were also used for strafing or as otherwise required. Each gun was loaded with a drum of ammunition containing 100 rounds. Spare drums were stored nearby.

In the early model Beauforts, a remotely controlled machine gun was mounted under the nose to fire to the rear of the aircraft. It provided only scatter fire value, while the other guns offered very effective defence, so its installation was discontinued.

Originally, two Browning .303 guns were mounted in the wings with 500 rounds being belt fed to each gun. The firepower of later Beauforts was then improved. From A9-531 onwards, 0.5 guns were fitted in the wings to meet the demands of strafing during ground attack sorties. Two Vickers guns were carried on clips in the vestibule, for mounting in the entrance hatch and in the starboard porthole, for beam defence as required. Spare drums of ammunition were stored on wall pegs nearby.

The hydraulically-operated dorsal turret had twin Browning .303 guns. The turret was a compact device, into which the gunner climbed after take-off to take his seat at the controls. Each gun was supplied with 2300 rounds of belt-fed ammunition, which fired sequentially three ball, one armour piercing, three ball and one incendiary round at a rate of 16 rounds per second. Sitting in the turret with hands on short handles was reminiscent of riding a motorbike. A left-hand lever controlled the hydraulics, and a right-hand trigger fired the guns. By twisting the handles the guns could be elevated or depressed, which conversely depressed or raised the seat. The rotation of the turret was accomplished by pulling the handles left or right. For extra rotation of the guns independent of the turret, a left or right foot lever was depressed. The twin guns were synchronised for maximum concentration of firepower at 200 yards. The cone of fire then increased in proportion to the distance, and at 600 yards it was approximately two yards in diameter. In early models, a bead and ring sight was used,

but in later models an illuminated reflector sight was employed, which was a distinct improvement.

The main bombload was carried in the bomb bay, which was fitted with hydraulically-operated doors. Racks were also added to carry wing bombs. A typical bombload comprised two 500 pounders and two 250 pounders in the bomb bay, and a 250 pounder under each wing.

There was a variety of bombs, apart from general purpose bombs. Delayed action bombs were used where penetration was required. The detonators, fitted to either or both the nose and tail pistols of the bombs, could be varied in set intervals from 1/10th of a second to 72 hours. Anti-personnel ('daisy cutter') bombs were fitted with a rod extension on the nose pistol to ensure the bomb exploded above ground level. There were also anti-submarine bombs and depth charges, canisters containing a number of incendiary bombs, and special types, such as 'Jeletrol' (Napalm).

As required, the bomb bay area was modified to accommodate a single 2000 pound (900 kg) bomb or a torpedo, which protruded beyond the bomb bay. When a 2000 pound bomb or a torpedo was carried, the bomb-bay doors were folded inside, and the bay left open. In the Beaufort, the navigator was also the bombardier and, when using the bombsight, he had to activate the bomb distributor and fuzing switches to deliver the bombs. An exception to this practice was in dive-bombing, when the pilot released the bombs by depressing a switch beside the throttle controls.

PYROTECHNICS

Flame floats were launched from the flare-chute in the vestibule of the aircraft, as required, for drift sighting at night and aluminium markers for drift sighting on a smooth sea in daylight. The markers were also useful in marking the position of a newly submerged submarine. Parachute flares were particularly useful in lighting up targets such as ships at sea. Each parachute flare in its canister was carried on a bomb hook. The Verey pistol in its holster in the cockpit, together with cartridges of various colours, was used for quick visual identification to ships, troops or control towers (i.e. the colour for the day).

EMERGENCIES

In the event of the loss of hydraulic oil needed to extend the landing gear, a gas cartridge was installed in each wheel bay to be fired by the pilot, hopefully, to extend the undercarriage. If there was a failure of the intercom system to the turret gunner, the pilot could press a switch to fire a magnesium flare adjacent to the turret, to warn the gunner to bail out. The pilot could exit the aircraft through a hinged panel in the canopy above the alleyway beside him.

There was a plywood panel in the floor for the navigator to force open by jumping on it, and the wireless operator and gunner could use the hatch opening off the vestibule. Parachutes, other than the seat type for the pilot, were stowed in readily accessible positions.

In the event of ditching in the sea, there was a dinghy release toggle recessed into the fuselage immediately aft of the hatchway. The dinghy (inflatable life raft), together with a Gibson Girl transmitter, was stored in the port wing, and Mae West life jackets were carried on board by each crew member. The Gibson Girl transmitted a distress signal by means of a crank handle, after launching an aerial attached to a box kite.

THE CREW

The Beaufort carried a crew of four—a pilot, a navigator and two wireless/air gunners. The navigator was positioned in the nose of the Beaufort. The pilot was seated on the port (left) side of the aircraft, level with the leading edge of the wing. The wireless operator had his desk behind the pilot. Although facing forward, his only view from the aircraft was a port side window, as the darkened area was needed for viewing the radar screen. The gunner moved into the turret after take-off where, from his exposed position facing the tail of the plane, he could keep a watchful eye to the rear of the aircraft.

Each member of the crew was a specialist but, to be an efficient crew, they had to be bonded together as a ‘TEAM’ (Total Effort Achieves Much). They lived together, trained together, knew each other’s idiosyncrasies, and even knew the smell of each other’s sweat. They instinctively knew each other’s reaction in danger or adversity. They were welded together into a single identity.

TYPICAL AIRCRAFT DETAILS

The Beaufort was an all-metal mid-wing monoplane with cantilevered main plane and tailplane. Its hydraulically-operated landing gear, including tail wheel, was fully retractable.¹¹⁹ The split trailing edge flaps were also hydraulically operated. Trimming tabs were fitted to the rudder, elevator and starboard aileron. Under the control of a good pilot, the Beaufort was highly manoeuvrable and responsive to the controls.

Vital measurements included – wing span 57 feet 10 inches (17.63 metres), length 44 feet 3 inches (13.49 metres) and height 15 feet 10 inches (4.83 metres). It had a wing area of 503 square feet (46.73 square metres) and a wheel track of 18 feet (5.49 metres). When fully loaded, its weight was 22 500 pounds (10 206 kilograms).

The Twin Wasp Australian-built Pratt & Whitney 14 cylinder air-cooled two row radial engines with superchargers were rated at 1200 horsepower (900 kW). They

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

powered Australian-made Curtiss Electric three-bladed variable-pitch fully-feathering propellers.

The Beaufort reached a maximum speed, with normal loading at 14 500 feet, of 268 mph (232 knots or 431 km/h). The aircraft had a rate of climb with normal loading of 1200 feet per minute up to 7000 feet, and 800 feet per minute up to its service ceiling of 24 000 feet.

The standard fuel capacity was 570 gallons (2590 litres) of 87 octane and oil was 39 gallons (177 litres). Its range was at least 950 nautical miles (1737 kilometres), which gave it an endurance in the air of at least 6 hours. Fuel consumption depended on the temperature, altitude, airspeed, bombload, flying manoeuvres and skill of the pilot.



**A9-700 – The Last Beaufort Delivered to the RAAF
With D/F loop extended**

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE BEAUFORT

Alan Gardner, a navigator with ‘Buck’ Buchanan’s crew, provides another look at the Beaufort:

The mighty Beaufort was built like a battleship—nearly as good as a Fairey Battle to prang in! It was, however built in three parts, bolted together.

The forward part contained the skipper and the navigator, bomb-aimer, gunner [who thought that ‘multitasking’ was a new concept in the RAAF] and the bits and pieces that told the plane how to work [a central processing unit]. It also told the plane how and where to drop bombs, torpedoes, flame floats and sea markers and when to take photographs.

The centre section, held everything together. Some would say that the wireless operator/radar wizard, in his comfy lair complete with portholes, was the most essential part of the ship. Others would opt for the wings, Pratt & Whitneys, fuel tanks, undercart, landing light or Yagi antennae. Or perhaps some would claim it was the bomb bay beneath the wireless operator’s feet, which was designed to blow the WAG to kingdom come if the pilot goofed on a ‘gutser’.

The tail of the beast was stuck on just behind the Bristol dorsal gun turret, with its Browning machine guns. There was a bulkhead, which separated the aft end of the aircraft from the rest. The area between the bulkhead and the turret formed a vestibule. It provided a conference centre for the crew if they decided to gang up on the skipper to tell him what they thought of that last hairy take-off (just clearing the jungle at the end of the strip). It also provided access to the great outdoors via the hatch (and ladder if safely on the tarmac). The vestibule held the flare-chute, camera well and a couple of Vickers guns and spare magazines. First aid packs and thermos flasks were also stored in the vestibule, but most vital of all the dunny.¹²⁰

This vital piece of equipment performed a triple role. Apart from the obvious use to which thunder-boxes¹²¹ are put, the Beaufort convenience was used by all from AC1 to AVM, as an essential step when boarding the plane. Woe betide the luckless individual who did not pay strict attention when entering or leaving. Just imagine the consequence if a too-shiny soled shoe slipped off the lift-up lid while he straddled the gap between wing and vestibule! The third use was as a seat for the turret gunner during take-offs and landings.

Then came the infamous period when ‘One-Shot Charlie’ on the ridge behind Boram airstrip plugged his third 100 Squadron Beaufort in the usual position, which resulted in the plane losing its hydraulics system. There were then no such handy bits of equipment as flaps or brakes to ease the landing. Tom (a fictitious name to protect the individual) radioed his predicament. He advised that the plane would make a belly landing on the old Jap fighter strip to avoid ripping up the Marsden steel matting on the main Tadjji Airport.

The crew duly took up ‘crash positions’—navigator beside the pilot, but strapped to his cushion on top of the box containing the Aldis lamp and the

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Very cartridges, wireless operator strapped to his snug armchair, protected by MF/HF radio sets, ASV/IFF radar, 24 volt battery and all associated electrical gear, and the tail gunner sitting in comfort on the loo, his back against the bulkhead, and gazing at the passing scenery through the open hatch.

The pilot did an impeccable circuit, lined up on final and made his approach. He forgot only one thing. He had no undercarriage! It would have been an absolutely perfect 'three pointer'. The tail touched first, thumped down, and the rear of the Beaufort parted at the bulkhead. The turret, rear fuselage and tail surfaces stopped in a cloud of coral dust, while the other two thirds of the plane careered down the strip. The bewildered gunner clung resolutely to his seat on the loo with his feet dangling in space over a rapidly retreating dust-clouded air strip.

AIRCREW TRAINING

*Up, down, flying around,
Looping the loop and defying the ground.
They're all frightfully keen,
Those magnificent men in their flying machines.*

Ron Goodwin,
Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines

Aircrew cadets, in the early years of the RAAF, received their training in individual squadrons, while cadet pilots were taught to fly, principally, at Laverton and Richmond. Then in May 1937, No 1 School of Aeronautics was established at Laverton not only to train pilots, but also to conduct the longer training courses for observers and wireless operators.

The Chief Instructor of air training at that time, using Hawker Demon, Bristol Bulldog and Avro Anson aircraft, was Flight Lieutenant W.H. 'Bull' Garing, while Flying Officer E. Cohen was responsible for ground training. By the time No 2 Trainee Course commenced on 17 January 1938, the training program in theory and practice, for both observers and wireless operators, was running smoothly alongside the pilot training program. Bombing practice was carried out at the Point Cook bombing range; air-to-ground gunnery for pilots took place at the Point Cook gunnery range; and ground training in gunnery for observers and wireless operators was conducted at the Williamstown rifle range. Air-to-air gunnery practice for aircrew graduates from the School of Aeronautics then took place in Hawker Demons of No 3 Squadron at Richmond, NSW.

With the outbreak of war in Europe on 3 September 1939, the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) was established. Agreement had been reached between the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Rhodesia, to supply trained aircrew for the European theatre of war. The agreement required that 78 per cent of Australian trainees would be fully trained in Australia and 22 per cent would receive their advanced training in Canada.

Recruitment for aircrew began with an earnest advertising campaign, and the first recruits began their training on 29 April 1940. There was no initial training at this stage. Instead, the recruits were selected for training as pilots, observers, wireless operators and gunners, and commenced their specific training immediately.

The number of applications for aircrew, however, exceeded the available facilities for training. Successful applicants were given a numbered lapel badge and enrolled as

RAAF Reservists to await their call up, which could be several months. Reservists were issued with a Training Manual, and were expected to attend a local course of instruction to learn and practise morse code.

When called up, the Reservist underwent a lengthy and meticulous physical examination, along with tests for intelligence and colour blindness.¹²² Those 'fit for full flying duties' received their regimental number. They then repeated, in unison, the oath of allegiance, promising to 'well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord, the King, in the Air Force of the Commonwealth of Australia until lawfully discharged'. The oath continued, 'and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law'.

It was April 1940 before the first Initial Training School (ITS) for aircrew was functioning at Somers, near Flinders Naval base on Western Port Bay, Victoria.

Instruction at the School included physical training, Air Force Law, aircraft recognition and daily morse code practice, which took place in a classroom environment. There were lectures on basic aerodynamics, navigation, meteorology and hygiene. Learning the rules of Air Force discipline and the recognition of ranks was reinforced by close-order drill. Instruction in armaments was also part of the course, and this included practice with a .303 rifle at the rifle range. Aircrew trainees at this stage were classified as Aircraftman 2 (AC2), the lowest rank of all.¹²³

The course of eight weeks concluded with specific aptitude tests, which would reveal whether or not the trainee was suitable for training as a pilot, observer (later navigator and bombardier) or wireless/air gunner (later signaller and air gunner). Each individual then appeared before a Category Selection Board. It must have been very difficult at times for the Board to decide which trainee should be a pilot, a navigator or wireless/air gunner, when a trainee was found to be medically suited and had an aptitude for all three categories. Very often it was a matter of the quota of pilots required, which was about 30 per cent of the trainees. At the end of the course the trainees were elevated to the rank of Leading Aircraftman (LAC).

Under the EATS program, training for pilots, navigators, wireless operators and gunners took place at separate Air Force schools in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Rhodesia. Pilots went to an Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS), observers to an Air Observers School (AOS), and wireless/air gunners to Wireless Air Gunners School (WAGS). Meanwhile the dual commitment of the RAAF, to share in the EATS and at the same time conduct training for home defence, continued.

PILOTS

A trainee pilot attending an EFTS was taught the theory of aerodynamics, navigation, meteorology and the theory of flying. He learned how the internal combustion engine worked and how to read vital gauges of the engine in operation. His ground and flight instruction included cockpit drill, instrument identification and aeronautical awareness.

Flight training usually took place in a Tiger Moth, which had two open cockpits with small windshields, one behind the other, with the instructor in the front one. Helmet and goggles were necessary, and were, at times, splattered with grasshopper guts. Communication between instructor and trainee was by means of a Gosport tube at first, but later by microphone and headphones fastened in the flying helmet.

The trainee soon learned that during a coordinated turn, the load factor increased as the angle of bank increases, something easily sensed as he was forced down in the seat, hence the term 'flying by the seat of your pants'. Dual instruction averaged about 10 hours. Then the trainee was let loose to take off on his own, circle the airfield and land. It was at the EFTS that the process of weeding out trainees lacking in potential to be efficient pilots was undertaken. A scrubbed pilot was then transferred for training as a navigator or wireless/air gunner.

A successful trainee pilot progressed to a Service Flying Training School (SFTS) to learn more advanced flying skills, such as flying on instruments (flying blind) and the art of dive-bombing. Night flying was difficult but blind flying was hazardous. The pilot quickly learned that the airspeed indicator was a vital instrument. There were more lectures and then various navigation exercises in solo cross-country trials, day and night. A Link trainer (an early flight simulator) was also available at most schools for practice sessions. At the conclusion of the course, which varied in duration from 12 to 20 weeks depending upon the demand for pilots, the graduating trainees were awarded their pilot's wings. Thereafter, pilots progressed to multi and single-engine advanced training schools.

NAVIGATORS

A trainee navigator (observer) studied navigation at an Air Observers School for 12 weeks, commencing with the method of dead reckoning, i.e. fixing position by calculating course, airspeed and elapsed time. To assist him in these calculations, he was issued a circular slide rule. Map and chart reading, and photography were also associated skills he had to learn. He studied meteorology, and learned to find the drift of an aircraft from the compass heading caused by wind currents, and thus make adjustments to the plotted course. All of this was reinforced through practical navigation in an Avro Anson, where he also became familiar with the altimeter, airspeed and air temperature indicators required in navigating.

The navigation graduate wearing his 'O' wing (later 'N' wing) was then taught the art of bombing and gunnery at a Bombing and Gunnery School (BAGS). During the 12-week course, he was taught the safety precautions in arming bombs, and the theory of bomb aiming (which was not as simple as it sounds). The main factors to be considered were the plane's speed and, course, the wind direction, air resistance and the distance and direction to the target. He practised high and low-level bombing with the course setting bombsight, and also practised air gunnery by endeavouring to score hits on a drogue towed by a Fairey Battle aircraft.

The trainee navigator then advanced to a four-week Air Navigation School, where he learned the technique of celestial navigation using his Longines watch and a bubble sextant. By measuring a particular star's angle above the artificial horizon of the sextant at a precise time, and referring to Star Tables and the current Air Almanac, he plotted a line¹²⁴ associated with the dead reckoning of his position. Three such sightings from well-spaced stars gave him a 'cocked hat' intersection of the aircraft's position on his chart. A navigator's training also included the use of great circle navigation, which recognises the curvature of the earth. Cross-country navigating exercises at night then completed his course.

WIRELESS OPERATORS

The wireless trainee studied basic electricity and magnetism, the electron theory, radio principles and propagation at a wireless school. He was introduced to the workings and maintenance of generators and storage batteries which powered radio transmitters and receivers. He learned the techniques of effective communications under varying atmospheric and seasonal conditions, by using the optimum operating frequency for the occasion.

He also practised sending and receiving morse code until proficient at 20 words per minute. The use of an Aldis lamp for visual morse code signalling was also rehearsed. Some trainees could not handle the morse code and went directly to train as air gunners.

The wireless trainee became familiar with a typical aircraft radio installation and then carried out practical exercises in an aircraft (Tiger Moth, Anson or Wackett). Trainees were taught to tune the radio transmitter and receiver to match a trailing aerial, which had to be wound out for the exercise and wound in again for landing, and how to tune the equipment for optimum performance. During a flight the trainee exchanged cipher messages in morse code, using a 'Syko' card, with a ground station, and decoded received messages into plain language. The procedure when communicating with a Civil Aeradio station was also taught, together with the morse 'Q' code for an abridged exchange of messages.

Radio direction finding (D/F) was another skill to acquire. Practical tests were attempted inside a mobile van, to simulate an aircraft environment, where the trainee

had to determine the precise directions of the local non-directional aerodrome beacon from the van at various locations. He then took additional bearings from two broadcasting stations, widely spaced geographically, to determine a 'cocked hat' position of the van, for the instructor to plot on a local map.

All members of aircrew were taught some basic navigation. While the navigator was highly trained in his art, and used his eyes to observe his whereabouts and read charts, maps and instruments, the wireless operator was, in effect, the navigator's ears. He kept a wireless log book, and entries in it commenced on taxiing out for take-off. All radio signals heard and transmitted were recorded until the aircraft came in to land.

Following the six months' wireless course, the successful wireless operator was originally awarded his distinctive shoulder patch of a handful of sparks. Later, this practice was phased out in favour of an 'S' wing (Signaller).

AIR GUNNERY

The wireless operator then attended a Bombing and Gunnery School (BAGS) where he learned how to dismantle and reassemble the Browning and Vickers machine guns, how to load belt and pannier ammunition, and how to clear stoppages. He was taught the theory and practice of aerial gunnery, and how to use the gun ring sight for deflection shooting, and for estimating distance.

The various gunnery exercises were carried out in a Fairey Battle. For air-to-ground gunnery the target was a numbered canvas patch on the firing range, while the air-to-air target was a canvas drogue towed by another Fairey Battle. The pilot towing the drogue had to be admired. Frequently the gunners overestimated the speed of the drogue and fired so far ahead of it that the towing aircraft was in very real danger of being hit. There were times when the towrope was hit and severed and the drogue lost.

Ron Laird, who later flew with 100 Squadron, describes gunnery training at Port Pirie, South Australia:

Three trainees would crouch below the rear cockpit of a Battle aircraft, where a Vickers machine gun was swivel-mounted, and where the smell of glycol fumes was always present. Each gunner had his own pannier of ammunition with the tips of the 100 bullets freshly dipped in an identifying paint to assess his percentage of hits. The gunner would take his turn to stand, load his pannier of ammunition, and fire at the target. When a Battle aircraft, in throttling back to keep pace with a drogue, reached stalling speed, a horn would sound. I was firing at the drogue when the horn sounded. I continued firing my 100 rounds of ammunition despite a jostling from below me. Then Ron Johnson, shouting to get out, squeezed his head and shoulders into the cockpit beside me. There was a look of alarm in his eyes and I could see he had clipped on his parachute.

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Dave Gill was holding him fast by the legs as I convinced him that the horn didn't mean to bail out!

From each training course for pilot, navigator and wireless/air gunner, one, and sometimes two, trainees in each category graduated with the rank of Pilot Officer. All other graduates earned the rank of Sergeant. How and why these arbitrary selections were made—particularly in some cases—remained a mystery.¹²⁵



Arthur Goodall Firing a Vickers Machine Gun

OPERATIONAL TRAINING

Operational training for combat in the South-West Pacific Area was at first carried out in each individual flying squadron until Operational Training Units (OTUs) were established. The first OTU for bombers in Australia was established at Bairnsdale, Victoria, in June 1942 and an OTU specialising in torpedoes was established shortly afterwards at Nowra.

At the OTU, pilots, navigators and wireless/air gunners were instructed in their individual roles as crew members, and then advised to find their own crew within a few days or be allocated into crews. It was a haphazard process of trying to assess each other's capabilities purely on appearances and mannerisms. There was no way to

measure another man's competence in the air until such time as they flew together. It was simply a matter of trust. Thus crews were formed for better or for worse.

Frequently the crew all held the same rank but, irrespective of rank, the pilot was always captain of the aircraft and responsible for its safety. Before flying in a Beaufort, a pilot had to convert from single-engine to twin-engine flying, and this was usually carried out in an Airspeed Oxford aircraft. Piloting the more difficult Beaufort then commenced under dual instruction.

Training as a Beaufort crew included practical day and night exercises. Navigation training out over Bass Strait in adverse weather conditions at night was often hazardous. It was even more so when flying at low level over a turbulent sea as an exercise to simulate radar evasion. Photographic reconnaissance missions were practised at the Melbourne docks because shipping recognition, as well as aircraft recognition, was an important component of the course.

Other assignments tested the navigator/bombardier's skill in low and high-level bombing, while dive-bombing, formation flying and searchlight evasion tested the pilot's flying dexterity. Radio communications exercises tested the wireless operator's ability to choose the optimum operating frequency for reliable communications. Direction finding and radar identification were also incorporated into the various exercises.

Gunnery tactics, which involved mock air-to-ground strafing and repelling fighter interception, were also a significant part of the course. A Kittyhawk or Boomerang aircraft would attack from various quarters. The most effective move by a Kittyhawk was to come from below, out of the arc of fire from the turret guns. The Boomerang was too slow for that move and had to make a beam approach attack. When available, the guns were fitted with cinecameras to record each encounter.

The training was very thorough and covered most situations likely to be encountered in operational squadrons. Beaufort aircrews were expected to be proficient in carrying out maritime sorties in support of Allied naval forces, to be able to undertake solo reconnaissance or bombing missions effectively, and to be efficient in providing close support for the land forces through bombing and strafing.

At the conclusion of the course, the crew had bonded, with a strong sense of confidence and trust in each other's ability. A period of leave was then usually granted on graduating, before graduates were posted to an embarkation depot or to a squadron.

POSTING

Alan Gardner describes a typical northern transportation trip on posting to 100 Squadron:

Troop trains, made up of swing-door suburban carriages drawn by tired C16 or C17 engines, took their overcrowded passengers on a very slow trip of the 850 miles from Brisbane to Townsville. These trains gave way at every passing loop to goods trains going either north or south. The north bound trains took supplies for the Defence Forces, while returning trains brought sick and wounded, together with sugar, bananas and other products of the far north. This overworked single line was virtually Australia's only link north of Rockhampton.

One bright spot in the four days journey was the loco water stop at Bororen. Before the train had actually stopped, every Queenslander in the know had charged across the road to sample the Bororen pies, much to the puzzlement of the 'uneducated Southerners'. By the time the first pie eaters had returned to the carriages, time was running out, as was the supply of pies!

The time spent in the transit camp in Townsville for transport to an operational squadron depended on availability of aeroplanes or ships. Douglas Dakotas or Martin Mariners were the main transport planes. The Dakota was the more comfortable of the two, having aluminium side benches along the fuselage, making it feel less claustrophobic when crowded. Port Moresby was the usual staging depot before proceeding on to an operational squadron, but later, as squadrons moved further north, Merauke, in Dutch New Guinea, was also used.

The slower method of transport to the war zone was, of course, by ship. Alan Gardner tells of his experience after boarding the transport ship *Canberra* at the Townsville wharves at the mouth of Ross Creek:

The ship proceeded north, inside the Barrier Reef but by nightfall we passed through Grafton Passage, with the Cape Grafton Light receding into the distance. The weather then turned foul, which had the *Canberra* pitching, rolling, twisting and creaking with decks awash and water pouring from the scuppers. Luckily, all the recent bullet and 20 mm shell holes were in the superstructure above the surging water. Practically all the new-chum sailors were seasick. They welcomed the sight of the navigation light and reef outside Port Moresby and the prospect of smooth water.

The RAAF cook, however, was sorry to hear the news for he had been running poker and pontoon games in the bowels of the ship and had amassed a tidy sum of winnings.

When the ship's passengers for Port Moresby and the cargo had been dispersed, the ship set off again south-east along the Papuan coast to arrive at the entrance

of the China Strait into Milne Bay at dawn the following morning. Moving slowly through the placid water with dense lush tropical rain forest plunging down to the water's edge made me homesick for the Daintree region of north Queensland. The China Strait must be the most beautiful seaway in the world. Samarai Island and town hove into sight and soon we arrived at Milne Bay in a blinding rainsquall. We were all unceremoniously dumped on the wharf to await RAAF tenders to the Operational Base Unit, where we did at least have shelter from the rain and less mud to stand in.

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FLYING COFFINS – THE TRIM TAB PROBLEM

*I ask no miracles or stunts,
No heavenly radiogram;
I only beg for once, just once,
To not be in a jam.
One tiny moment thy servant craves
Of being his own master;
One placid vale between the waves
Of duty and disaster.*

Ogden Nash, *Prayer at the End of a Rope*

The Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) was effective in turning into pilots, navigators and wireless/air gunners, men who had been drawn from such diverse occupations as farming, banking, drafting and sales. Training at an Operational Training Unit (OTU), however, was a vastly different exercise. It was the most dangerous part of their training. New pilots, in particular, had to master a more advanced aircraft, such as the Beaufort, which was a tricky plane to learn to fly. Becoming proficient in flying Beauforts at No 1 Operational Training Unit (1OTU) was exhilarating at first, but then became hazardous. 1OTU became infamous for its high accident rate, first at Bairnsdale and then East Sale.

In his book, *Fighter Squadron Doctor*, Flight Lieutenant Bill Deane-Butcher, Senior Medical Officer, wrote:

Many mysterious fatal crashes clouded the training program at the Beaufort Operational Training Unit. The Beaufort had a crew of four so it was a busy time for me and a sad time for the young families living in the town.

Between March 1942 and August 1945, 91 airmen lost their lives in Beaufort flying accidents at 1OTU, a number of them very likely due to a malfunction of the elevator trim control.

The author was training at 1OTU on No 12 Beaufort Course, when the Unit moved from Bairnsdale to East Sale, while Wing Commander Archie Dunne was Commanding Officer. During that period, 22 April to 22 September 1943, there were six fatal accidents. On 28 April, A9-304 crashed into the sea near King Island in Bass Strait killing all crew. From East Sale, A9-352 crashed and burned near Currie

aerodrome on King Island with the loss of the crew on 11 July. Flight Sergeant M.B. Maxwell was flying solo in A9-175 when it dived vertically from 2000 feet into the ground near Tinamba, Victoria, on 22 August. The next day, while doing a steep turn to starboard on returning from Pyramid Rock datum point during a DR7 exercise,¹²⁶ A9-311 struck the ground at Welshpool, Victoria, killing all crew. Three days later, A9-353 dived into Lake Wellington, Victoria, on a dive-bombing exercise with the loss of all crew. The sixth fatal accident occurred on 13 September, when the crew of two in A9-303 dived vertically to their deaths into a swamp two miles east-south-east of East Sale.

The elevator trim problem first emerged in May 1942, but the significance of the problem was not recognised at that time. Even before that date, on 28 January 1942, there was one instance which, at the time, appeared to be sabotage. The pilot of A9-146 taxied out at Bankstown, NSW, and suddenly found his elevators were not working. On removing the inspection plate at the tail, he and the flight rigger found that the rivets had fractured at the attachment point of the elevator lever to the torque tube; the result being that the tube had pulled out of position and disconnected the elevator assembly. The verdict by Alex West, Assistant Chief Engineer, was that excessive loads applied during jiggling had probably been used deliberately at the factory.

Flight Lieutenant J.G. Hoskins, while at 1OTU East Sale, was the first to land a Beaufort successfully with elevator trim trouble. He decided to test fly A9-308 on 3 July 1943 after receiving a report of the aircraft, in level flight, bunting like a porpoise. When he experienced the same problem, he was forced to land very heavily at Medway golf links, Maribyrnong, Victoria. An inspection of the elevator revealed a loose Breeze Trim Tab Actuator.

Squadron Leader Herb Plenty, DFC and Bar, recalls the trim tab problem:

Another nasty malfunction occurred when the elevator trim tab failed, allowing the tab to float free. These tabs exerted a force through the pilot's control column, a force too powerful for the pilot to override in most circumstances, so that the Beaufort entered a steep dive from which recovery proved extremely difficult. There were two or three experienced pilots and crews who were killed in such circumstances, and a few pupils too met their fate, victims of similar accidents.

Although the Department of Air and the Air Board were very concerned at the high accident rate, they procrastinated in ordering an investigation until 9 February 1943. Even then, no conclusion was reached as to the source of the problem. In May 1943 the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Jones, summed up yet another investigation by saying, '... they could not attribute any one specific cause'. It was not until Group Captain W.H. 'Bull' Garing, CBE, DFC, grounded the Beauforts at East Sale on 14 October 1943, that the Department of Air did anything worthwhile.

A letter, dated 14 November 1943, from M.C. Langslow (Secretary of the Department of Air) to the Secretary of the Department of Aircraft Production headed ‘Most Secret – Beaufort Aircraft Defects’ states:

A serious defect has been discovered in the Breeze Control mechanism of the elevator trim tab circuit in Beaufort aircraft. The defective part is Spindle Part No Z5083, two of which are incorporated in the Breeze elevator unit, Stores reference A9/51560, Part No CZ5070.

The letter then explains in paragraph 3 the reason for grounding all Beauforts:

An intensive and detailed investigation of fatal Beaufort and previously unexplained accidents—of which there have been a disturbingly high number—has led to the conclusion that defects in the elevator trim tab control circuit may be a potential cause of a proportion of these accidents, in the circumstances under which they have occurred. It has therefore been decided to ground all Beaufort aircraft until replacement spindles are installed in the Breeze elevator unit in place of those existing.

On 20 November 1943, the Secretary of the Department of Air received a chilling reply. It explained that the design and specifications for the Breeze Control could not be considered faulty on theoretical grounds. The following contributory causes, however, rendered the spindles of local manufacture defective:

1. Faulty workmanship.
2. Substitution of the original S.1 material.
3. Failure to recognise that the particular component was a vital link in the aircraft control system. The standard finish of many of the spindles would indicate that it was regarded more in the accessory category than an item on which the safety of the aircraft might well depend.

Initially, 20 sets of Bristol Breeze Control assemblies were used, and then the USA supplied 180 sets. When these ran out, Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd (AWA) contracted to supply 700 sets using R.W. Reynolds Ltd as subcontractors. On 14 February 1943, the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production (DAP) took over the full inspection of the Breeze Control assembly sets. It is thought that, at some point after the Division took on the responsibility, the problem came into full focus.

A viewing of communications between the Department of Air, Department of Aircraft Production, the Beaufort Division of DAP, the Air Force, AWA and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR),¹²⁷ from 14 October to 17 December 1943, transports the reader back in time to typical ‘buck-passing’. Some of

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the issues included argument as to the necessity to ground all Beauforts, and concern over the loss of aircraft production while modifying existing Beauforts.

Another issue was the focus on faults with the spindle Z5083, when other parts of the assembly were also suspected of being faulty. It was in an extract of the Minutes of the Beaufort Advisory Committee, dated 10 November 1943, that the most significant faulty part was identified:

It was a fact that the pin which locked the two sections to the actuator arm had been installed as a 1/16 inch straight pin instead of a 3/32 inch taper pin. This had escaped the notice of the AWA Inspection Division and the Beaufort Inspectors for a long period. Other examples of this particular equipment demonstrated that, in some instances, no pin had been utilised at all and that, in others, soft alloy pins (Duralium) had been used.

In view of this single curse on an otherwise splendid aircraft, one is forced to ask the questions. Why was this problem found only in the Australian Beaufort, and apparently not encountered in the Bristol Beaufort? Why did Bristol change the design of the trim control to a much safer one for the Beaufighter? Was the trim tab problem due to sabotage?

Although the Beauforts at East Sale were grounded, it is evident from further reports of trim tab problems after 14 October 1943 that not all Beauforts in Australia had been grounded. Flying Officer Cliff Scott experienced a trim tab problem on the morning of 29 October 1943:

We were at about 2000 feet due east of Barrenjoey and heading for our base at Camden in A9-267. Suddenly the aircraft developed a nasty shudder, which gradually got worse until the control column was whipping backwards and forwards causing the aircraft to porpoise.

Without further warning the Beaufort bunted into a steep dive. The controls were solid, but forcefully operating the trim control pulled her out. On reaching Camden I dropped full flap, as the strip is down hill, and immediately the elevator trim went into a full nose down position. While I wrestled with the controls, the navigator (Alf Tisdall) got on the trim wheel and managed to wrench it free but with not much to spare. I guess we were lucky for in the past several Beauforts had been seen to dive in for no apparent reason. After this effort all our kites were grounded until the elevator trim actuator was replaced. When you are young these things don't worry you too much, but as you get older you realise that a large amount of luck can have a bearing on your future.

Flight Lieutenant Len Parsons, DFC, an experienced Beaufort pilot, also confirmed there continued to be a trim tab problem, as he had experienced it himself. Group

Captain Brian 'Blackjack' Walker, DSO, however, is the only pilot to bring a Beaufort back with a trim tab actuator jammed in the nose down position. If the aircraft had not been fitted with dual control to provide assistance in holding the aircraft in the air, Walker, the crew and several passengers would have certainly perished that day. Here is a copy of his official report:

At the time of the incident described below, I was the CO of No 5 OTU stationed at RAAF Tocumwal, in the SW of NSW.

While flying Beaufort A9-415 from Tocumwal to Bankstown on 5 November 1943, I sensed an irregular vibration in the control column when nearing the vicinity of Crookwell. We were at about 8000 feet above a light layer of scattered cumulus but seeing nothing to cause turbulence. I called for one of the crew to check the tailplane as I suspected something may be working loose in the elevator control.

Almost before he could move, the control column began to rock back and forth quite violently, so I immediately reduced power and hauled back on the column with every ounce of strength I could muster. The control made a couple of more violent forward moves but then appeared to lock with a very heavy down force which was stable. But I doubt whether I could have held it for any more than five minutes on my own as my bottom was off the seat through the strength exerted.

When the panic had subsided, I realised the aircraft was fitted with dual controls, so I called for Sgt Jaggs, a wireless/air observer who had applied for a flying course. I informed him that his course was due to (blank) start forthwith and got him into the empty co-pilot's seat. I then ordered all on board to don parachutes.

With his help, the situation was more manageable, but it was my intention to get the aircraft clear of the mountains, bail out the crew, then roll the aircraft over more and hope the heavy subsequent 'nose up' force would throw me out.

My Chief Ground Instructor, F/Lt Dennis Cowper, who was on board, then informed me that we had eleven passengers, including one, P/O Potter, who had jumped aboard just prior to moving off the tarmac, and he did not have a parachute. I remember the brief conversation with this young gentleman. 'When did you come aboard, Potter?' 'Well Sir, I asked F/Lt Cowper and he said it would be all right, just before you moved off, Sir.' 'Well Potter, you are going to look silly when we have to wave you goodbye.'

Potter was standing in the well just behind my right shoulder, a fair youth of no more than nineteen years, but I noticed a tear came from each eye after my last remark. At the same time my CGI, Cowper, gave me a hard look and said, 'I think you can handle it, Sir'.

By now it would be 10 minutes after the initial trouble. I had the speed back to between 90 and 100 knots — power well reduced and the aircraft was

descending at about 100 to 200 feet per minute towards Bankstown. As the situation appeared stable as long as we kept that back pressure on the elevator, it seemed reasonable to attempt a crash landing on Bankstown. Of course, there would be no gear or flaps, as the pair of us could just hold the aircraft in the attitude described. I reasoned that both gear and flaps could make the Beaufort unstable again, with subsequent even more nose down trim. I gently felt the elevator trim wheel, it seemed locked, so I decided to leave it alone.

Fear gives strength, so I reasoned Jaggs and I could hold it long enough. I remember saying to LACW Patterson, a loquacious orderly room WAAAF¹²⁸ sitting behind within earshot, 'Patterson, I have never seen you so quiet', and all I got was a sickly grin. She must have been very frightened. So was I, but far too busy to worry about it. Then I said to Potter, 'We will have a go at a forced landing on Bankstown, but if she lets go, I'll curse you all the way down'.

Well do I remember that approach to Bankstown. First I had to do up my own harness. I had to yell and scream at Jaggs for more back pressure, as he tended to let the nose drop a trifle if I relaxed even for a moment, as was necessary to arrange and tighten my own safety harness.

And now that final (approach). I pointed the aircraft well to the north of where I knew Bankstown Aerodrome to lie and keeping the speed below about 100 knots, turned on a final over Prospect Reservoir just under 1000 feet. With much more yelling at poor Jaggs, while taking even one hand off the column to adjust power, the pair of us managed to arrive at a couple of feet over the fence heading SE with fortunately no conflicting traffic. To make sure I was as close to terrain as possible, I waited till I could just feel the propellers starting to make contact. Then I yelled for the last time 'Let her go' and the aircraft slid to rest on its belly. Both props came off, but luckily did not penetrate the fuselage. We all got out safely and I went immediately to the rear and, as was suspected, found one elevator trim tab hanging loose, completely detached.

The elapsed time from the start of the problem to the aircraft coming to rest would have been about 50 minutes — as far as I was concerned, '50 minutes of concentrated fright'. I can assure you that not until that aircraft came to rest, did the butterflies stop fluttering in my tummy. I then noticed that Potter got out with a parachute harness on, but Dennis Cowper was not wearing a harness. That man had some guts, but he was a rugby Wallaby and some of them don't come any finer. He later said quite simply when queried, 'I knew you could handle it, Sir'.

I rang my Chief Flying Instructor, S/Ldr Ross Little, and told him of the accident. He offered to send another Beaufort to which I replied, 'No way, Ross, send a Beaufighter as they have an irreversible screw-jack in the elevator trim, a much better and much safer design'.

When I returned to my unit the next day I was met by Cpl Blake, who signed the Beaufort out on the previous day and he was a worried man. He had a complete Beaufort elevator system laid out on a bench and invited me to inspect it for security, which I did and it certainly looked OK. He then went

to the fork-end, which would attach to the tab, and spun it between his palms and the cable came adrift at the breeze control. From memory it appeared this unit could look secure, but, in the very odd case, it could come undone with disastrous results. It was later modified, but immediately made subject to special daily inspection. So what do you think caused more than quite a few Beauforts to dive unexpectedly into the ground?

Walker signed the statement and wrote on the EE/77 Defect Report, 'A positive lock on the 'brise' [sic] control is immediately necessary to save valuable aircrew lives'.

A further incident took place at 14 Squadron, Pearce, WA, which reveals the fickle finger of fate at work. Flying Officer Bob Maynard reports:

Mid morning on 6 January 1944, I had my crew in A9-346 in preparation for take-off. I was about to taxi out to the strip, when F/Lt Ken Hewitt asked us to step out, as our Commanding Officer, W/Cdr Charles Learmonth, DFC, had decided to take the aircraft.

Inter-Services war exercises were the order of the day when the Commanding Officer and his crew flew out over Rottnest Island. Listening on the squadron radio, we heard the CO call his wingmen in the other two Beauforts, 'Open up formation, my aircraft is shuddering and hard to control'.¹²⁹ Then we could hear him trying to diagnose the trouble with his two wing pilots, who reported that the trim tab was flapping and then stuck in the vertical position as the plane assumed a diving position. Finally, although a powerfully built man, Learmonth said, 'Sorry chaps, can't get her out. Trim tab appears jammed. This looks like it.' Then silence.

Squadron Leader John Kessey assumed command of 14 Squadron and grounded the Beauforts, pending an investigation. The Air Board threatened him with a court martial for taking this action and ordered him to get the aircraft operational immediately, but he resolutely stood by his decision. His action was vindicated when the result of the Inquiry was announced, so the Air Board took no further disciplinary action.

The Court of Inquiry found that insufficient attention had been paid to Special Instructions for maintenance of the Breeze unit, issued in October 1943, and that the ground staff had displayed gross negligence in attending to their maintenance duties and various administrative matters. It also found both the section officer and the supervising officer blameworthy.

A Bar to his DFC was awarded posthumously to Wing Commander Learmonth for his valuable diagnosis under dire circumstances. Later, Learmonth Airport at Exmouth Gulf was named in his honour, and a brass plaque was placed in the civilian passenger terminal referring to the incident.

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On completion of a trim control modification to the Beauforts at Pearce, John Kessey flight-tested an aircraft, including the performance of some aerobatics over the station. He then ordered the whole squadron into the air.

No longer was there that knot in the stomach when we climbed aboard, or the sickening feeling of playing Russian Roulette every time a Beaufort made a steep dive.

RADIO AND RADAR

*Di, di, di, dah, the code spills out
With an even pace –
Tell me are there roses still
For sale in Martin Place?
Do the Pitt Street trams still pass,
Full of folk and fare?
Di, di, di, dah, another phrase
Goes keening through the air.*

J. Dingwell, *Reverie*

Compared with today's sophisticated telecommunications facilities, which make use of artificial satellites and computers, communications during World War II were primitive. Short-wave wireless (radio) was used for transmitting and receiving messages. This method of communications depended on the conditions applying in the ionosphere, which varied considerably.

The overall safety of any craft in motion, particularly aircraft, depended upon having reliable communications. The successful outcome of an air strike against the enemy, for instance, always depended upon effective communications, particularly when the aircrew was operating in coordination with ground forces. However, the very nature of communicating by short-wave radio enabled the enemy to listen to signals intended for the Allies. Most Japanese found the pronunciation of 'L', 'Wh' or 'R' difficult, and this was used to advantage by having radio call signs such as 'Cyclops', 'Wheezy' or 'Rooster' for control towers at airstrips. To provide secrecy, both sides used coded radio messages, but fortunately the Allies were always a step ahead of cipher techniques used by the enemy.

The interception of radio messages and the use of direction finding (D/F) equipment therefore became valuable tools during the war in determining the intentions of the enemy. Deliberate jamming of transmissions occurred from time to time and, on a few occasions, the Japanese gave false messages in impeccable English. Such messages were identified when the sender could not supply the password for the day.

Radio reception of amplitude modulated (AM) signals—the state-of-the-art at that time—was subject to both reflective changes in the upper atmosphere and bursts of 'static' from lightning flashes. These effects were particularly noticeable in the tropics. Bomber aircraft, flying in bad weather in the South-West Pacific, often had difficulty in maintaining contact with their base station, due to these effects.

Reliable contact with advanced troops was essential in jungle warfare, for there was no other means of knowing how or where the enemy was moving. However, maintaining a wireless base station at Milne Bay, or anywhere in the tropics, was not easy. Daily rain with very high humidity, together with heavy dew overnight, played havoc with radio equipment. When the only shelter available was a tent with three inches of mud on the floor, the task was nigh impossible; yet this was the environment in which the Signals Section worked.

To keep a new base station position secret, until the nearby area was secure, messages intended for the new station were obtained by the 'intercept' method. RAAF Signals Port Moresby, for instance, would transmit a specific message (intended for Milne Bay) to Townsville for an acknowledgment, and this was clear from a secret indication in the preamble of the message.

Effective wireless communications during an emergency were vital to survival.

The wireless operator of a disabled aircraft making a forced landing or ditching in the sea had to act quickly. He would call his base station to advise of the emergency, and repeat the position several times. If time permitted, he would then change operating frequency and tune to 8280 kcs to transmit 'SOS' on the high frequency direction finding (HF/DF) frequency. He would give the aircraft type and the nature of emergency, and then clamp the key down for a bearing to be determined. If ditching within sight of land, a call directly to the Air-Sea Rescue organisation could be made on the emergency frequency 6540 kcs. Provided the ditching had been successful and the life raft had been launched, the Gibson Girl emergency transmitter, which had been packed with the life raft, would be used. The wireless operator would throw the aerial attached to a kite into the air, clamp the transmitter between his knees, and energise it by turning the crank handles.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TIME

Time in the Services was in 24 hour notation but, if local time was used for convenience, the suffix 'K' was added for Eastern Standard Time (EST). For example, a W/T message sent at 4 pm EST was logged as 1600K. However, all long-distance base-to-base communications were logged in Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) to ensure a standard time. GMT time was then expressed with the 'Z' suffix. To convert EST to GMT, it was necessary to deduct the difference in longitude east from Greenwich,¹³⁰ which was 10 hours in Papua New Guinea. Thus 1600K would be expressed as 0600Z GMT. To ensure that the time referred to the current 24 hours period, it was necessary also to include the day, so that 1600K on the 14th day of the month was expressed as 0600Z/14.

INTERCEPTING MESSAGES

A RAAF radio interception station had been set up at Darwin shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. During the early morning shift of 19 February 1942, an abnormal increase in Japanese radio traffic was observed coming from the north of Australia. Of particular interest were messages being exchanged between aircraft and aircraft carriers, and with the Japanese base station at Kendari in southern Celebes. Something unusual was about to happen. The situation was immediately reported to the Commanding Officer, RAAF Darwin, but there is no record of any action being taken prior to the attack on Darwin.

Early in February 1942, the Wireless Branch of the Postmaster General's Department also set up listening posts at their Frequency Measuring and Monitoring Stations in the capital cities. Amateur radio operators were recruited and sworn to secrecy, to augment the PMG telegraphists and Service personnel. Their job was to identify radio traffic being transmitted on unauthorised frequencies. In the early hours of the morning over the period 17–24 May 1942, an unusual continuous tone—as if an operator was holding his morse key down—was observed at several of these monitoring stations. It was recognised as a homing signal, and heard loudest at the Middle Head Station, Sydney. However, no apparent action to track the signal to its source was taken on the report sent to the Armed Services. On 31 May, three Japanese midget submarines attacked shipping in Sydney Harbour. What had been heard earlier in May were the midget submarines making trial runs.

The first news of the Japanese landing at Milne Bay came from an Australian Army patrol on 25 August 1942, when the message from the patrol was intercepted at the Somerton Monitoring Station in South Australia. This became possible due to the vagaries of short-wave transmission via the ionised layers in the upper atmosphere.

Worldwide news bulletins from Reuters news agency, sent in morse code at 25 words per minute, offered practice to wireless operators wishing to improve or retain their skill. The independent news service, broadcasting in the 18 and 30 metre short-wave bands, usually flavoured its news with cultural expressions of the country.

The bulletin of mid-May 1944 was a typical example. It opened with Tokyo News and referred to the death of Admiral Koga:

The news of the death of Admiral Koga, C in C of the combined Fleet, has been announced. The circumstances are identical to those published about the end of Admiral Yamamoto, of whom it was also announced that he died in a plane whilst leading an operation. His succession by Admiral Toyoda as Commander of the Fleet has therefore caused deep anxiety regarding Admiral Toyoda's fate. There is the ill-omened belief that what happens once happens twice, and what happens twice is bound to happen for the third time. The people of Japan cannot help feeling that since the Battle of Midway an evil spell has seemed to hang over the Japanese Navy.

The Japanese had purchased the early version of the German 'Enigma' coding machine¹³¹ and adapted it to their use. Known as the 'Purple' cipher, it was an incredibly complex coding system. However, the Americans partially broke the Japanese 'Purple' cipher in 1939. Then, after the Pearl Harbor attack on 7 December 1941, the Americans set up a radio interception centre in Brisbane and, a little later, with the RAAF in Darwin.

As the war in the South-West Pacific progressed, detection by radio interception stations of Japanese shipping, aircraft and troop movements, provided invaluable warnings of enemy air raids and tactical air strategy. It was this type of information that created more favourable conditions for the Allies in sea-air battles. This foreknowledge gave Admiral Nimitz time to move his ships into position to engage the enemy in the Battle of the Coral Sea. Similarly, the disposition of the Japanese Navy was known for the Battle of Midway and the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, with their disastrous results for the Japanese Navy.

A further vital breakthrough for intelligence gathering in the SWPA came in January 1944, when an Australian 9th Division Army engineer opened a Japanese strongbox, which he had found in a flooded slit trench following the capture of Finschhafen. The box contained papers and code books divulging the Japanese Imperial Army cypher system. The ability to transcribe the enemy's wireless messages pertaining to military operations provided a powerful tool. Late in the war, diplomatic messages were being intercepted between Berlin and Tokyo, by listening to a Japanese relay station in Burma. The diplomatic traffic was given the code name 'Magic'. No call signs were being used and parts of each message were sent sequentially on six different frequencies.

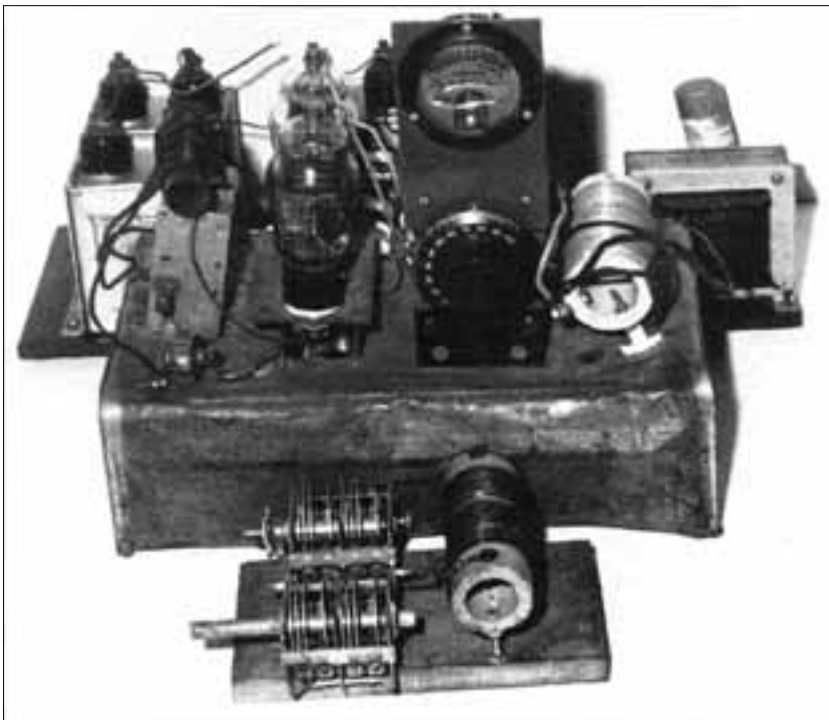
The Australian Special Wireless Group, later augmented by RAAF and Allied wireless units, carried out this Top Secret wireless intercept work. The data was then passed to a highly-skilled intelligence organisation. The intercept operators had to learn the Japanese 'Kana' code, which was the Japanese version of our morse code, but with an entirely different alphabet, numbers and punctuation.¹³² To receive the 73-character kana transmissions at speeds of up to 30 words a minute was an amazing feat, especially considering that each written character often consisted of two or three English morse code letters. The work required intense concentration, but to this present day the valuable contribution by these dedicated workers goes unheralded.

ENCRYPTION OF MESSAGES

Encryption and deciphering of messages requires time, and, in the heat of a jungle battle, where successful actions depend on split-second decisions, leaders had to resort to plain language. Many Japanese soldiers had attended colleges in the West and were therefore fluent in English. It was a case of broadcasting the plans to the enemy, when plain language was used. An alternative language was needed as a means

of encryption! Thus the Americans trained Navajo native Americans as code-talkers. The Navajos proved their worth as code-talking radio operators at Guadalcanal, and they went on to serve in all the American Marine Divisions.

Perhaps the most unusual story about wartime communication is that of 'Winnie the War Winner', an ingenious apparatus on display in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. When Timor Island was overrun by the Japanese early in 1942, Australian commandos, known as *Sparrow Force*, had to make a hasty retreat into the hills of Portuguese Timor almost empty handed. They urgently needed to communicate with Australia.



'Winnie the War Winner'
Constructed and operated by *Sparrow Force* commandos in Timor

Signalman Max Joe Lovelace, who had been a technician with radio station 7ZL, Hobart, designed a transmitter to contact Darwin, and the four signallers of *Sparrow Force* set to work to construct it. An empty petrol tin served as the chassis. Coils were wound on bamboo, and valve sockets were handmade. A system of wheels and a belt to a car generator were hand-turned by natives to provide electric power. Contact with Darwin by morse code was established on 19 April 1942. The Army was, at first, suspicious, but the operator convinced the Darwin station that it was *Sparrow Force*

calling. The commando transmitter continued in service to arrange supply drops and provide bombing targets for the RAAF, until the commandos were evacuated.

DIRECTION FINDING

Finding the direction from which a radio signal was being transmitted was often of particular importance for navigation purposes. D/F bearings during a flight, often served to confirm, or correct, a course plotted by the navigator. The wireless operator would rotate the aircraft's D/F loop and use the associated sensing section of the radio receiver, to ascertain the direction of a selected beacon or broadcasting station from the aircraft heading.

D/F by radio was also useful when an enemy convoy was discovered during a reconnaissance mission. On such an occasion, a 'Rooster' (so called because it sounded like a rooster crowing), carried by the searching aircraft as it shadowed the convoy, was sometimes used. It was an airborne radio beacon, which could be activated by the radio operator, to allow the Allied aircraft to use their D/F loops to home onto the Rooster.

If an enemy flight was not observing radio silence and carelessly chattered, D/F ground stations could quickly and accurately find the direction of their signals. This useful device, used by both the Allies and the Japanese, was high frequency, cathode ray direction finding. Four vertical antennae, positioned north, south, east and west, fed signals to twin radio receivers, the output of which was displayed on the screen of a cathode ray tube.

An experienced operator could obtain a bearing on a 'dit' of morse code or even a burst of static caused by a lightning flash, due to the persistence of fluorescent trace on the screen. Its primary use was to assist in air navigation, but it was also used to intercept signals from Japanese radio base stations, ships and aircraft to identify their positions. A further use was for long-range weather forecasting. When all high frequency direction finding stations could simultaneously observe lightning flashes, their intensity as well as the direction of the approaching front could be determined.

THE COASTWATCHERS

A very important and daring radio communication network was established by the Coastwatching Organisation. This clandestine network commenced with a small number of volunteers at the outbreak of the war in the Pacific and grew in strength to 700 watchers.¹³³ The watchers were set up behind the Japanese lines in Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, New Britain, New Ireland, the Solomon and Admiralty Islands. They worked in close association with the Radio Group of New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, led by Captain Alan Vagg, and with Army Headquarters at Port Moresby. These heroes operated from positions where they could watch enemy movements.

Their main qualifications, apart from knowing the area and knowing how to operate a radio transmitter, were the abilities to live off the land and have exceptional courage.

They transmitted vital information about enemy movements but were always on the move, because the Japanese intercepted their transmissions. The radio equipment they used was bulky, compared with today's portable units, and required the erection of an aerial. One of the well-known coastwatchers was Flight Lieutenant Leigh Vial, a former PNG patrol officer, who earned the name of the 'man with the golden voice'. He was honoured with an American Distinguished Service Cross but was unfortunately killed in an aircraft accident in the New Guinea highlands.

Bill Walls of 100 Squadron recalls:

The enemy planned to track down the coastwatchers on Bougainville by training and using attack dogs. On learning of this news, Beauforts from 100 Squadron at Milne Bay destroyed the enemy camp and kennels at Kieta where the diabolical plan was being hatched.

RADAR

The development of radar (radio detection and ranging) in Australia was due principally to the ingenuity of Dr J.H. Piddington (1910–1997) from the Radio Physics Laboratory of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).¹³⁴ He established Australia's first air warning radar system in Darwin, within weeks of Darwin's first air raid. The late Air Commodore A.G. Pither, CBE,¹³⁵ quickly saw the value of radar and was instrumental in establishing the RAAF Radar Organisation, whose activities became known as the 'Secret War'. The first lightweight air warning (LW/AW) radar station,¹³⁶ which was designed and produced by the joint effort of the CSIR and the NSW Railway workshops, went into service in New Guinea in October 1942.

Radar equipment in the tropics suffered from the same humidity problems as the radio installations, with the additional impairment of reception during very heavy rain. The Allies leant heavily on meteorological and enemy aircraft sighting reports, which came from radar stations. Bill Walls, of 100 Squadron at Milne Bay, tells of the value of early warning radar:

The spotters' reports of approaching enemy aircraft were vital to the Forces at Port Moresby and Milne Bay. The advance notice of the 100 plane attack on Milne Bay in April 1943 gave us plenty of time to fly the Beauforts and other bombers out to sea while the fighters deployed for a surprise attack on the waves of the approaching enemy planes.

The Australian Postmaster General's Department manufactured airborne radar for the RAAF. Radar was used to search and find ships, but it also displayed, on the cathode ray screen, landmasses, beacons and aircraft. An experienced operator could identify an island, a ship, or an aircraft from the nature of the blip on the screen. The radar echoes were displayed, on either the left or right of a vertical centre line of the cathode ray screen, in the form of a green blip, to give the distance and approximate direction. Switching from side to front antennae enabled the aircraft to home onto the object sighted (e.g. a ship). The screen was calibrated for 100, 40, 10 and 4 nautical miles. The lower the range, the more visual detail.

Airborne radar, together with land-based radar beacons, was also used as a navigational aid. Reliable readings of direction and distance from known radar beacons were a great comfort in placing the distance and general direction of the aircraft relative to a known point. A reliable beacon reading gave a solid, almost rectangular, blip on the screen in the aircraft. A fix of two beacons was, of course, even more accurate. The individual beacons were identified by their two-letter call signal pulsed in morse code and superimposed on the rectangular blip.

Another adjunct to airborne radar was the Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) transponder. A fuzzy-tipped blip moving quickly down the trace on the radar screen indicated an approaching aircraft. If the blip had a pulsing beam from an IFF superimposed on it, the aircraft was a friend and, if not, it could be assumed to be a foe. In an emergency, such as ditching in the sea, the wireless operator would immediately switch on the emergency IFF. The IFF then emitted a continuous transmission as a radar beacon to indicate the position of the stricken aircraft. ASV therefore gave aircraft an additional navigation aid and a greater awareness of its environment.

In late 1944, the Lancaster aircraft were fitted with H2S and Oboe radar systems for operations in Europe. H2S was a vastly superior system to the Australian ASV radar. The radial scanning H2S signals from any particular area painted a map on the cathode ray screen, showing the built-up sector, coastline and water. The system had various ranging scales. The longer range was used as an aid to navigation, while the shortest range was used for the bombing run. It is generally thought that Lord Cherwell, the scientific adviser to the UK Prime Minister, named it H2S. Lord Cherwell considered the system to be science fiction and when asked what he thought of the new gadget, he said, 'It stinks. Call it H2S.'

Oboe was a method of accurately bombing by radar. It was a responder system worked by two base stations, which measured the distance to the bombing aircraft to within a theoretical accuracy of about 50 feet. One station kept the aircraft on track by transmitting dots on one side of the radar beam and dashes on the other. The other station at the same time observed the position of the aircraft and, when nearing the target, sent out warning signals of the approaching time for releasing bombs. Finally, the station would send a long dash, and the moment the dash stopped, the bombardier pressed the bomb-release button.

Sometimes, when flying near or in thunderclouds of cumulonimbus or towering cumulus, an aircrew experienced a strange light enveloping them. The interior of the aircraft would take on an eerie blue glow, which lasted for several minutes. In extreme cases, long streaks of fire appeared at the propellers and wing tips. This phenomenon affected the wireless receiver and intercom with a continuous hissing 'static', and filled the radar screen with green traces, rendering it useless. Meteorologists call the phenomenon St Elmo's Fire, after the patron saint of sailors. Sailors, on seeing it in the top rigging of a ship, believed it to be a good luck omen! It is a discharge of atmospheric electricity, which is usually harmless, but which can initiate a lightning strike.

CARRIER PIGEONS

Finally, a method of communication that has stood the test of time—homing pigeons. Because of the very rugged terrain covered with jungle in New Guinea and Bougainville, homing pigeons were ideal message carriers. Portable wireless sets were heavy, and wireless messages, which could be intercepted, had to be sent in code. In some situations, messages by carrier pigeons were not only more secure but also more explicit. A map reference, sent by wireless, was not as good as a sketch showing enemy positions, which could be sent by pigeon. The Japanese could shoot at the pigeon, but in doing so, would reveal their position.

There were many missions flown by pigeons. One bird is known to have survived 23 missions. Two Australian pigeons in the South-West Pacific Area of the war were awarded the Dickin Medal for valour.¹³⁷

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE

*If with pleasure you are viewing
Any work a man is doing,
If you like him, or even love him,
Tell him now.
Don't withhold your approbation
Till the parson makes oration,
As he lies with snowy lilies o'er his brow!*

*For no matter how you shout it,
He won't really care about it.
He won't know how many teardrops you have shed.
If you think some praise is due him,
Now's the time to slip it to him,
For he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead.*

Anon

An Air Force recruiting advertisement described the Air Force as a mountain, with the aircrew as the summit supported by a dedicated ground crew. This picture is a fitting analogy. Without an efficient ground crew to service an aircraft and to provide support for the aircrew, there would be no operational flying. Wartime aviation recording focuses on the exploits of the fliers—the action attracts attention. However, having explicit faith in the ground crews to keep their planes and armaments at top performance allowed the fliers to devote their full attention to their dangerous missions.

This particularly applied to 100 Squadron operating in the South-West Pacific, where the aircraft maintenance crews kept as many Beauforts as possible flying day and night, despite the adverse tropical climate and primitive conditions. At Milne Bay the conditions for all ground staff early in the term were dreadful. Not only were the facilities primitive, but the prolonged wet season, mud, and mosquitoes also made life miserable. Trying to protect an aircraft or vehicle engine from the rain, while working on it, always presented a problem. Added to the maintenance problems was the need to haul fuel drums, bombs or any other heavy equipment manually through the rain and unyielding mud.

Aircraft maintenance crews comprised engine mechanics and fitters, airframe fitters and riggers, wireless and radar mechanics, instrument repairers, electricians and armourers. Each of the categories required the airman to complete successfully an

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

intensive course of study, for which he had displayed an aptitude. It was a crash course, a three-year course normally designed for an apprentice, which was crammed into four months. The Ultimo College in Sydney was one of the colleges to run a nine-week theory course for engine fitters 2E, and the Engineering School at Ascot Vale, Melbourne, ran courses for engine mechanics. Often, much of the practical work was learned on the job, as in the case of a flight mechanic, before attending the more advanced course for aircraft riggers 2A.

It was customary to allot a ground crew to each aircraft, and it was a wise aircrew who befriended them. The pilot would find the mechanic and airframe fitter very helpful, and the navigator and gunner would find the armourers particularly valuable. Each member of the ground crew had trained very hard and was a specialist. During each inspection, they pulled down and visually inspected, and serviced, every moving part. They knew far more about the plane, the bombs, the wireless and guns than the aircrew, and they were always willing to share their knowledge. Each ground crew member looked after his plane with pride and was deeply hurt by its loss, and more so when their aircrew mates were also lost.



Armourers at Vivigani, January 1944

Whatever the reason for an aircraft being unserviceable (U/S), it was the ground staff's job to make it operational again. There were no hangars, just a large camouflage net for major repairs, and all other servicing was carried out in the blazing sun in dispersal bays. Often they worked through the night to get the job done, ready for the

next day's operations. Frequently maintenance crews were servicing later type aircraft for which technical data was not available, and often they had to use their ingenuity to complete the job.¹³⁸ Their creed was 'Be Ready'. No matter when a strike at the enemy was called, the aircraft were always ready—refuelled, armed with bombs and ammunition, guns oiled and engines tuned. To be able to rely on the dedication of the maintenance crews, and know that the aircraft was safe beneath the aircrew, made half the battle won.



**Wally Crane and 'Scratch' Palmer
Working on A9-488 at Nadzab**

There were some scary incidents for the aircraft maintenance crews, apart from experiencing Japanese bombing raids. Fitter 2E, Tony Booth recalls, while working on an engine doing an 80-hourly inspection:

Just beside me was Neil Phelan, who was taking out an oil cooler from the leading edge of the wing. All of a sudden the two machine guns in the wings let go a burst of fire. I froze and so did Neil, for he was closer to one of the guns. The rigger up in the cockpit had pressed the firing button on the joy stick, thinking it was on 'safe'.

Improvisation was necessary. Engine stands, which enabled work to be carried out, were in short supply, so 44-gallon fuel drums were used. If a plane was required in a flying position for servicing, the tail section was manually lifted to rest on a fuel drum.

A flying position, for example, was required to inspect and check the undercarriage, the bomb bay, and to harmonise the turret guns.¹³⁹ Spare parts from an unserviceable aircraft were often used to repair another aircraft. This method of repair was known as 'cannibalising'. Many an electrical fault was discovered using a battery and light globe to test for continuity, when a multimeter or insulation tester was not available.

After any major service, it was customary for the ground crew member responsible for the service to be included in the subsequent test flight. It was, therefore, hard to understand the Air Force policy to transfer ground staff individually. It may have had some hidden tactical advantage, but it often disrupted a team which had worked harmoniously together. As with an aircrew, the ground team had a close bond of mateship.

There was no such thing as demarcation of duties or set working hours. In an emergency every one worked to solve a problem, such as filling in bomb craters on the runway or retrieving an aircraft from a bog. To pull an aircraft out of a bog required teamwork. As many ground staff as possible were mustered and, while they walled in the mud and slipstream to push, the pilot would rev the motors to move the plane to terra firma. Armourers sometimes needed help to load bombs. A bombload of 2 x 500 and 4 x 250 pounders was usually wheeled out on a trolley. The 500 pounders were winched into the bomb bay, while the 250 pounders were manually lifted into the bomb bay and onto the wing racks. In an emergency, the 500 pounders could also be loaded manually, but of course required additional strong backs. The armourers would then check the position of the bombs and fuze them.¹⁴⁰ Armourers were also called on to defuze unexploded Japanese bombs, when no bomb disposal specialist was available.

In a lighter vein, some skilful ground crew members used their spare time to manufacture 'foreigners', which was the code name for any item made for the fitter's own use, such as a finger ring. The workmanship on such jewellery was superb and showed great ingenuity. A piece of aircraft aluminium tubing fashioned into a ring, inset with a piece of coloured toothbrush handle and polished with toothpaste, was a very popular adornment. Pieces of perspex from pranged Beauforts were also turned into trinkets. A polished heart-shaped piece of a two shilling coin, with smoothed surfaces and suitably inscribed, would be embedded into a suitably shaped and polished piece of perspex to make a nice pendant to hang on a silver chain. A storage battery was used to heat the coin, which could then be pressed into the perspex. By deftly using the tip of a very small three-cornered file to sketch a palm tree and perhaps a girl's name, the finished article was much in demand.



Armourer Fuzing Bombs



**Ground Crew at Goodenough Island
Maintenance on a 100 Squadron aircraft at Viviani**

The first of the support staff at any new airfield site was an Airfield Construction Squadron, commencing work under the protection of the Aerodrome Defence Unit. Very often they worked in hazardous conditions near enemy positions to build airstrips and buildings. Next on the scene were the cooks and mess-men. They were attached to all units and did a first-class job, often under very trying conditions. No-one in 100 Squadron ever went without some sort of sustenance. Among the messing staff at Milne Bay were three mess stewards, who were quite effeminate and referred to as 'pansies' (or worse), but in today's parlance would be labelled 'gays'. One of these gays had an evening dress and a wig in his kit, and, at one of the squadron concerts, he dressed in his finery to perform on stage. He sang in a fine counter tenor voice, and was well applauded.

Guards soon followed the Airfield Construction Squadron to keep watch over the landing strip and all strategic places, such as the stores and the Orderly Room. The guards also took on a key role when called upon to support the Aerodrome Defence Unit.

Once the squadron was established, storemen looked after all supplies for the men, as well as spares for the aircraft and motor vehicles. Then followed the Operations Room staff with its intelligence section, the photographic group and the signals group. Administrative record keeping and orderly room duties required clerical staff, and the Medical Officer needed his medical clerk and orderlies to keep medical records up to date. The medical section was busy around the clock—attending to wounded or accidentally injured personnel, or to sick airmen suffering from dysentery, malaria or dengue fever, tropical ulcers, tinea or ringworms, to name some of the cases. The medical services functioned in a hostile environment, where humidity and mosquitoes added to their difficulties. Frequently the strain on the medical staff was intense. They deserve high praise for the many occasions their devoted service went well beyond the call of duty.

An important section, as far as aircrews were concerned, was the Air-Sea Rescue Unit, which snatched aircrew from their inflatable dinghy, after an aircraft had been forced to ditch in the sea. There were also the transport drivers. They drove the aircrews to and from the airstrip at all times of the day or night, carted water for the kitchen and ablutions, and delivered fuel, which came in 44-gallon drums, from the wharves to the airstrip. Likewise, the motor mechanics were required to service the vehicles and they did a great job to keep them on the road.

Another great ground support member was the squadron padre, who was always available for counselling. At Milne Bay and Goodenough Island there was probably the most colourful padre in the whole of the RAAF. Flight Lieutenant Chris Debenham, or 'Deb' as he was known by those close to him, was born in England in 1899. He served in an infantry battalion in France during the latter part of World War I. Immediately after the war, he studied for the ministry and came to Australia as a 'Bush Brother' to serve in the Boonah district of Queensland. During the first

12 months of World War II, he was padre at No 3 Initial Training School Sandgate. Then, as padre at Milne Bay and Goodenough Island, he became a father figure to those needing counselling or consoling, and was held in very high regard.

He was pragmatic, and bent the rules a little if it was expedient to do so. On one occasion he, with the help of 'Spider' Craig, brewed an alcoholic beverage in the welfare tent until someone reported him to Operational Group Headquarters. Two Service Police (SPs) were sent to investigate, but the padre refused entry unless they had a search warrant. By the time they returned with a search warrant, there was no sign of any illegal brew. 'Deb' explained to the SPs that he had been making a replacement beverage, as there was no suitable drink available for Holy Communion services, but had discontinued the practice. Tony Booth, a flight mechanic at that time, reports that all who witnessed the event had a wry grin as the SPs drove off in their jeep.



Technical NCOs at Vivigani

Back, L–R: LAC Sid Dyson, Sergeant Frank Fryer ('B' Flight), Flying Officer E.O. Hearst, Sergeant Les Clarke ('A' Flight) and Sergeant Sid Phillips ('B' Flight)

Front, L–R: Sergeant Pfeffer (Service party) and Flight Sergeant Les Watson ('A' Flight)



'B' Flight Ground Crew at Tadjj, November 1944

While serving at Milne Bay, 'Deb' tells his own story of showing a rookie padre the various features of the place, when the air-raid sirens started wailing. The new padre dived for a slit trench, but 'Deb', with the nonchalance befitting one who had been there since the days of 'the Do', calmly waited for the raiders to appear, and told the rookie to get out and watch the fireworks. Suddenly the Nips slipped in from an unexpected quarter, and 'Deb' heard the swish of falling bombs. Forgetting he was on his best behaviour, and that the long association with airmen had left their mark, he yelled, 'Down! Here the bastards come.' The new padre was as surprised at 'Deb's' language as he was startled by the falling bombs!

Then there was the time Chris Debenham tried to take a short cut through the bush one evening, from 6 Squadron camp across to 100 Squadron on Goodenough Island. He became lost, or temporarily out of position, as he called it. 'Ho, Ho, Ho, 100 Squadron. Can you hear me?' Deb called several times. Someone from the fighter squadron answered the lost soul, not knowing who was calling, 'Go further down away from the beach, you silly bastard, and you'll get across to 100. This is the fighter squadron here.' The saying, 'Ho, Ho, Ho, can you hear me?' is said to have originated with a wireless operator in a Beaufort, who called base a couple of times but, getting no response, used the phrase. It soon became a catch cry in 6, 8 and 100 Squadrons, and others, to locate each other as in Deb's case, anywhere in the dark, or even 'across a crowded room'.



**Baseball Premiers at Tadjj
100 Squadron's Team**

Identified members include K. Clarrington, Bob Dabelstein, N. Jackson, Eric Robertson, Bob Thomsen, Colin Vine, Hank Webster, Jack Nolan, Jack Branscombe, M. Schneider, C. Johnson and Cliff Lacey



Armourers at Tadjj, December 1944

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

PERSONNEL PROFILES

*Drop the question what tomorrow may bring,
And count as profit every day that fate allows you.*

Horace (65–08 BC), *Odes*

The thumbnail sketches of 100 Squadron personnel itemised below are intended to give a glimpse of their personalities. Most of those who survived the war put their memories of the conflict aside and followed diverse careers in civilian life. They carved out a future for themselves and their families. Some, perhaps, picked up the threads of the Beaufort fraternity on Anzac Day, but most were content to keep their wartime memories locked away in their subconscious. At retirement age, however, many sought to renew squadron or wider Beaufort friendships, and it is these bonds which has made the writing of this history possible.

JOHN R. BALMER, OBE, DFC

SERVICE NO. 068

John Raeburn ‘Sam’ Balmer was born in Bendigo, Victoria, on 3 July 1910. He was educated at Scotch College, Melbourne and then studied law at the Melbourne University.

He enlisted in the peacetime Air Force in 1932 as an Air Cadet and, following graduation as a pilot, he flew in Wapiti aircraft with No 1 Squadron. When war was declared, Flight Lieutenant Balmer was serving with 22 Squadron on coastal patrols.

In *War Without Glory*, J.D. Balfe describes Balmer, ‘... a sardonic man, not one to tolerate fools or to bend before over-conservative authority, with a dry wit and a capacity for individual action that cut away double values and needless obstacles’.

He liked to drive fast sports cars, and it is rumoured that, being unattached, he had a way with the ladies. He loved to fly and sought to test fly any available type of aircraft. Several times he sought approval to make a parachute jump, but of course was refused. Exasperated, Balmer found an opportunity while instructing a junior pilot. He told him to do a slow roll that he had taught him in a Wapiti aircraft and accidentally fell out! He survived not only the fall but also the official inquiry.

As a Flight Lieutenant, he flew Hawker Demons with No 3 Squadron at Richmond. Then, as the founding Commanding Officer of No 13 Squadron at Darwin on 1 June 1940, he was elevated to Squadron Leader. By the time he left the squadron on 2 August 1941, he was a Wing Commander.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Wing Commander Balmer commanded No 7 Squadron at Laverton, which was, at that time, virtually an Operational Training Unit, until 18 March 1942. He then took command of No 100 Squadron, the first squadron to be equipped with the new Australian Beaufort Torpedo Bomber, and shortly afterwards was awarded the OBE.

At Milne Bay, he demonstrated outstanding leadership with that special quality of courage that distinguishes the few from the many. He was withdrawn from the squadron on 29 March 1943 to serve in the UK and, in a farewell letter to the Adjutant just prior to leaving Australia, he regretted not having the opportunity to address the squadron. He praised the efforts of the aircrews and regretted that the ground staff had so little recognition for maintaining the aircraft under so many difficulties.

By 18 August 1943, Balmer was the Commanding Officer of RAAF No 467 Lancaster Squadron at Waddington in Lincolnshire, from where he led the squadron on numerous raids deep into Germany. When he was awarded the DFC, the citation, appearing in the *London Gazette* on 18 April and the *Australian Gazette* on 27 April 1944, read:

Wing Commander Balmer has completed a varied tour of operations, and throughout has displayed skill and devotion to duty. This officer is a most efficient Squadron Commander whose keenness and zeal have set a fine example.

Shortly afterwards he was promoted to the rank of Group Captain.

On 11 May 1944 Balmer led 467 Squadron in a raid on Bourg-Leopold in Belgium. Group Captain Balmer and crew did not return from this mission. The *Daily Mail* newspaper of 17 May 1944 reported:

Balmer was as well known in the RAAF as was Cheshire in the RAF. He became a commissioned pilot no less than 13 years ago. He had done almost 5000 hours of service flying over New Guinea as well as Germany. Hundreds of other pilots, many of whose names have since become famous, were trained by Balmer.

Ross Stanford, who flew under Balmer in 467 Squadron, tells of his first operational trip over Germany:

We were all settled into our positions in the aircraft when Wing Commander Balmer pulled up in his flight van. He had especially come to see that everything was all right with us and the aircraft. This was a gesture, which was much appreciated by my crew.

He also relates another example of 'Sam' Balmer's compassionate side:

A young 20-year-old pilot, who had already done 15 trips, was ready for take-off when he throttled back, switched off and said, 'I can't go'. Instead of being dressed down as possibly having a lack of moral fibre (LMF) the CO sent him to the Medical Officer who gave him two weeks leave. Balmer rang some friends, who had a farm in Somerset and asked them to look after the lad for two weeks. They did and the young man returned to the squadron and finished his tour. 'Sam' Balmer was held in very high esteem after that.

Bill Ewing, who served under 'Sam' Balmer at the commissioning of 100 Squadron has the last word:

It was a privilege to have served under a commanding officer of such stature. Regular airmen such as he, formed the base on which, despite political wrangling, the massively enlarged RAAF was built to become an effective fighting service.

JOHN HENRY BAKER, MID

SERVICE NO. 409982

John Baker was born in Melbourne on 10 June 1920. He matriculated from Melbourne Boys' High School in 1936 and worked as a clerk at MacRobertsons, Fitzroy. John was called up to serve with the AMF in January 1941, which was, he said, 'a great experience'. Six months later, however, he enlisted in the RAAF, a week before his 21st birthday, which he said was 'to avoid foot slogging'.

Following initial training at Victor Harbour, John trained as a pilot at Benalla on Wackett aircraft and then at No 1 Elementary Flying Training School, Point Cook, on Oxfords. After serving for some months as a staff pilot at No 2 Air Navigation School, Nhill, flying Avro Ansons, he trained on Beauforts at Bairnsdale and East Sale. John served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay and Goodenough Island, where he earned his Mentioned in Despatches for courage and devotion to duty during the Lae and Salamaua offensives. At the time of his demobilisation on 25 October 1945, Flight Lieutenant Baker was serving with 32 Squadron.

Post-war, John graduated from the Melbourne University with a Bachelor of Arts to follow a career with the Education Department. He retired as Deputy Principal, Mornington High School in 1980. John was last reported to be living in Frankston, Victoria.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

JOHN TYZZER BIRTWISTLE

SERVICE NO. 408119

John was born in the UK on 19 June 1914. He joined the RAAF on 6 December 1940 and trained as a wireless operator/air gunner. He was serving with 100 Squadron RAF on Vildebeeste aircraft when the squadron was forced to leave Kota Bharu. He became one of the originals of 100 Squadron RAAF and flew in 'Sam' Balmer's crew with Stan Jaffer and 'Scotty' Jansen.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 27 October 1945, Flight Lieutenant Birtwistle was serving with 23 Squadron on Liberators.

GORDON L. BLAND, DFC

SERVICE NO. 407519

Gordon was born on 18 December 1916 in Adelaide. He joined the RAAF on 9 November 1940 for training as aircrew.

Following graduation as a pilot, he served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay and Goodenough Island. Flying Officer Bland became ill and died while serving at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale on 13 November 1944.

GRAEME W. BODINNAR

SERVICE NO. 401736

Graeme was born in Ballarat, Victoria, on 28 May 1922. He enlisted in the RAAF on 28 March 1942 to undertake basic training for aircrew. He then trained as a wireless/air gunner and served in 8 and 32 Squadrons before his posting to 100 Squadron.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 25 January 1946, Flight Lieutenant Bodinnar was a patient in No 6 RAAF hospital.

HENRY ELTON BOOTH

SERVICE NO. 75430

'Tony', as he was known in the Air Force, was born on 28 September 1920, in Toowoomba, Queensland. On 28 April 1942 he enlisted in the RAAF where he trained and graduated as a fitter 2E.

He recalls one memorable day before leaving for the tropics:

It was the day the Jap subs got into Sydney Harbour. The big US battleship *Chicago* and the *Queen Mary* were at Circular Quay. We were quartered at the Astra Hotel overlooking Bondi Beach that was now a barbwire entanglement—although you could swim there. That Sunday night we were awakened by one

big 'boom' and then gunfire and after a while the 'all clear' sounded. It was like a taste of the 'real thing' we might expect when we were to get to Milne Bay.

He then went on to serve a full operational tour with the squadron at Milne Bay and Goodenough Island.

Tony was discharged from the RAAF on 20 September 1946, and after the war he returned to the printing trade, having been a compositor-machinist. He joined the Government Printing Office where he served for 35 years. He retired as Supervisor of Works on Parliamentary Papers in 1981.

Tony has published a private paper for the Australian War Memorial entitled, *Living Through Friendly Fire in New Guinea*, and also a book on some aspects of his life, *The Dry Gullies I Have Crossed*. Both are private publications.

GEORGE ARTHUR BOND

SERVICE NO. 400428

George was born on 6 October 1914, at Brunswick, Victoria. He joined the Air Force to serve as aircrew in September 1940. George trained as a wireless operator/air gunner and then flew in Jim Hepburn's crew at Milne Bay.

Flight Lieutenant George Bond was discharged on 18 December 1945 and, at that time, he was serving at No 7 Operational Training Unit, Tocumwal, NSW.

KYM BONYTHON AC, DFC, AFC

SERVICE NO. 280778

Hugh Reskymer Bonython was born in Adelaide, South Australia, on 15 September 1920. Kym joined the RAAF in March 1940 and trained as a cadet pilot at Mascot and Point Cook, from which he graduated that same year with a commission. He earned the DFC while serving with No 2 Squadron Hudsons operating out of Koepang in the Netherlands East Indies, before the squadron withdrawal to Darwin, where he was stationed during the first air raid.

In June of 1942, he was posted to No 100 Squadron Beauforts and served out of Milne Bay until December 1942. On posting to the Torpedo Training Unit at Jervis Bay, he became an instructor in torpedo bombing techniques until April 1944, and was then Commanding Officer of Torpedo Development Flight.

In August 1944, he joined No 87 Squadron Mosquitoes to carry out photographic reconnaissance work and, by the end of hostilities, he had earned the AFC.

Post-war, he became very active in public affairs and was awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC). He served on the Australian Council of Arts, became an Art Gallery director, and has written several books on the subject. Another of

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his books, *Ladies, Legs and Lemonade*, has been popular reading for many of the Beaufort fraternity. In contrast to his love of music and the arts, he enjoyed the thrill of motorbike and car speedway racing, and, in 1956, he was a speedway champion.

ARTHUR WILLIAM BRASNETT

SERVICE NO. 405293

Arthur was born in Rockhampton on 30 August 1915. He joined the Air Force on 2 March 1941 and was one of the early members of 100 Squadron. Arthur flew as a navigator with Allan James during the squadron's service at Milne Bay. Arthur returned for a second operational tour in New Guinea with 8 Squadron at Tadj. Flight Lieutenant Brasnett was stationed at No 1 Operational Training Unit prior to demobilisation on 4 July 1945.

Post-war, Arthur qualified as an accountant and worked in the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department. After service in Melbourne and Perth, Arthur was stationed at Townsville, serving North and Central Queensland as the Official Bankruptcy Receiver until retirement in 1976. Shortly afterwards, Arthur moved to live in Toowoomba, Queensland.

COLIN HARVEY CAMERON

SERVICE NO. 414760

Colin was born on Thursday Island on 29 May 1922. He enlisted on 9 November 1941 as an aircrew trainee. After attending the Initial Training School at Sandgate, Queensland, he trained and graduated as a navigator/bombardier. After service with 73 and 66 Squadrons, Colin joined Brian Chapman's crew at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale.

The crew was posted to 100 Squadron in September 1944, to serve at Tadj. The crew's term with the squadron, however, was cut short with a further posting in November of the same year, to serve in 6 Squadron stationed at Goodenough Island and later at Dobodura.

Flying Officer Colin Cameron was serving in 67 Squadron at the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 20 September 1945.

IVON PERRY CARTER

SERVICE NO. 431436

Ivon, known as 'Ippy', was born in Brunswick, Victoria, on 21 May 1925, where he received his early education. On 2 July 1943 at the age of 18, he enlisted in the RAAF where he trained and graduated as a wireless/air gunner. He served in Warrant Officer Merv Hazelwood's crew, with Don Robinson and Howard Trenouth at Tadj. Flight Sergeant Ivon Carter was discharged from the RAAF on 11 October 1945.

HARRY ROY CLEGG, OAM

SERVICE NO. 253408

Harry was born 19 July 1912. He was an engineer with a gold-dredging outfit in Papua New Guinea when he joined the RAAF on 19 February 1940. He was immediately appointed as a lecturer at the RAAF Engineering School in Melbourne. In March 1942 he was posted to 100 Squadron at Richmond to organise the maintenance section. He then served with the squadron at Laverton, Mareeba, Bohle River and Milne Bay. At the time of his discharge from the Air Force on 19 November 1945, Harry was a Flight Lieutenant.

Post-war, Harry had his own engineering business, and was also Mayor of Dubbo, NSW, from 1981 to 1983. Harry was 91 when he died on 29 December 2003.

HUGH CONAGHAN, DFC

SERVICE NO. 387

Hugh Augustine Conaghan was born in Tweed Heads on 15 September 1917. He was a regular Air Force officer, having enlisted prior to the commencement of World War II. Hugh trained as a pilot and graduated with a commission on receiving his wings.

At the outbreak of war in the Pacific he was serving in Rabaul and, by the time he was 24, he was an acting Wing Commander in charge of No 1 Fighter Sector. He then commanded No 3 and No 9 Fighter sectors until his posting to command No 109 Mobile Fighter Sector, 1943–44. Hugh then served with 8 Squadron until March 1945. From 3 March to 6 August 1945 he was Commanding Officer of 100 Squadron at Tadjj.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF, Wing Commander Conaghan was serving with the RAF Flying College. He was killed in a flying accident on 27 August 1954.

JACK LLOYD COUTTS

SERVICE NO. 412913

Jack was born in Junee, NSW, on 31 January 1921. He enlisted in the RAAF in Sydney on 15 August 1941 and trained as a navigator. Jack joined Ted MacKenzie's crew, for operational training prior to the posting of the crew to serve out of Milne Bay.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 22 November 1945, Flying Officer Coutts was serving with No 7 Operational Training Unit.

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ERIC ERNEST CRISP

SERVICE NO. 415620

Eric 'Poppa' Crisp was born in Perth, Western Australia, on 31 March 1910. He enlisted on 7 December 1941 and trained as a pilot. On graduating with a commission, Eric trained on Beauforts at No 1 Operational Training Unit and was serving with 100 Squadron at Tadj, when he, and his crew, was killed in action on 2 April 1945. Flight Lieutenant Crisp's name is included in the Honour Roll at the Gosnells Memorial, Western Australia.

STANLEY P. DAMMAN

SERVICE NO. 418924

Stan was born in Warburton, Victoria, on 25 November 1923, and had a driver's license when he turned 18. (It is interesting to note that there were many pilots in the RAAF who did not have a license to drive a motor car!) On 15 December 1941 he joined the RAAF where he trained and graduated as a pilot. On converting to Beauforts, Stan served in 14 Squadron at Pearce and 100 Squadron at Tadj and Finschhafen. When he was discharged from the RAAF, he held the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

Post-war, Stan studied at the Royal Melbourne Technical College before serving as Sales Manager, for building materials, with Dalgety & Co for 15 years. Following another 15 years managing a Mitre 10 hardware store at Taree, he retired to live in Queensland. While at Taree, Stan was the District Commissioner for the Scouts for several years. His hobby of restoring antique furniture led him into making reproduction furniture, and for a while it became a business proposition. In more recent years, Stan has served as a judge at a number of woodwork shows and travels to new places at every opportunity.

KENNETH ALFRED DAVIES

SERVICE NO. 418091

Ken was born on 2 November 1920, in Toorak, Victoria, and joined the RAAF on 25 April 1942. He trained as a wireless/air gunner and served in Tony Warden's crew with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay and with 32 Squadron on anti-submarine patrols.

Ken Davies excelled as a talented artist. His painting of Beaufort A9-321, complete with nose art depicting a tomcat ready to release a bomb, was very realistic. Copies of the painting are to be found on display in many of the homes of the Beaufort fraternity. The painting was also enlarged and printed on soft canvas (8 x 6 feet) for the South Australian Aviation Museum, Port Adelaide.

GEORGE ROBERT DAWS

SERVICE NO. 401288

George was born in Doncaster, Victoria, on 8 April 1921. He trained and graduated as a wireless air/gunner and served in the Squadron at Milne Bay. He flew in Allan James' crew with Arthur Brasnett and Bert Furler, when the squadron was using torpedoes.

George was commissioned while at Milne Bay and, at the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 9 November 1945, he was a Flight Lieutenant serving at No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School.

FRANK MERSON DAY

SERVICE NO. 12466

Frank was born in Melbourne on 19 November 1920. He was already a qualified motor mechanic when he enlisted in the Air Force on 16 December 1940. He trained and graduated as a fitter 2A. Following service at No 1 Operational Training Unit, Bairnsdale, Frank served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay. At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 26 November 1945, LAC Day was serving with No 1 Communication Unit.

Post-war, Frank returned to work as a motor mechanic. He then became involved in motor car racing, in company with leading car racers, Alf Barnett and Lex Davidson, on the Phillip Island/Bathurst road circuits, as well as the Adelaide Grand Prix. In 1976 Frank left his service station in Melbourne, and opened a new and very successful one in Manoora, Cairns. Frank has since passed on.

JOHN SAMUEL C. DEWAR

SERVICE NO. 290613

John Dewar was born in Perth, Western Australia, on 24 March 1911, where he was educated and also practised as a solicitor and barrister. He then joined the RAAF on 8 January 1940 and, having trained and graduated as a pilot John served with 14 and 6 Squadrons, before taking command of 100 Squadron on 6 August 1945.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 24 December 1945, Squadron Leader Dewar was serving again with 6 Squadron. He then returned to Perth where he again practised law.

PHILIP ALEXANDER DEY

NO. 402853

Philip was born in North Sydney on 13 June 1921. He attended Shore College, North Sydney, before joining Priestly and Morris Accountants. He enlisted in the

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RAAF on 11 November 1941 and, while awaiting his call for training, he joined the Militia. When his call came, he was acting Lance Corporal and had difficulty in transferring, but was eventually released. Philip trained as a pilot at Narrandera, NSW, before posting to Canada for further training.

On graduating with a commission, Philip flew Beaufighters in North West Wales. On his very first combat mission, he was shot down into the Irish Sea. The navigator was badly injured, but Philip managed to get him into one of the two small dinghies normally carried in the Beaufighter. He hung onto the side of the dinghy, until the icy cold water forced him to lie on top of the navigator. Two hours later the two airmen were rescued by seaplane.

Three months later, he was posted to Australia, where he retrained on Beauforts. Squadron Leader Philip Dey had been serving with 100 Squadron for seven months at Tadji, when he and his crew were killed in action on 16 March 1945. His name is included on the Honour Roll at the North Sydney War Memorial.

LLOYD A. DOUGLAS, DFC

SERVICE NO. 403

Lloyd Albert 'Smoky' Douglas was born on 1 June 1919. He joined the RAAF in 1938 and graduated with a commission as a pilot officer in 1939. Lloyd was serving with the RAF as a pilot in Malaya until the fall of Singapore. He then became one of the early members of 100 Squadron RAAF.

At the time of his discharge on 25 July 1946, he held the rank of Wing Commander and was serving with No 5 Squadron ATC. Ron Munro says of 'Smoky', 'I had the highest regard for him as a pilot, and I am sure that I would not be alive today but for his skill and natural ability'.

After the war Lloyd flew with commercial airlines in the Middle East and Africa and was subsequently a senior pilot in Trans Australia Airlines (TAA). On retirement, he settled in Canberra. 'Smoky' Douglas died 3 August 1988.

JOHN ROBERT DUNCAN

SERVICE NO. 406777

Bob was born on 18 October 1920 in Wagin, Western Australia, and enlisted in the RAAF on 31 March 1941. He trained as a pilot and, after completing an Operational Training Unit course in April 1942, he became one of the original 100 Squadron RAAF, which had formed at Richmond. Flight Lieutenant Bernard, who instructed many of the early 100 Squadron pilots, also taught Bob to fly a Beaufort while at Richmond. Bob served with the squadron at Milne Bay from September 1942 until April 1943, and was commissioned in October 1942.

At the time of his discharge from the Air Force on 24 July 1945, he was a Flight Lieutenant serving at the General Reconnaissance School.

WILLIAM J.M. EWING, OAM

SERVICE NO. 407348

Bill was born on 17 September 1921 and joined the RAAF to commence training as a navigator on No 6 course on 15 September 1940. On being posted to 205 Squadron RAF Malaya, he served in Catalinas until the fall of Singapore. He then became one of the founding members of 100 Squadron RAAF and served at Milne Bay. On a second operational tour, Flight Lieutenant Ewing served with 8 Squadron at Tadjji until his demobilisation on 27 November 1945.

After the war, Bill returned to banking and then qualified as an accountant. He ran his own practice for a few years then took a partner. In 1967, he joined a large firm of chartered accountants with national connections. By 1974, that firm was part of the international firm of Touche Ross & Co, from which he reluctantly retired on reaching 65 years of age in 1986.

Three years prior to this, Bill had been decorated for services to the accountancy profession. Following his retirement, Bill was then engaged in various directorships until 1999. He continues as Honorary Auditor of the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association.

ALVIN D. FARQUHAR

SERVICE NO. 408308

'George' Farquhar, as he was known in 100 Squadron, was born in Scottsdale, Tasmania, on 16 July 1923. He enlisted for aircrew training on 9 October 1941 and graduated as a wireless/air gunner. He served in 7, 32 and 13 Squadrons before serving in 100 Squadron.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF, Flight Sergeant Farquhar was serving with the General Reconnaissance School, Laverton.

BRIAN T. FITZGERALD

SERVICE NO. 405628

Brian was born in Mullumbimby, NSW, on 5 February 1915 and joined the Air Force on 27 April 1941. He trained as a wireless/air gunner and was one of the originals of 100 Squadron at Richmond. He flew in Dick Thompson's crew with two other foundation members, 'Lofty' Wray and Stan Mars, and participated in the attack and sinking of the *Tenyo Maru*. (see pages 31–33)

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Flight Lieutenant Brian Fitzgerald was serving at 14 Squadron Pearce, Western Australia, at the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 17 November 1945. Brian has since passed on.

HARRY JOHN FOWLER

SERVICE NO. 415636

Harry 'Jack' Fowler was born in Perth on 10 September 1921. On 7 December 1941 he enlisted in the RAAF where he trained and graduated as a pilot. It was while Flight Lieutenant Fowler was serving in 100 Squadron at Tadjililla that he was killed in action, together with his crew, on 13 March 1945. His name appears on the Roll of Honour at the Perth Memorial.

ALAN GARDNER

SERVICE NO. 434456

Alan was born in Brisbane, Queensland, on 18 March 1923. He joined the RAAF on 3 December 1942, on being released from the Forestry Department where he was employed. He trained as a navigator and, after a spell on Ansons at No 1 Air Navigation School at Parkes, NSW, Alan trained on Beauforts at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale. Flying Officer Gardner was posted to 100 Squadron on 8 November 1944.

Following his demobilisation from the RAAF, Alan completed his course at the Australian Forestry School, Canberra, and served as a Forester, District Forester and Officer in Charge of National Parks and Timber Utilisation until retirement in March 1983. In retirement he has been active in Rotary and Probus Clubs. He is also an active member of the Wireless Institute of Australia as a licensed operator. In June 2001 he was awarded a 50-year Masonic Jewel.

While not involved in community or family affairs, Alan constructed, in detail, a 1/24th scale model of Beaufort A9-625 QH-D, from sketches and notes made during the war, and from general research. This model is now on display at the RAAF Museum, Point Cook.

WILLIAM H. GARING, CBE, DFC, MID, DSC (USA)

SERVICE NO. 326

William 'Bull' Garing, was born in Corryong, Victoria, on 26 July 1910. At the age of 17, he joined the RAAF as a Leading Aircraftman and trained as a wireless operator. Two years later, he was accepted as a cadet officer and trained at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Upon graduating, he was posted to the RAAF College at Point Cook.

By 1937, he was the Commanding Officer of a seaplane squadron where he acquired the sobriquet 'Bull'. He could shout from an open seaplane cockpit at 1000 feet and be heard below. Flight Lieutenant Garing was then appointed the Chief Inspector of air training at Laverton.

With the outbreak of World War II, he was posted to Great Britain, where he flew Sunderlands with Coastal Command in No 10 Squadron. In 1940, he flew Lord Selwyn Lloyd to France to confer with the French Government about capitulation. He also flew Sir Anthony Eden to Egypt on a similar mission. While on convoy duty, German bombers attacked the convoy. He replied by attacking the German planes, and he and his crew prevented the Germans making three separate bombing attacks. For this remarkable incident he was awarded the DFC.

By mid-1941, he was back in Australia as Senior Air Staff Officer, North-Eastern Area Headquarters. This area extended from New Caledonia to Indonesia. In August 1942, he was promoted to command No 9 Operational Group from Port Moresby.

The Fifth US Air Force Commander, General George C. Kenney, was impressed with William Garing. In his book, General Kenney wrote, 'They called him "Bull", but he was active, intelligent, knew the area and had ideas about how to fight the Japs. I decided to keep an eye on him for future reference'. Kenney gave Garing a copy of his book and inside the cover he had written, 'In sincere appreciation for his loyal cooperation in the Allied Air Forces during the Pacific War. He made it easier for MacArthur to put four stars on my shoulders.' Because of his work with the Fifth Air Force, William Garing was awarded an American Distinguished Service Cross (DSC).

As Station Commander at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale, in October 1943, he grounded the Beauforts to have the elevator trim controls modified, following a number of fatalities. (see page 294)

Bruce Lowe was one of Bull Garing's aircrew and wrote at a later date:

You were perhaps always feared by us, but we were always of the opinion, when we flew with you, we would always get home. If ever you need a character reference as to your guts and administrative quality, I would have no hesitation in supporting and writing of you in a most illustrious manner.

Later in his Air Force career, he was Director of Operations Requirements 1944–1945 and was the RAAF representative in Washington DC. He was then appointed as the Officer Commanding the Joint Services Staff College. In 1951 he was the aide-de-camp to King George VI.

Until his retirement on 29 July 1964, as an Air Commodore, he served as commander at several RAAF Bases. During his 38 years service with the RAAF, he became qualified

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and proficient at flying 84 different aircraft. Bull was 93 when he died on 1 January 2004.

ROSS WALTER GEUE

SERVICE NO. 416849

Ross Geue was born in Wasleys, South Australia, on 7 June 1921. He enlisted in the RAAF on 11 October 1941 and trained as a pilot. Ross served with the squadron at Goodenough Island and Nadzab. At the time of his discharge on 13 September 1945, Flying Officer Geue was serving with 14 Squadron at Pearce, Western Australia.

Post-war, Ross returned to South Australia and worked in the meat industry until retirement at West Beach, South Australia.

ARTHUR F. GOODALL

SERVICE NO. 412946

Arthur was born in Bathurst, NSW, on 5 November 1920. He enlisted on 15 August 1941, and trained as a wireless operator/air gunner. He served at first in Wirraways, then converted to Beauforts, to fly in 14 and 8 Squadrons and finally with 100 Squadron. In 100 Squadron, Arthur flew in John Kessey's crew with Alan Lorimer and Roy Dingwall.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 5 October 1945, Flight Lieutenant Goodall was serving at the Central Gunnery School.

Post-war, Arthur's first job was as a sales representative with the Shell Oil Company. Then followed two years in supervising AC Nielsen's Gallup Polls, before joining the Commonwealth public service in the Customs Department. As a Shipping Master operating in the South Australian ports, to administer the relevant acts and regulations, he had to acquire, by necessity, a smattering of many foreign languages.

In retirement, Arthur's main interest continued to be serving actively in Legacy. He was also a founding member of the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association, and served on the national executive in Adelaide for a number of years before moving to Noosa Heads, Queensland.

ROBERT JAMES GOW

SERVICE NO. 37626

Bob was born in Willoughby, NSW, on 16 December 1919. He enlisted on 30 June 1941 and trained as an armourer. Bob served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay during the early period, in adverse weather and when the conditions for ground crews were primitive.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 6 January 1946, LAC Robert Gow was serving at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale.

RAYMOND A. GRAETZ, MC, OAM

SERVICE NO. 417175

Ray was born in Mount Pleasant, South Australia, on 10 December 1917. He earned his Military Cross while serving with 100 Squadron out of Nadzab in May 1944. He flew as a wireless/air gunner in Lyle McLaren's crew and was the sole survivor when their Beaufort was shot down. While injured and escaping through enemy lines, he destroyed equipment and brought back valuable information on the Japanese defences. The citation for the presentation of his Military Cross reads, 'for outstanding courage, initiative and complete disregard for his own safety; his devotion to duty is worthy of the highest praise'.

Post-war, Ray entered the world of commerce, and operated the Graetz Emporium in Warracknabeal, Victoria, before retirement at Port Macquarie, NSW. In 1994 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to the community.

CLARENCE R. GREEN, CGM, MID

SERVICE NO. 416212

Reg Green was born in Tweedvale (Lobethal), South Australia, on 23 April 1920. He joined the RAAF in 1941 and, as a pilot and captain of a crew, served in 7 Squadron prior to joining 100 Squadron at Milne Bay. During one mission, Reg and his crew, comprising Peter May, Norman Mann and Frank Nolan, shot down two enemy planes during a running battle with three Zeros. (see pages 71–73)

Shortly afterwards, Reg earned the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for attacking three Japanese fighters who were strafing survivors from a sinking ship. Reg quipped, 'You just do what you are expected to do, but I was relieved when I got back down to earth'. Reg went on to also serve with 8 Squadron.

Flight Lieutenant Green was serving at No 1 Aircraft Depot, when he was discharged from the Air Force on 1 July 1947. He recalls his first interest in flying, 'I must have been about 10 as I watched an aircraft come in to land. My mother asked if I'd like to be in it and I said I'd like to be driving it!'

Post-war, Captain Reg Green flew with Ansett Airways until his retirement. In 1999 Reg attended a Gallantry Muster at the Gold Coast. It was the first time the Muster, which brings together all members of the Gallantry League, had been held outside the United Kingdom. Members are the recipients of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, Conspicuous Gallantry Medal or the George Medal, earned during service in the armed forces.

LOUIS W. HALL, DFC

SERVICE NO. 406717

Lou Hall was born in Subiaco, Western Australia, on 21 May 1914. When he joined the Air Force on 31 March 1941, Lou had already earned his pilot's wings. He served with 13 Squadron in the Netherlands East Indies, and was in Darwin during the first raid by the Japanese. Lou then served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay. His crew comprised Warrant Officers Ted Morgan, Charles Minehan and Jim Jenkins. At the time of demobilisation on 26 January 1946, Flight Lieutenant Louis Hall was engaged as a flying instructor at East Sale.

Post-war, Lou wrote of his experiences, *Recollections of RAAF Service 1939–1946 as a Pilot*.

CLIVE SYDNEY HAMBLIN

SERVICE NO. 400

'Bill', as he was always known, was a regular Air Force officer. He was born on 4 May 1918. On 19 July 1938, he joined the Air Force where he trained as a pilot. Bill served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay and then completed a second tour with his same crew with 8 Squadron at Tadj. Wing Commander Bill Hamblin was Commanding Officer of 8 Squadron from 6 November 1944 to 27 January 1945.

SIR VALSTON HANCOCK, KBE, CB, DFC

SERVICE NO. 315

Valston Edridge Hancock was born in Perth on 31 May 1907. He was a regular Air Force officer, who trained as a pilot and whose career spanned five decades from biplanes to the jet age. He enrolled in the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1925. He was a fine athlete and a very keen aviator.

He held many senior positions pre-war, including Director of Works and Building, 1938–40 and the Commanding Officer of No 1 Bombing and Gunnery School (1BAGS), 1940. Having relative seniority and staff experience at the start of World War II, he was immediately called into administration at Air Force Headquarters for vital planning.

In 1944, he insisted on serving in a combat zone and, as a Group Captain, he served for a while with 100 Squadron at Tadj, New Guinea. He then took over from Wing Commander Cooper to command No 71 Wing at Tadj.

Following his operational tour, Sir Valston was again called upon as a staff officer in the reconstruction of the RAAF post-war. He was the founding Commandant of the RAAF College, Point Cook, and Air Officer Commanding RAF Malaya 1957–59. Then in 1961 he became head of the RAAF's Operational Command and, on being promoted to Air Marshal, he led the RAAF as Chief of the Air Staff. In 1962 he

was knighted with the award of KBE. Before his retirement in 1965, Air Marshal Hancock showed great foresight in the selection of the F-111—Australia's first supersonic bomber.

In retirement, he published his book, *Challenge*, which reveals his obvious delight at having the opportunity to serve in an operational squadron, and taking command of 71 Wing. Sir Valston was the Patron of the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association Incorporated until his death in 1999 at the age of 91.

PHILLIP HARRISON

SERVICE NO. 412136

Phil, known to his friends as 'Pranger', was born in Sydney on 24 February 1921. He enlisted on 22 June 1941 and trained as a pilot. Phil served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay under Wing Commander 'Sam' Balmer and later went on to fly in Liberators. Flight Lieutenant Harrison was demobilised on 20 May 1946.

He claims to have taken off in aircraft, as a pilot, 811 times. He does not mention landings! A facetious legend has it that his two wireless/air gunners, who flew with him, received part disability pensions based on the stress and strain of flying with Phil!

WILLIAM WINTON HAY

SERVICE NO. 413589

Bill Hay was born in Manly, NSW, on 20 October 1922. He enlisted in the Air Force on 12 September 1941 and trained as a pilot. Bill served with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay and, on one occasion, he had to ditch his Beaufort in the sea due to loss of engine power. Fortunately Bill and his crew were located, and helped aboard the rescue vessel by natives.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF, Flying Officer Hay was again serving in operations with 8 Squadron.

Bill continued to fly after the war and retired from flying with 12 000 hours as a pilot. Some time was spent in Iran, where he flew for an Australian mining company. Bill and the Shah of Iran exited the country at the same time, ahead of religious turmoil—Bill with not as much money!

ST GEORGE ERIC HENDY

SERVICE NO. 434434

Eric Hendy was born in Kilcoy, Queensland, on 27 April 1920. On 4 December 1942, he enlisted in the Air Force where he trained as a navigator. Eric served with

100 Squadron at Tadj in Stan Damman's crew, together with Bob Atkinson and Eric Byrnes. Flying Officer Hendy was discharged from the RAAF on 23 January 1946.

JAMES HEPBURN, DFC, AFC

SERVICE NO. 247

Jim Andrew Hepburn was born on 24 January 1919 in Melbourne, Victoria. He joined the RAAF in July 1937 as an Air Cadet and received his wings in June 1938.

He commanded 100 Squadron from 19 April 1943 to 12 September 1943 while stationed at Milne Bay. Then, early in 1945, Wing Commander Hepburn acted in the position of Station Commander at East Sale where he was flying Lancaster A66-1.

Post-war, Jim joined TAA, and flew the first passenger flight, Melbourne-Sydney-Melbourne, before later flying with Swissair. On one occasion, when he landed his Convair Coronado at Tokyo, a cyclone was imminent. Japan has an average of 22 cyclones each year. He ensured that the Convair was parked in the centre of the airport—possibly the safest place from flying objects. The station engineer kept all four engines running throughout the night, while Jim retired to his room on the 18th floor of the Ginza Tokyo Hotel, which swayed during the height of the storm. As the wind direction changed, he gave instructions by phone to turn the aircraft into the wind. Between 11 pm and 7 am he made 11 calls. It was worth the effort. There was no damage to the aircraft.

Jim retired in 1979 and died in 1999.

JOSEPH ERIC HEWITT, CBE

SERVICE NO. 032

Joseph Hewitt was born in Tylden, Victoria, on 13 April 1901. He joined the Royal Australian Naval College, aged 13, and graduated with a commission in 1919.

On 29 January 1923 he enlisted in the RAAF and in 1925 he was serving on attachment to the UK Fleet Air Arm. As a Squadron Leader he served on the HMAS *Albatross*, the only seaplane carrier in the Southern Hemisphere until the 1940s. It was while serving on the *Albatross* in 1931 that he assisted Francis Chichester (later knighted) to lift his De Havilland Moth onto the carrier, after Chichester successfully made the first solo flight from New Zealand to Australia.

As an Air Commodore, Joseph commanded No 9 Operational Group in the South-West Pacific, which included No 71 Wing with 100 Squadron. He published a book, *Adversity in Success*, describing his wartime experiences. At the time of his retirement on 13 April 1956, Air Vice-Marshal Hewitt was serving with the Department of Air.

DAVID WILSON HITCHINS, AO, AFC

SERVICE NO. 05836

Dave was born in Katanning, Western Australia, on 13 January 1923. He joined the RAAF on 1 February 1942, and trained to become a pilot at Pearce, Cunderdin and Geraldton, Western Australia. His crew joined him for operational training at East Sale and at the Nowra Torpedo Base before serving at Milne Bay, Goodenough Island and Nadzab with 100 Squadron. He was then posted to East Sale Operational Training Unit as an instructor until the end of the war.

Dave continued serving in the Air Force, where he had a wide-ranging career including four years in Japan and Korea, and two years in the UK as Commanding Officer of the Commonwealth Squadron of the RAF. At one stage he was pilot to the Governor-General.

During his three years as Officer Commanding RAAF Darwin, he experienced Cyclone Tracy. He then served as Officer Commanding RAAF Pearce. After 36 years service, Air Commodore David Hitchins retired to Geraldton, Western Australia on 14 February 1978.

JACK JOSEPH HOGAN

SERVICE NO. 76337

Joe was born in Inglewood Queensland on 25 January 1920. He enlisted in the Air Force on 22 June 1942, and trained as a fitter/armourer. He saw service in 8, 100 and 7 Squadrons, and in 73 Wing. LAC Hogan was discharged on 14 September 1945 while employed at No 1 Aircraft Depot.

ALLAN TORRENS JAMES

SERVICE NO. 406853

Allan James was born at Queens Park, Western Australia, on 30 November 1920, and joined the RAAF in Perth on 28 April 1941. His career in Beauforts began with his posting to 100 Squadron at Richmond in April 1942, where he learned to fly the aircraft. On completing his operational tour with the squadron at Milne Bay, he served eight months as an instructor at No 6 Operational Training Unit, Jervis Bay, NSW. Allan then served a second operational tour with 8 Squadron at Tadjji.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 4 January 1946, Flight Lieutenant James was serving with a Ferry Flight at Laverton. Of the 700 Beauforts, and the 46 that were converted to Beaufighters, Allan flew in A9-6, one of the earliest, and A9-744, one of the last.

RICHARD SCOTT JANSEN

SERVICE NO. 408035

'Scotty' Jansen was born in Barcaldine, Western Queensland, on 11 May 1919, and enlisted in the Air Force on 19 March 1940. He trained as a wireless/air gunner, and served with 8 Squadron Hudsons at Kuantan, Malaya, where he shot down a Zero on the first day of the war, 8 December 1941. 'Scotty' then flew in 'Sam' Balmer's crew in the early days of the squadron. He was discharged from the RAAF on 7 May 1945.

JOHN W. KESSEY, DFC, MAP

SERVICE NO. 482

John was born in Hamilton, NSW, on 30 August 1918. He enlisted in the peacetime Air Force on 16 January 1939 as an Air Cadet and, following training on Wapiti aircraft, John graduated as a pilot with a commission. When war was declared, he was flying Anson aircraft at Point Cook. Then followed an assignment to instruct on Wirraways at Amberley in Queensland.

When HMAS *Sydney* and the German raider, *Kormoran*, engaged in battle due west of Carnarvon in 1941, John, who was instructing on Ansons at Geraldton, took part in the grim search for survivors. He then converted to Beauforts, and flew with 14 Squadron operating out of Pearce, Western Australia, on anti-submarine patrols. He was Commanding Officer of 14 Squadron for a brief period, before flying with No 8 Squadron in New Guinea. In July 1944, Squadron Leader Kessey took command of 100 Squadron, during which time he was elevated to the rank of Wing Commander.

On being discharged from the service on 23 June 1945, John joined Australia National Airways (ANA) and, for a time, he piloted the rare Douglas DC-5. Then, as the Company's senior Route Captain for TAA, he flew the first Sydney-Brisbane service. In the 1950s, he flew DC-4s and DC-6s across the Pacific Ocean for British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines (BCPA).

While flying a BCPA DC-6 on charter to TAA, he set a domestic route speed record from Perth to Sydney. In 1961, John Kessey joined Mandated Airlines as senior pilot to fly in Papua New Guinea. The company eventually merged with TAA to form Air Niugini in 1973.

While serving with Air Niugini, he made contact, through a close friend, with a wartime Japanese anti-aircraft gunner, Taizo Takahashi, the owner and President of a Kimono factory in Kyoto, Japan. Takahashi was the sole survivor of the crew of a notorious nest of anti-aircraft guns, labelled 'Dead-Eye Dick', which had hit the port motor of Kessey's Beaufort during the war. They corresponded and eventually met at the Kyoto Royal Hotel. Conversation was difficult, as John Kessey did not understand Japanese, and Taizo Takahashi spoke very little English. In struggling to ask about Kessey's Beaufort, Takahashi used a Pidgin English word, *bikpela*, and

'the ice was broken', for both men understood Pidgin. From then on they conversed in Pidgin. With the aid of a wartime silk map of the Sepik Region that Takahashi produced, they discussed their experience of the same incident in January 1945.

John Kessey retired from flying with Ansett Airways with more than 22 000 flying hours. As a distinguished member of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in Queensland, he has served as their Chairman and has been honoured with an award for excellence, signed by the Guild's Patron, Prince Philip.

ALLENBY Q. KINGSTON

SERVICE NO. 16041

Alan was born in Perth, Western Australia on 21 January 1919. He joined the Air Force on 16 March 1940.

My small contribution to the war effort was as a Corporal instrument repairer-maker, because I failed the eyesight colour test for aircrew; which fact probably saved my life after observing the risks the elite aircrew had to take. After schooling at Laverton, Point Cook, Melbourne and Sydney Technical Schools, I served at Evans Head, Mallala and Port Moresby. Then at the end of 1943 I was posted to 100 Squadron at Goodenough Island.

Alan was recognised as a very skilled instrument technician.

At the time of his discharge from the Air Force on 9 November 1945, he was serving at No 4 Aircraft Depot.

JOHN ALLEN LANGLEY

SERVICE NO. 412156

Allen was born in Mosman, NSW on 7 August 1916. On 22 June 1941, he enlisted in the RAAF where he trained as a pilot. Following operational training, Allen and his crew, comprising Chas Gordon, Jack Stevens and John Mathews, served with 100 Squadron at Tadjji.

At the time of his discharge on 23 January 1946, Flying Officer Langley was serving on attachment to No 8 Communication Unit at Finschhafen.

RONALD WILLIAM LAWS

SERVICE NO. 429233

Ron was born in Strathfield, NSW, on 18 August 1924, and enlisted in the RAAF on 5 November 1942. Following training and graduation as a pilot, Ron and his crew, comprising Barrie Blackstone, Laurie Martin and John Coffey, completed their operational training at East Sale. Ron and his crew served with 32 Squadron and

then 100 Squadron at Tadjj and Finschhafen. Flying Officer Laws was discharged on 18 March 1946.

ROBERT LAW-SMITH, AFC

SERVICE NO. 280733

Bob was born in Adelaide, South Australia, on 14 July 1914. He enlisted on 5 February 1940 as an aircrew trainee and trained as a pilot. After serving in 2 and 13 Squadrons with commissioned rank, he joined 100 Squadron at Richmond. At the time of his discharge from the service on 21 March 1946, Robert Law-Smith, AFC, held the rank of Squadron Leader.

Post-war, Bob joined TAA, where he served in an executive position.

BRYANT IVAN LAWSON

SERVICE NO. 437945

'Ike', as he was known in the RAAF, was born in Thebarton, South Australia, on 7 March 1925. He enlisted in the RAAF on 24 April 1943 in Adelaide, and trained as a pilot. When training to fly a Beaufort at East Sale, 'Ike' claims that his instructor, John Lemcke, DFC, MID, deserved a bar to his DFC! Warrant Officer Lawson served with 100 Squadron at Tadjj, and was discharged from the RAAF on 5 July 1946.

'Ike' retired to live in Atherton, North Queensland, but returned to South Australia when his health deteriorated, and has since passed on.

DONALD WILLIAM LAY

SERVICE NO. 408248

Don Lay was born at Zeehan, Tasmania, on 4 December 1922. He enlisted in the Air Force on 19 June 1941 and trained as a wireless/air gunner. Don was a member of a crew comprising Sergeants Geoff Megaw, Bill Young and Lochlan Howlett flying in A9-8, which failed to return from a torpedo attack on an enemy convoy on 9 January 1943. Sergeant Don Lay's name is honoured on bronze panel A3. A. 26 at the Bomana War Cemetery, Port Moresby.

GEORGE LEWIS

SERVICE NO. 408248

George was born in Grimsby, UK, on 17 July 1919. He was five years old when his parents migrated to Tasmania on the SS *Osterly*. After his tertiary studies at the Launceston Technical College, George was employed in the electrical industry until enlisting with the RAAF in August 1942. After the Initial Training School at Somers, he trained as an observer at the Air Navigation School at Mount Gambier and the

Bombing and Gunnery School at West Sale. Then followed training in astro navigation at Nhill and operational training at East Sale. George was the navigator with Allan Ditchburn's crew, who served in 100 Squadron in operations at Goodenough Island and at Nadzab.

On returning to civilian life on demobilisation, George, who was married before joining the RAAF, went back to his family in Launceston and to his original employment in the electrical industry.

NOEL LOVEDAY

SERVICE NO. 405049

Noel was born in Pittsworth, Queensland, on 14 July 1918. On 6 January 1941, he enlisted in the RAAF where he trained as a wireless/air gunner. On 21 May 1943, Noel was flying in A9-188 with Flying Officer David Forrest, MID, Flying Officer Ken Holmes and Flight Sergeant Jim Hatfield, when they failed to return from a night bombing raid on Gasmata.

Flight Sergeant Loveday's name appears on bronze panel No. 35 at the Bita Paka War Memorial Cemetery in Rabaul.

WALTER ALEX LUKEIS

SERVICE NO. 427521

Wally was born in Perth, Western Australia, on 14 March 1924. He enlisted in the RAAF on 19 July 1942 to train as aircrew. He trained as a pilot and then completed operational training with his crew, comprising Bill Gardner, John McCutcheon and Owen Carrick. The crew served with 8 and 32 Squadrons before posting to 100 Squadron at Tadjji.

Flying Officer Lukeis was discharged on 29 March 1946 and was at that time serving with No 1 Aircraft Depot.

FRANCIS W.F. LUKIS, CBE

SERVICE NO. 009

Francis Lukis was born in Balingup, Western Australia, on 27 July 1896. He enlisted in the Australian Flying Corps on 31 March 1921. As an Air Commodore and Air Member for Personnel in November 1943, he was appointed to command No 9 Operational Group of the Fifth United States Army Air Force, in which 100 Squadron functioned. On 8 March 1944, Air Commodore Lukis then commanded all of the RAAF units in New Guinea and, in October of that year, he established his headquarters at Madang.

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At the time of his retirement from the RAAF on 2 May 1946, Air Commodore Lukis was in command of RAAF Eastern Area.

COLIN MACNAUGHTAN

SERVICE NO. 422662

'Mac' was 28 when he joined the RAAF in 1942. Following graduation as a pilot, he was posted to Bairnsdale, where he converted to Beauforts and completed the operational training course, and torpedo training at Jervis Bay. He was posted to 100 Squadron in December 1943, serving at Goodenough Island, Nadzab and Aitape. Flying Officer Macnaughtan's favourite aircraft was A9-488, QH-L, and later he flew A9-557, which by that time was also QH-L.

Having survived a wartime aircraft ditching in the sea, 'Mac', and his crew, Fred Tolcher, Jack Slingo and Laurie O'Sullivan, became eligible members of the 'Goldfish Club'.

After the war, 'Mac' set up a dental supply business in Sydney, which is still flourishing under the management of one of his sons. 'Mac' died in 1963, but his family and remaining crew members still have a warm affiliation.

NORMAN BESSELL MANN

SERVICE NO. 409271

Norm was born on 3 January 1920 in Coburg, Victoria. He enlisted in the Air Force on 20 July 1941, and trained as a wireless/air gunner. While serving in Reg Green's crew as a turret gunner in 100 Squadron, Norm fought attacks by three Zeros. The full account of that encounter is reported in the chapter titled 'Action at Milne Bay' (see pages 71–73). Later, Norm also served in 7 and 8 Squadrons.

Flying Officer Mann was serving with 67 Squadron at the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 28 Sept 1945.

STANLEY JOHN MARS

SERVICE NO. 401045

Stan was born in Bendigo, Victoria, on 25 January 1916. He joined the RAAF on 8 December 1940, where he trained and graduated as a wireless/air gunner. Stan served in Malaya and joined the 'Q' flight of five Beauforts to return to Australia.

After operational service at Milne Bay, Flying Officer Mars served with the Air Armament and Gas School, where he was stationed at the time of his discharge on 7 November 1945.

MATTHEW H.P. MARTIN, MID

SERVICE NO. 59717

Matt was born in Gateshead, England, on 2 March 1903. On 30 July 1942, he enlisted in the RAAF where he trained as a fitter/armourer. Matt was Mentioned in Despatches when aircraft A9-82 caught fire. The ground crew, led by Pilot Officer Temple, raced to remove a torpedo, and fortunately succeeded in doing so. (see page 70)

At the time of his discharge on 28 November 1945, Corporal Martin was serving with No 3 Malaria Control Unit.

ROBERT MAYNARD, MID

SERVICE NO. 17211

Bob was born in Midland Junction, Western Australia, on 17 July 1918. He was employed as a clerk in the Commonwealth Bank, when he joined the RAAF, in Perth, on 6 July 1940. He was active as a drill instructor before being accepted for aircrew training, where he graduated as an above average pilot.

At No 1 Operational Training Unit he converted to flying twin-engine aircraft in Oxfords, and then trained in Beaufort A9-1 (T9540). Bob was a natural flier, and this flair was recognised when he was given the task of test flying reconditioned Beaufort aircraft allotted to 100 Squadron, while serving at Tadj. He had over 1000 flying hours and more than 140 sorties, including 85 strikes, to his credit at demobilisation on 10 October 1945.

Flying Officer Maynard would have preferred to continue flying commercially after the war, but he was persuaded by his wife to return to the Commonwealth Bank in Perth, where he was manager at the time of his retirement in 1978. Bob died in 1997.

WILLIAM M. MCARTHUR

SERVICE NO. 416589

Bill was born in Millicent, South Australia, on 7 August 1922. He was working as a laboratory assistant in a Forestry Research Station, when he joined the RAAF on 21 July 1941. Following training as a navigator/bombardier, Bill served in United States Navy Catalinas until posted to East Sale for operational training on Beauforts. He served in 14 Squadron in Ken Beer's crew on sea patrols over the Indian Ocean, and then the crew was posted to Aitape to join 100 Squadron.

At the conclusion of his operational tour, Flying Officer MacArthur joined No 11 Communication Unit at Morotai, where he flew in Beauforts and Venturas until his discharge from the RAAF on 2 June 1946.

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After the war, Bill graduated in Science from the University of WA and went on to do a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in plant ecology. He was then awarded a Master of Science Degree for work on soils of the Swan River coastal plain. In 1952, he joined the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial and Research Organisation (CSIRO) in the Division of Soils, where he worked until retirement in 1982. Bill then worked as a consultant in land resource assessment, where he was involved in projects for forestry, mining, defence, agriculture and viticulture. He has published about 40 scientific papers, culminating in the publication, in 1991, of a reference book on *Soils of South-Western Australia*. Bill is an Honorary Life Member of the Australian Society of Soil Science and does voluntary work in environmental and conservation projects.

JOHN MCKAY

SERVICE NO. 408607

John was born on 22 March 1912 in Maryborough, Queensland. He enlisted on 27 April 1941, and trained as navigator/bombardier. John was one of the foundation members of 100 Squadron. He served in the squadron as a specialist to take the places of navigators absent from crews because of illness or accident. Pre-war, John had been a solicitor in Lae and he had an intimate knowledge of Lae and Salamaua. He therefore could accurately assess the squadron's bombing raids in that area.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 10 May 1946, Flight Lieutenant McKay was serving at RAAF Headquarters.

IVAN MORRIS, MID

SERVICE NO. 413003

Ivan joined the Air Training Corp as soon as he turned 18, and was on the Reserve until 15 August 1941 when recruited into the RAAF. As an AC2 on No 19 Course he completed initial training at Somers. He then trained as an observer at Parkes and Mount Gambier and graduated with a commission on 28 May 1942. He teamed up with Bill Hamblin, pilot, Laurie Webb and Fred Lauer, as wireless/air gunners, to fly in Beauforts from July 1942 until December 1945 in Nos 7, 100, 32 and 8 Squadrons.

He was discharged as a Flight Lieutenant in January 1946 after completing 638 hours of flying, which included 140 operational sorties:

I came to have a healthy respect for the versatility and structural strength of the Australian Beaufort ... The service crews did a magnificent job in keeping the maintenance up to scratch, particularly in the mud and humidity of Milne Bay.

After the war, Ivan completed a Diploma course in Electrical Engineering at the Sydney Technical College. Following a short time with Birlec Limited, a furnace company, he formed his own furnace company and stayed in that field until retiring in 1997. Ivan has been the Honorary Secretary of both the 100 Squadron Association, and the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association in NSW for a number of years and continues in that capacity. He is also an active member of the Strathfield Probus Club where he has been Secretary for some years.

RONALD FANE MUNRO

SERVICE NO. 408915

Ron 'Darby' Munro joined the RAAF in April 1941. He served his initial training with No 17 course at Victor Harbour, South Australia. He then trained and graduated from the wireless school at Ballarat and gunnery course at Evans Head. Ron was posted to serve with 100 Squadron at Richmond in April 1942. He flew briefly in the Commanding Officer's crew, and then crewed up with Flight Lieutenant Lloyd 'Smoky' Douglas. He was with the squadron at Milne Bay engaging in torpedo attacks on enemy shipping.

On completion of his operational tour, Ron was posted to No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale early in 1943. He instructed there on ASV radar, until his posting to Laverton on 1 January 1945. Ron then trained on a Liberator in 201 Flight, specially fitted with advanced radar for service in Borneo, but was declared medically unfit for tropical service.

Post-war, Ron returned to the Commonwealth Public Service, where he became Director of Finance in the Department of Public Works. At one stage he was seconded to the Snowy Mountains Authority as financial advisor to the Commissioner, Sir William Hudson. At the time of his retirement, he was executive director of the Australian Society of Accountants.

COLIN N. NEWBERRY

SERVICE NO. 426146

Colin was born in Mackay, Queensland, on 21 January 1921. He joined the Air Force on 23 May 1942 and trained as a wireless/air gunner. During his operational tour with 100 Squadron, he flew in Ron Caffin's crew. Flight Sergeant Newberry was discharged from the RAAF on 26 February 1946 while serving at No 3 Operational Training Unit.

Post-war, Colin returned to the family sugarcane farm near Mackay before farming independently. He then joined the Australian Sugar Producers' Association in North Queensland, where he served as a senior officer until retirement in 1986.

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In retirement in Cairns, he has been active in the RSL particularly as a district officer to organise district conferences.

ROBERT M. NIELSEN

SERVICE NO. 425097

Bob was born on 31 December 1917 in Rockhampton, and enlisted in the RAAF on 8 December 1941. After training as a pilot, he served in 14 Squadron prior to his posting, with his crew, to 100 Squadron.

Flying Officer Nielsen was discharged from the Air Force on 8 March 1946. After the war, Bob and his crew, comprising navigator Keith Watts and wireless/air gunners Eric Schofield and 'Scotty' Ireland, met regularly for reunions. 'Scotty' owned Arrowfield Winery, Jerry's Plains, NSW, and the crew reunions were always complemented by a case of cabernet sauvignon. Both 'Scotty' and Eric published books on their experiences. Eric's book, *First Came Willis*, covers 100 years of his family history and ends with an account of his experiences in Beauforts when flying with Bob during World War II.

LEONARD E.H. PARSONS, DFC, MID

SERVICE NO. 250826

Len was born in Burnie, Tasmania, on 20 November 1920. On gaining his Leaving Certificate at Launceston High School, he commenced work as a draftsman with the Tasmanian Lands Department. Len's brothers, Keith and Wilbur, were already serving as pilots in the Air Force, when he enlisted as a cadet on 4 March 1940. He too trained and graduated as a pilot at Essendon Aerodrome.

On 24 February 1942, he commenced instructing pilots to fly Ansons on No 5 Course at Point Cook. A month later he was posted to Wagga Wagga to instruct on Wirraways, which he had never flown. Len soon mastered the Wirraway, and instructed on all courses up to No 25 in June 1942, when he was posted to No 1 Beaufort Course at No 1 Operational Training Unit, Bairnsdale. He then completed torpedo training at Nowra, before joining 100 Squadron in October 1942, which subsequently moved to Milne Bay the following month.

His service in 100 Squadron included a period as acting Commanding Officer. At the conclusion of his operational tour, he was posted to No 1 Operational Training Unit again as an instructor. Then followed another torpedo course before joining No 8 Squadron at Goodenough Island, which subsequently moved to Nadzab and then to Tadjj. On finishing his second operational tour, Len was posted to 7 Squadron, but three months later he was back at No 1 Operational Training Unit where, by the end of the war, he was the Chief Flying Instructor. Squadron Leader Len Parsons was discharged from the Air Force on 27 September 1945.

Post-war, Len flew with Australian National Airways until 1951, when he joined a calculating machine firm and worked as a sales representative. With the introduction of decimal currency, Len then joined an importing firm as office manager, where he served until retirement in November 1985.

HAYWOOD PEARCE

SERVICE NO. 436111

'Hank', as he was known, was born in Bridgetown, Western Australia, on 29 June 1919 into a pioneering farming family. His tertiary education led to his graduation in agriculture from the School of Agriculture at Narrogin.

He joined the RAAF in November 1942, and began his initial training at Clontarf, Western Australia. Hank trained as a pilot at Cunderdin and then graduated at Geraldton on Avro Ansons. His first posting was to Bairnsdale, as a staff pilot flying Ansons on general reconnaissance. He then trained on No 17 course on Beauforts at the Operational Training Unit, Bairnsdale.

During training, Hank had one hair-raising experience, in a dual-control aircraft with the instructor and several other pilots under instruction, that he can never forget:

At 5000 feet, neither the instructor, nor I, were strapped in, when he decided to show some evasive action. He threw the plane about and lost control. We were tossed out of our seats, and the plane went into a vertical dive. Somehow we struggled into a position to get the stick, and between us we pulled her out of the dive.

Hank was posted to 100 Squadron at Goodenough Island in April 1944, and continued on in operations to Nadzab and Aitape. At the time of his discharge from the RAAF in November 1945, he held the rank of Flying Officer and was serving at 14 Squadron Pearce, Western Australia.

Hank returned to farming near Bridgetown after the war, before joining the Department of Agriculture as a Weed Control Officer. At the time of his retirement in 1979, he held the position of Superintendent in the Department.

NEIL KEVIN PHELAN

SERVICE NO. 53612

Neil was born on 8 July 1923 and was raised in Mitiamo, near Bendigo, Victoria. He enlisted in the RAAF on 8 April 1942 and trained as a fitter 2E. Neil joined 100 Squadron at Laverton shortly after it was formed, and served at Milne Bay and at Goodenough Island. At the time of his discharge on 26 March 1946, LAC Phelan was serving at East Sale.

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After the war, Neil returned to the family general store Mitiamo. Then he moved to Kerang to run a fuel distributorship, which he managed until his retirement in Kerang in 1985.

HERBERT C. PLENTY, DFC AND BAR

SERVICE NO. 3103

Herb was born on 2 February 1921 in Port Pirie, South Australia, and enlisted in the RAAF on 4 September 1939. Herb was recognised early in his career as a very capable and daring pilot. He earned his first DFC while flying Hudsons in 2 Squadron, and a second one while serving with 100 Squadron. Herb commanded a forward detachment of the squadron operating out of Nadzab, during the transition of 100 Squadron from Goodenough Island.

He continued serving in the RAAF after the war, and at the time of retirement on 2 February 1976 he was a Group Captain. Herb wrote a synopsis of 100 Squadron, which has been very helpful in researching and compiling this book.

STANLEY POLKINGHORNE, MID

SERVICE NO. 420260

Stan was born on 2 April 1923 in Griffith, NSW. He was 18 years old when he joined the Air Force on 11 October 1941. Stan trained as a pilot at Narrandera and Bundaberg, and graduated with a commission. While flying Avro Ansons with the General Reconnaissance School at Cressy, Victoria, Stan contracted rheumatic fever. However, after eight weeks in hospital and two weeks in a wheelchair, he recovered and was posted to the flying school at Tamworth to instruct on Wackett aircraft.

Stan then trained on Beauforts at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale, where Flying Officer Harry Marsh and Warrant Officers Ron Merlin and Brian Cook formed his crew. He joined 100 Squadron at Goodenough Island, where he promptly contracted dengue fever, but he then went on to serve with the squadron at Nadzab and Tadjj. At the time of his discharge on 24 September 1945, Flight Lieutenant Polkinghorne was instructing back at No 1 Operational Training Unit.

Post-war, Stan went back to farming at Griffith, until recurring ill health proved to be a problem. He left the farm to manage a growers' cooperative cannery, and continued working in the fruit industry. At the time of his retirement in Griffith in 1990 Stan was a fruit inspector.

SYDNEY ALFRED POPE

SERVICE NO. 409317

Syd was born on 12 May 1920 in Melbourne. He enlisted in the Air Force on 15 August 1941 to train as aircrew. Syd trained and graduated as a wireless/air gunner

and went on to serve in 100 Squadron at Milne Bay and Goodenough Island. Warrant Officer Pope was serving with 9 Local Air Supply Unit, when he was discharged on 6 December 1945.

IVOR JAMES ROBERTS

SERVICE NO. 033070

Ivor was born in Melbourne on 15 January 1915. He joined the RAAF on 28 April 1940, and trained as a pilot. He served in 8 Squadron on Hudsons before commencing his tour with 100 Squadron. Ivor served as the Commanding Officer at Milne Bay and at Goodenough Island.

Suffering from a serious bout of malaria, Squadron Leader Roberts left the Squadron on 28 November 1943 and did not return to operational flying.

ARTHUR ROBERT ROOT

SERVICE NO. 261845

Bob was born on 28 January 1903 and joined the Air Force in February 1941. As 100 Squadron Adjutant at Bohle River, Townsville, he organised the transfer of the squadron to Milne Bay. Bob was recognised as a very efficient adjutant and, at the time of his discharge from the service on 7 December 1945, he held the rank of Squadron Leader.

GEOFFREY REX SCHLANK

SERVICE NO. 407184

'Barry', as he was known in the Air Force, was born on 17 September 1916. He joined the RAAF on 20 July 1940. On gaining his pilot's wings, he served in 8 Squadron on Lockheed Hudsons operating out of Kota Bharu and Sembawang. When the Japanese took Singapore, the squadron withdrew to Sumatra to be transported on the SS *Orcades* to Adelaide early in March 1942.

Barry then served at the Nowra Torpedo Base for some months before joining 100 Squadron at Mareeba. On a second operational tour Barry served with 8 Squadron at Tadjji. At the time of demobilisation on 11 September 1945, Flight Lieutenant Schlank was serving at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale.

JOHN CHARLES SCHOFIELD

SERVICE NO. 407377

John came from Walkerville, South Australia, where he was born on 7 October 1919. He enlisted on 17 September 1940, and trained as a wireless/air gunner. He served

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in the early days of 100 Squadron at Milne Bay in Kym Bonython's crew, along with David 'Doug' Thomas and Geoff Brokenshire.

Flight Lieutenant John Schofield was serving at the Base Torpedo Unit, Jervis Bay, at the time of his accidental death on 21 December 1945.

WILLIAM H. SCOTT

SERVICE NO. 428508

Bill was born in Bendigo, Victoria, on 30 September 1924. (His father was Brigadier W.H. Scott, CMG, DSO.) Bill enlisted on 6 November 1942 and trained as a fitter/armourer. He served in a Short Empire Flying Boat unit, in which he was also a gunner.

He then remustered to train for aircrew. Following training as a pilot he served in 6 and 100 Squadrons in the South-West Pacific Area. At the time of his discharge on 1 December 1953, Flight Lieutenant Scott was employed at the Aircraft Research and Development Unit.

ALPHONSUS JOSEPH SHORT

SERVICE NO. 420067

'Alf' was born in Randwick, NSW, on 27 January 1921. He enlisted on 10 October 1941 and trained as a pilot. He had already served in 8 Squadron at Goodenough Island and 6 Squadron at Dobodura before joining 100 Squadron in July 1945.

With the rank of Flight Lieutenant, 'Alf' was discharged on the 14 January 1946, while still serving with the squadron at Tadjj.

JOHN ANKETELL SMIBERT

SERVICE NO. 250276

John was born on 4 July 1917. He served as a pilot with 100 Squadron at Milne Bay, with the rank of Squadron Leader. During his operational tour, he led a number of torpedo attacks on enemy destroyers and, on several occasions, was the temporary commander of the squadron.

An attack of a virulent type of malaria ended his tropical tour at the end of May 1943. At the time of his discharge from the RAAF Wing Commander Smibert was serving at RAAF Headquarters.

PERCY RAYMUND SMITH, AE, RFD

SERVICE NO. A16044

Ray was born in Warwick, Queensland, on 12 January 1920 and received his secondary schooling in Brisbane. While working for the Shell Oil Company in 1938

he obtained his pilot's licence. As an Aero Club member, he commenced service in the RAAF on June 1940. Following service at Amberley, Queensland, and with No 31 Beaufighter Squadron at Cressy in Victoria, he trained on Beauforts, and was posted to 100 Squadron at Milne Bay. On completing his operational tour at Nadzab, he served with No 8 Communication Unit until the end of the war.

Post-war, Ray resumed scholastic studies and graduated at the Queensland University with a Law Degree (LLB), and was admitted as a barrister in 1952. Ray maintained his connection with the peacetime Air Force and joined the General Reserve, where he was a flying instructor for National Service trainees who had been inducted into the RAAF. In 1964 his rank as Group Captain was confirmed.

That same year, Ray was appointed Deputy Judge Advocate General, a position he held until his retirement in 1976. For a number of years he was State President of the Air Force Association and the Beaufort Squadrons Association. He was also Patron of the Beaufighter-Boston Association of Queensland. From 1957 to 1969 he served in the Queensland Parliament as a Liberal MLA, representing the seat of Windsor. Then from 1976 to 1982 he was an alderman of the Brisbane City Council. His involvement in community life included being President of 10 or more Associations, including the Royal United Services Institutes of Queensland and Australia, and the Early Birds Association. Ray died 10 February 2002.

JOHN A. SNEWIN, MID

SERVICE NO. UNKNOWN

John was born in Loxton, South Australia, on 3 November 1921, and was employed as a clerk when he enlisted in the RAAF on 17 August 1941. He trained as a navigator and was posted to serve at No 4 Service Flying Training School, Geraldton on 7 August 1942.

John then trained at No 1 Operational Training Unit, Bairnsdale, where he joined Tony Warden's crew, prior to the crew's posting to 100 Squadron on 2 July 1943. It was during his tour with 100 Squadron operating out of Milne Bay that he was Mentioned in Despatches.

On 22 February 1944, he was posted to 32 Squadron, where he served until his posting again to 100 Squadron in August, just prior to the end of the war. Flying Officer John Snewin was discharged from the RAAF on 18 October 1945.

Post-war, John studied at the Adelaide University and graduated in Law (LLB) in March 1951. A month later, he was admitted as a solicitor and barrister to the Supreme Court of South Australia. John retired as senior partner of the firm Baker, McEwin, Millhouse and Ligertwood on 30 June 1991, but continues to practise as a sole practitioner.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

John also continues to take a prominent role in Legacy, and is the national scribe of the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association Inc.

ATHOLSTON C.E. SNOOK

SERVICE NO. 400449

Athol was born in Hawthorn, Victoria, on 29 February 1920. He joined the Air Force in Perth on 12 September 1940. Prior to serving with 100 Squadron, based at Milne Bay, Athol served in Malaya. His escape with a group of airmen and their epic voyage of 1500 miles in an open boat from Indonesia to Fraser Islet, Western Australia, is mentioned elsewhere in this book (see page 21).

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 6 June 1945, Flying Officer Snook was serving at No 1 Operational Training Unit.

Athol, an accomplished artist, is remembered for his very realistic painting of Beaufort A9-38 being attacked by Zeros on 1 December 1942 (see page 73). The painting was presented to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook on 26 April 1987.

GEORGE C. SPARKS, MID

SERVICE NO. 8490

George was 32 when he enlisted in the RAAF on 30 January 1940. He trained as a fitter/armourer. It was during his operational service with 100 Squadron at Tadjj that he was Mentioned in Despatches for his dedication to duty, along with fitters, Flight Sergeants L. Clarke and C.R.L. Watson, and Corporal J. Mullaney, and electrical fitter, Corporal L. Tebbutt.

At the time of his discharge from the Air Force, George was serving at No 7 Operational Training Unit, Tocumwal.

JOHN THOMAS STERNDALE

SERVICE NO. 422311

'Tiny' Sterndale was probably the tallest pilot in the RAAF. He certainly was the tallest in 100 Squadron, where he served at Goodenough Island. He was born in Glebe Point, NSW on 2 November 1922, and joined the RAAF in Sydney on 26 April 1942. 'Tiny' trained as a pilot and then underwent operational training at No 1 Operational Training Unit, Bairnsdale, on Beauforts, where his crew, comprising Ern Skinner, Joe Rounsevell and Bill Murray, joined him. Flying Officer Sterndale was serving at Western Area Headquarters at the time of his discharge on 11 February 1946.

Post-war John flew with Swissair. He has now passed on.

ALEXANDER GORDON STUART, DFC, MID

SERVICE NO. 405457

Alex was born in November 1917. He enlisted in the RAAF on 29 November, 1941. Alex trained as a navigator and was commissioned on graduating. He then served for a time with 7 Squadron. He was in the original detachment sent from Bairnsdale to Port Moresby during the Buna campaign, where he completed 140 hours flying in less than two months, most of it over the Owen Stanley Range from Port Moresby to Dobodura. On one occasion he was attacked by seven Zeros. The attack lasted for 15 minutes before his aircraft escaped into cloud. He is credited with shooting down one enemy plane, and possibly another.

Alex then completed a torpedo course at Nowra before his posting to 100 Squadron in April 1943. On completing his operational tour at Milne Bay, Alex came back again to serve in 100 Squadron at Goodenough Island, Nadzab and Aitape from 30 June 1944 to the end of hostilities.

He carried out 93 strikes and 85 other operational sorties during three operational tours. Alex survived the war years but has since passed on.

ERIC STUART

SERVICE NO. 408763

Eric was born in Amphitheatre, Victoria, on 26 May 1915. Following enlistment on 23 May 1941, he trained as a wireless/air gunner. Eric served full operational tours in both 8 and 100 Squadrons.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 11 May 1945, Flying Officer Stuart was serving with No 1 Aircraft Depot.

DONALD CHARLES STUMM

SERVICE NO. 270681

Don was born in Sydney on 11 December 1919. He was a shipping clerk in Brisbane, when he enlisted in the Air Force on 9 January 1940. He trained as a pilot and graduated with a commission. Following service in 8 Squadron, flying Hudsons based at Kota Bharu in Malaya, he served with 100 Squadron RAF in Vildebeeste aircraft. He and RAF pilot Peter Mitchell flew the first Beaufort to engage in a sortie against the Japanese on 7 December 1941. Don subsequently became a foundation member of 100 Squadron RAAF.

Don and his crew failed to return from a night torpedo attack on enemy shipping in the Faisi-Buin area of the Shortland Islands on 3 October 1942 (see page 61). Flight Lieutenant Stumm's name appears on bronze panel No 9 of the Bomana War Memorial, Port Moresby.

KEVIN TASKIS

SERVICE NO. 434906

Kevin was 21 when he joined the RAAF on 17 February 1943. He had already served a year with the Army as a Bren gun carrier driver. During an RAAF recruiting campaign for aircrew, Kevin applied, along with about 100 others from the Army. Only 10 passed the aptitude test, and then only two were accepted as medically fit for flying duties. Kevin trained as a wireless/ air gunner and completed his training at No 1 Operational Training Unit, East Sale. He served in 100 Squadron at Tadjji with Jim Forrest's crew, the other members being Lou Aitkin and Bob Brett. Warrant Officer Taskis was discharged from the Air Force on 10 September 1945.

After the war, Kevin returned to the family farm in the Albury district and then worked for the Department of Agriculture in Victoria until his retirement in 1982.

NOEL D. THOMPSON

SERVICE NO. 407395

Noel was born in Chandada, near Streaky Bay, South Australia, on 21 November 1921. He was employed by Goldsbrough Mort, an agricultural firm, prior to enlisting in the Air Force on 14 September 1940 to train on No 5 Course. During the initial training at Somers, Victoria, he volunteered as a gunner and was posted to No 1 Squadron at Singapore. Noel served in Malaya and Java from 12 October 1940 to 21 February 1942. Following evacuation from the islands, he was posted to Ballarat to do the wireless course but remustered to train as a pilot at Parafield. Noel joined 100 Squadron at Milne Bay on 10 November 1943, just prior to moving to Goodenough Island.

At the time of his discharge from the RAAF on 20 December 1945, Flight Lieutenant Thompson was serving with No 1 Operational Training Unit.

After the war, Noel rejoined Goldsbrough Mort, and then worked for General Motors Acceptance Corporation until his retirement in 1980 as its manager in South Australia.

RICHARD H. THOMPSON, DFC

SERVICE NO. 260285

Dick was born in Sydney on 7 June 1919. He enlisted in the RAAF at Richmond, NSW, on 26 March 1937 and, after training, graduated as a pilot officer. He joined 100 Squadron at Mareeba and participated in the attack and sinking of the *Tenyo Maru* (see page 31–33). Dick rejoined 100 Squadron at Goodenough Island for a second tour of operations on 12 November 1943.

Dick was in command of 100 Squadron from 28 November 1943 to 1 December 1944, following his elevation to Wing Commander. At the time of his discharge

from the Air Force on 27 September 1945, Dick was serving in 14 Squadron Pearce, Western Australia.

ROBERT A.K. THOMSEN

SERVICE NO. 151435

Bob was born in Brisbane on 26 September 1924 and was 19 when he joined the Air Force. He trained as an armourer and served with 100 Squadron at Tadj and Finschhafen. Bob was at Finschhafen with the squadron until his demobilisation on 1 March 1946.

ALFRED L. TISDALL, CBE

SERVICE NO. 418207

Alf was born in Shepparton, Victoria, on 30 September 1912, and proved to be an outstanding student from his early school years. On graduating from the Melbourne University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1933, he joined the CSIR. In 1937 he received his Master's Degree.

Alf then enlisted in the RAAF on 25 April 1942 to be trained for aircrew. He received his commission on 26 May 1943, following his graduation as a navigator/bombardier. He served on Beauforts with 32 and 100 Squadrons until demobilisation on 11 September 1945 with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

Post-war, Alf joined the Water Commission of Victoria. In 1958, he was appointed a Commissioner and was elected Fellow of the Royal Institute of Public Administration. He was Chairman of the Institute from 1965 until his retirement in 1977, when he was elected a life member. He was also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. The University of Melbourne awarded him the Degree of Doctor of Agricultural Science in 1975 and, in 1978, he was appointed as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Alf lived in the Melbourne bayside community of Black Rock for some 50 years, where he worked tirelessly for the community, through Rotary, church and sporting clubs, until his death on 20 February 1999.

HOWARD C. TRELOAR

SERVICE NO. 424895

Howard was born in Manly, NSW, on 25 September 1923. He joined the RAAF on 9 October 1942. He trained as a wireless/air gunner and served with 100 Squadron in Sid Wright's crew, with Roy Corbett and Norman Danes, at Goodenough Island, Nadzab and Tadj.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

At the time of his discharge from the Air Force, Howard was serving as a Flying Officer with No 1 Communication Unit.

CLIFFORD E. TUTTLEBY, DFC, AFM

SERVICE NO. 2760

Cliff was born in Collingwood, Victoria, on 4 October 1908. He was one of the early enlistments in the RAAF, joining at Point Cook on 27 August 1928, in which he trained and graduated as a pilot. During the period prior to the outbreak of World War II, he earned the award of the Air Force Medal for outstanding service.

Following operational training in Beauforts at Bairnsdale, Cliff and his crew, comprising Colin Bourke, A.D. Crawford and J.D. Dihm, served with 100 Squadron at Goodenough Island. The crew is credited with destroying an enemy submarine near Gasmata on 10 December 1943 (see page 131). At the time of his discharge from the Air Force on 1 May 1947, Flight Lieutenant Tuttleby was serving at Laverton base.

PETER H. WALL

SERVICE NO. 435836

Peter was 19 when he joined the RAAF on 13 September 1943, training as a wireless/air gunner. From 29 September 1945 to 10 January 1946 he served with 8 Squadron. He was then posted to 100 Squadron. Peter was one of 69 airmen of various categories posted from 8 to 100 Squadron at Finschhafen at that time. He was immediately seconded to the Air-Sea Rescue Group, where he served as a W/T operator on HMAS *Airbird*, until his discharge on 28 August 1946.

BARTON M. WARDEN, DFC

SERVICE NO. 421060

'Tony', as he was known in the RAAF, was born at Neutral Bay, NSW, on 18 August 1916. On 7 December 1941, he joined the Air Force in Sydney, where he trained and graduated as a pilot. He served in 100 Squadron, operating out of Milne Bay, where he earned his decoration. On 22 February 1944 he and his crew were posted to 32 Squadron.

Flight Lieutenant Warden was discharged from the RAAF on 18 October 1945.

KENNETH N. WATERS, DFC

SERVICE NO. 408192

Ken was born in Lefroy, Tasmania, on 20 August 1915. Bill Ewing, who flew with Ken Waters for three years, wrote about him on the occasion of Ken's 80th birthday:

Ken Waters was an outstanding operational pilot, who time and time again pressed on regardless, 'above and beyond the call of duty'. He could fly. He was a skilled pilot, there is no doubt about that, but with his typical quiet modesty, he admired two or three pilots whom he regarded as 'natural pilots—born in the cockpit'. Two in particular were Allan James and Len Parsons, and they were certainly good. I flew with Allan in the formative days of 100 Squadron at Richmond and at Jervis Bay. I flew with Len from East Sale to deliver an important Major General to Darwin—all in one day—13 hours flying and another 13 back again the next day. I know what Ken meant. Nonetheless, I have always thought the difference was infinitesimal and anyway when it came to operational flying his records speaks for itself—he was the best. He had strength of character, courage (physical and moral), unshakeable determination and great ability.

His leadership was quiet, but indisputable. I was privileged and damn lucky to have flown with Flight Lieutenant K.N. Waters, DFC.

RALPH FERGUSON WILEY

SERVICE NO. 130

Ralph was born in Brisbane, Queensland, on 5 August 1915. He was an early bird, having joined the Air Force on 15 July 1935. He served in 100 Squadron in torpedo attacks out from Milne Bay and was temporarily in command of the squadron for a short period. Wing Commander Wiley was serving with Air Defence Melbourne at the time of his discharge on 3 September 1946.

Post-war, Ralph graduated in pharmaceutical chemistry and practised in that field until his retirement. In retirement, Ralph has been an active member of the Early Birds Association in Queensland.

CLEMENT WILLIAM WRAY, DFC

SERVICE NO. 400867

'Lofty' Wray, as he was known for obvious reasons, was born in Yackandandah, Victoria, on 24 January 1914. He enlisted on 9 November 1940 and trained as navigator and bombardier.

After service in Malaya, 'Lofty' was one of the original members of 'Q' Flight from Singapore to Australia. He subsequently served with 100 Squadron in operations based at Milne Bay. On returning to the mainland, he continued on flying duties, and, at the time of his discharge from the Air Force on 17 November 1945, Flight Lieutenant Wray was serving with 14 Squadron.

A JAPANESE PROTAGONIST – J.G. NISHIZAWA

Lieutenant J.G. Nishizawa was born in 1920. He was accomplished in judo-sumo, and was said to have been lively and social, but also taciturn, aloof, and stubborn—a man of complex personality.

He shot down his first enemy aircraft at Rabaul on 3 February 1942 and, in the battle of the Solomons in November 1942 he was credited with 30 aircraft shot down. At Rabaul again, in June 1943, he claimed another six aircraft before the air groups discontinued recording kills by individuals. He perished on 26 October 1944, when the transport plane, in which he was travelling, was shot down. There is no actual figure for the aircraft he shot down. Probably the most reliable figure is 86, mentioned to Group Leader Okamoto of Air Group 253. Official Allied estimates are between 60 and 70. In any event, it is the highest score ever recorded.

ROLL CALL – NO 100 SQUADRON

*Never be needlessly reckless – he who does this is a dunce –
Stopping a bullet is easy – but you don't stop 'em well more than once.*

...
*Finally, never get jumpy – e'en though the fighting is hot!
Think of how often you're shot at – think of how seldom you're shot!*

A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson, *Maxims of War*

This list has been compiled from many sources: from RAAF Operations Record Books and Unit History Sheets (Forms A.50 and A.51), RAAF Beaufort Association newsletters, historical accounts, the 100 Squadron paper *Goodenough Guts* and also from membership lists, squadron and group photographs, and members' memories.

The list, unfortunately, is not complete and, notwithstanding diligent research, errors will occur. As Bill Ewing points out, 'In the early days there were many crew changes as the squadron settled down. The casualty rate and the incidence of malaria also caused many changes.' Some of these crews served a second operational tour with 100 Squadron, or served at another time with another Beaufort squadron. In such cases, these crews may also receive mention in other squadron histories. Decorations earned are mentioned elsewhere and have not been included in the roll call. Fatalities, while serving with 100 Squadron, are indicated with an asterisk (*), and names marked with a cross (+) indicate those killed while serving with another squadron or unit. More details concerning the fatalities are mentioned in the chapter titled 'No 100 Squadron Losses' (see page 373) and elsewhere in this book.

AIRCREWS IDENTIFIED

(The listing is in order of the pilot, navigator and two wireless/air gunners.)

Wing Commander 'Sam' Balmer, Flying Officer Stan Jaffer, Flight Sergeant 'Birtie' Birtwistle and Flight Sergeant 'Scotty' Jansen

Squadron Leader Peter Parker, Flight Sergeant Al Greenhill, Flight Sergeant Ted Boxhall and Flight Sergeant Bill Osborne

Sergeant John Pittman*, Sergeant Chas Hucker*, Sergeant Horrie Shying* and Sergeant Ted Jones*

Squadron Leader Chas Sage*, Sergeant Doug Desmond*, Flying Officer Joe Wormald* and Flight Sergeant Chas Patterson*

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Flying Officer Terry Elcoate*, Sergeant Dudley Wehl*, Sergeant Chas Redgrave,* and Flight Sergeant Jimmy Axon*

Squadron Leader Cliff S. Bernard*, Flying Officer Len H. Ophel*, Flying Officer Colin MacDonald*

Squadron Leader Dick Thompson, Flight Lieutenant Clement 'Lofty' Wray, Warrant Officer Stan Mars and Flight Lieutenant Brian 'Fitzzy' Fitzgerald

Flight Lieutenant Lloyd 'Smoky' Douglas, Flying Officer Doug 'Kanga' Shetliffe, Flying Officer Ron 'Darby' Munro and Warrant Officer Don Max Mahoney

Flying Officer Allan James, Flying Officer Arthur 'Braz' Brasnett, Flying Officer Bert Furler and Flying Officer George Daws

Flying Officer Johnny Mercer, Ted Suter, Arch 'Buck' Buchanan and Perce Clisdell

Flying Officer Ken N. Waters, Flying Officer Bill Ewing, Stan Webber and Bob Walker

Flying Officer Dave Forrest*, Flying Officer Ken Holmes*, Flight Sergeant Jim Hatfield* and Flight Sergeant Noel Loveday*

Flight Lieutenant John Smibert, N.S.A. Layton, R.S. Leiper and Jack Hoskins

Flight Lieutenant H.R. Kym Bonython, Flight Sergeant David 'Doug' Thomas, Flight Sergeant Geoff Brokenshire and Flight Sergeant John 'Schoe' Schofield

Flight Lieutenant Jimmy Ryan, Flying Officer 'Jock' Bremner, Pilot Officer Bob Reed, and Pilot Officer R.L. Sapwell

Flight Lieutenant Don Stumm*, Flying Officer Ken R. Hendy*, Sergeant Arthur 'Bluey' Walker* and Sergeant Cec Hale*

Flying Officer Doug Avery*, Flying Officer Doug Bell*, Flying Officer Leslie Schwartz* and Lieutenant Glueck*, USN

Flying Officer Bob Duncan, Harry Thomas, 'Nick' Nicholson and Bill H. Rabbisch*

Pilot Officer Geoff Collins*, Sergeant Robert Forrest*, Sergeant Albert Haysom* and Sergeant Francis Roberts*

Sergeant Geoff Megaw*, Sergeant Bill Young*, Sergeant Lochlan Howlett* and Sergeant Don Lay*

Squadron Leader Len Parsons, Flying Officer Ken Burnett, Flying Officer Alex Heagney and Flying Officer V. 'Jake' Jacobsen

Flying Officer Gordon Yuille*, Flying Officer Albert Chivers*, Flying Officer Alan Ross* and Flying Officer Fred Fromm*

Flight Sergeant C. Reg Green, Flight Sergeant Peter May, Flight Sergeant Norman Mann and Flight Sergeant Frank Nolan

Flying Officer Laurie Glenn, Flying Officer Ray Spalding, Flight Sergeant Harry 'Non-stop' Lazarus and Flying Officer Boyd O'Brien

Flight Sergeant Bill Ross, Flight Sergeant Terry Gower, Flight Sergeant 'Sandy' Powell and Flight Sergeant Mark Everett

Flight Lieutenant Dave G. Dey+, Pilot Officer Earl Waterhouse, Pilot Officer Jack Norman+, and Pilot Officer Rex L. Solomon+

Flight Lieutenant Ralph Wiley, Warrant Officer ‘Big Mac’ McLennan, Flight Sergeant Keith McCann and Flight Sergeant Alan Smith

Flying Officer R.S. ‘Grassy’ Green+, Pilot Officer Frank ‘Curley’ McCarron, Flight Sergeant Will Sweetnam+ and Flight Sergeant Ken Watson

Flying Officer John C. Davis*, Flight Sergeant Geoff Emmett*, Sergeant George Collins* and Sergeant Willie T. Brain*

Flying Officer Raymund ‘Ray’ Smith, Flying Officer John ‘Pluto’ Ryan, Flying Officer W. ‘Bill’ Davidson and Flying Officer Alan Overland

Flying Officer Tom H. Allanson*, Flying Officer Mervyn Keehn*, Flight Sergeant Keith Grieve* and Flight Sergeant Denis H. Webb*

Flight Sergeant W. ‘Bill’ Hay, Sergeant Fred E. Errey, Sergeant Laurie G.S. Bourke and Sergeant J. ‘Gerry’ Hunt

Flight Lieutenant C. ‘Bill’ Hamblin, Flying Officer Ivan Morris, Warrant Officer Laurie Webb and Warrant Officer Fred Lauer

Flight Sergeant Ron Caffin, Flight Sergeant Ray King, Flight Sergeant Colin Newberry, Flight Sergeant Colin Perkins

Flight Lieutenant Jim S. Mannix, Flight Sergeant Jack Donald, Flight Sergeant Bill A. Power and Flight Sergeant O.M. ‘Bruce’ Rowe

Flying Officer G. Tony Treverton, Flight Sergeant J. Hall, Flying Officer Jim McAlpine

Flying Officer John Gregory, Flying Officer Doug Phipps, Flying Officer Bill McBean and Flying Officer T. Allan Linton-Smith

Flight Lieutenant Roy H. Woollacott*, Flight Sergeant Jim A. Sugg*, Flight Sergeant Harley J. Williams* and Flight Sergeant William T. Pedler*

Flying Officer Roy B. Anderson*, Flight Sergeant Jeff A. Heath*, Flight Sergeant Robert Harrison* and Flight Sergeant Lawrie V. McMahon*

Warrant Officer Clem Wiggins*, Warrant Officer Russell Grigg*, Flight Sergeant Gordon Hamilton* and Flight Sergeant Albert Beckett*

Flying Officer Phil ‘Pranger’ Harrison, Flight Sergeant Alan Copley, Flight Sergeant Mervyn Sheridan and Flight Sergeant Noel Cornwall

Flight Sergeant David Hitchins, Flying Officer Max Warren, Flight Sergeant Frank Edwards and Flight Sergeant Geoff Bennewith

Warrant Officer A. Ted McKenzie, Warrant Officer Jack Coutts, Flight Sergeant T.J.P. ‘Tom’ Davies and Flight Sergeant Geoff Beechey

Squadron Leader Herb C. Plenty, Flying Officer John A. McKay, Pilot Officer Wynn ‘Mandrake’ Webster

Flying Officer Brian Chapman, Pilot Officer Colin Cameron, Warrant Officer G.A. Pat Preeo and Warrant Officer Stan Wade

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Flight Sergeant Fred Cornish*, Flight Sergeant Don K. Cooper*, Flying Officer John S. Rekdale* and Flying Officer Fred J. Maloney*

Flight Lieutenant B.K. 'Barry' Fuller, Flying Officer Wilf Jackson*, Flying Officer Ron Flanagan and Flying Officer Jack E. Walsh

Flight Sergeant John E. Kenny*, Flight Sergeant Tom Burrowes*, Flight Sergeant Arthur J. Davies* and Flight Sergeant Murray Fairburn*

Flying Officer Alex P. Potts*, Flight Sergeant Geoff L. Wiblin*, Flight Sergeant Jim S. Hammersley*, Flying Officer Fred W.S. Easton*, Corporal Bernard L. Duggan*

Flying Officer Ted V. Kleinig+, Pilot Officer E.J. Turk+, Flying Officer Stan J. Miller+ and Flight Sergeant B.C. White+

Flying Officer Louis W. Hall, Flight Sergeant Tod Morgan, Flight Sergeant Charles Minehan and Flight Sergeant Jim Jenkins

Flying Officer Geoff R. Liddell, Flight Sergeant Fred Westphalen, Flight Sergeant Eric Shipway and J.F. Mathews

Flying Officer A. Hilary 'Tex' Morton, Flight Sergeant Owen H. Griffiths, Flight Sergeant Bill East and Flight Sergeant Ron G. Harbeck

Squadron Leader Jimmy Hepburn, Flying Officer Alex Stuart, Flight Sergeant George Bond and Flight Sergeant Ramsay Brewin

Flight Lieutenant Cliff E. Tuttleby, Flying Officer Colin W. Bourke, Flying Officer A.D. Crawford and Flying Officer J.D. Dihm

Flying Officer B.M. 'Tony' Warden, Flying Officer John Snewin, Flying Officer Ken A. Davies and Flying Officer E.H. Ted McConchie

Flying Officer Noel D. Thompson, Flight Sergeant A. David Perry, Flight Sergeant Laurie G. Dubois and Flight Sergeant Dennis Badger

Flying Officer Kev N. Nightingale, Flight Sergeant Leo, Flight Sergeant R. 'Happy' Mahoney

Flight Sergeant David Stephenson, Flight Sergeant J. Donnelly, Flight Sergeant A. Roberts and Flight Sergeant G.W. Wilson

Flying Officer W.I. Leabeter, Flying Officer Gordon C. Hodgson, Flight Sergeant Laurie J. Toohey and Flight Sergeant T.J. Sanders

Flight Sergeant Jim Cahir, Sergeant Tom Smith, Sergeant B.A. Borserini

Flying Officer R. Sandow, Flight Sergeant R. Humble, Flight Sergeant H. Renouf and Flight Sergeant L. Alexander

Warrant Officer Ralph H. Beinke, Flight Sergeant Louis Moore, Flight Sergeant Mervyn Nash and Flight Sergeant Ryder

Warrant Officer J. Keith Taylor, Warrant Officer Doug Fletcher, Flying Officer S. Baker and Warrant Officer Jim Robins

Alan J. 'Bill' Barr, J. Williams and Flight Sergeant J. John Waters

Peter Creagh, Joe L. Waters, I. Cupit-Bowman and T.V. Parkhill

Warrant Officer W.H. Hardy, Flight Sergeant R.D. Cassell, Flight Sergeant W.A. Clydesdale and Flight Sergeant R. Allan
 David W. Jones, H. Ray Barber, A.J. ‘Snow’ Palframan and Allan M. Davies
 R.H. Sharp, E.A. Thompson, J.O. Butler and J.H. Redman
 Flight Lieutenant Chas S. Walsh, Flying Officer W. Henry, Flight Sergeant J.C. Guthrie and Flight Sergeant J.E. Barton
 Warrant Officer Cedric E. Hall*, Flying Officer Arthur W. Orman*, Flight Sergeant John A. Chellew* and Flight Sergeant William N. Halyard*
 Flight Sergeant Ross Geue, Flight Sergeant Joe Johnson, Flight Sergeant J.W. ‘Bill’ Armstrong and Flight Sergeant Keith Crooks
 Flying Officer Colin Macnaughtan, Flight Sergeant Laurie O’Sullivan, Flying Officer Fred Tolcher and Flight Sergeant Jack Slingo
 Flying Officer Lyle M. McLaren*, Flying Officer Syd Anderson*, Flying Officer Ray Graetz and Flight Sergeant Francis Maloney*
 Flying Officer John H. Baker, Flying Officer Ken Burns, Warrant Officer Stan Harris and Warrant Officer Keith McKay
 Flying Officer Bob Law-Smith, Pilot Officer J. McDonald, Sergeant Owen Whitford and Sergeant Ken Shepley
 Flying Officer Hank Pearce, Flying Officer Jack Rolfe, Warrant Officer ‘Kitch’ Philpott and Warrant Officer Jack Sommers
 Flight Lieutenant Sid Wright, Flying Officer Roy Corbett, Flying Officer Howard Treloar and Warrant Officer Norman Danes
 Flight Lieutenant Jim C. Birt, Flying Officer J. ‘Des’ McCormick, Warrant Officers R. ‘Blue’ Young and Warrant Officer Doug Murray
 Flight Sergeant Allan Ditchburn, Flight Sergeant George V. Lewis, Flight Sergeant Aub Hasler and Flight Sergeant ‘Bluey’ James
 Wing Commander John W. Kessey, Flight Lieutenant Alan Lorimer, Flight Lieutenant Arthur Goodall and Flight Lieutenant Roy Dingwall
 Flying Officer Jim H. Forrest, Flight Sergeant Len Aitken, Flight Sergeant Bob Brett and Flight Sergeant Kevin Taskis
 Flight Lieutenant Stan Polkinghorne, Flying Officer Harry Marsh, Warrant Officer Ron Merlin and Warrant Officer Brian Cook
 Flying Officer Bob Maynard, Warrant Officer Arthur ‘Tanglefooot’ Chellis, Flying Officer Colin King and Warrant Officer Ron ‘Argus’ Laird
 Flight Lieutenant Robert ‘Buck’ Buchanan*, Flying Officer Alan Gardner, Flying Officer Bob Thompson* and Warrant Officer Kev McMahan*
 Flying Officer Ken J. Hovenden*, Flight Sergeant V.S. Webb, Flight Sergeant Colin A. Haslam* and Flight Sergeant Walter J. Ellen*

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Flying Officer Ken Beer, Flying Officer Bill McArthur, Flying Officer Jim S. Ball and Flight Sergeant Vic Tucker

Flying Officer Ted Christensen*, Sergeant Leslie Cooke*, Flight Sergeant Bernie Buckner*, Sergeant John Chivas and LAC Ken S. Gay*

Flying Officer Hugh Barton*, Flying Officer R. Basil Webb*, Flying Officer Ken Davis*, Warrant Officer Ken A. Pontt* and LAC Loris C. Epps*

Flight Lieutenant Harry Jack Fowler*, Flying Officer Geoff Waite*, Flying Officer Frank Smith* and Flying Officer Jack Shipman*

Squadron Leader Phil A. Dey*, Pilot Officer Stuart L. Lloyd*, Flight Sergeant Cliff N. Tonge* and Flight Sergeant Gordon A. Peatfield*

Wing Commander Hugh A. Conaghan, Flight Lieutenant Gordon S. Dun, Flight Lieutenant Col J. Bastian and Warrant Officer Bill K. Bremner

Flying Officer Cliff Scott, Flying Officer Alf Tisdall, Warrant Officer Tom Scully and Warrant Officer John Mitchell

Flight Sergeant John 'Tiny' Sterndale, Flight Sergeant Ernie Skinner, Flight Sergeant Joe Rounsevell and Flight Sergeant Bill Murray

Group Captain Valston Hancock, Warrant Officer Ken Cox, Flying Officer Jack Cole and Sergeant Cook

Pilot Officer Ron W. Laws, Flight Lieutenant A. Barrie Blackstone, Flight Sergeant Laurie Martin and Flight Sergeant John Coffey

Flight Lieutenant John Matthews, Flying Officer S. Amott, Flight Lieutenant Cliff Fisher and Flight Lieutenant Rex Green

Flying Officer Max Hulse, Flying Officer Des V. Latham, Flight Sergeant I. Des Hair and Flight Sergeant Gordon S. Curby

Warrant Officer Bob M. Nielsen, Warrant Officer Keith E. Watts, Warrant Officer Eric G. Schofield and Warrant Officer D.W. 'Scotty' Ireland

Warrant Officer Bryant 'Ike' Lawson, Warrant Officer R. Lance Clements, Flight Sergeant D.J. 'Mac' MacGillicuddy and Flight Sergeant George N. Robinson

Squadron Leader John S.C. Dewar, Flight Lieutenant Eric Roly Cooper, Flight Lieutenant D. Jones and Flight Lieutenant J. Max O'Neil

Flying Officer Jack Northover, Flying Officer Jim Jarvis, Flying Officer J. Carter and Warrant Officer Cliff H. Poole

Warrant Officer Merv Hazelwood, Flight Sergeant Don Robinson, Flight Sergeant Ivon P. 'Ippy' Carter and Flight Sergeant Howard V. Trenouth

Warrant Officer Norman Stehn, Warrant Officer D.C. 'Tiny' Elliott and Sergeant Angus McDonald

Flight Lieutenant Eric E. 'Poppa' Crisp*, Flight Lieutenant Jack T. Hughes*, Flight Lieutenant Cedric A.V. Horne* and Flight Lieutenant George L. Park*

Flight Lieutenant Ian H. Fielding*, Flying Officer Robert J Fletcher*, Flying Officer Graham V. Manger*, Flying Officer Ernest R. Negus* and Flight Sergeant Robert Lambert*

Squadron Leader R.G. Mullins, Flying Officer H.J. Johnston, Flight Sergeant F.J. Harrington and Flight Sergeant R.D. Murray

Flight Lieutenant A.J. 'Alf' Short, Flying Officer W.A.T. 'Bill' Campbell, Flying Officer Col Walters and Warrant Officer Harry Smith

Flight Lieutenant Stan Damman, Flying Officer St George Eric Hendy, Flight Sergeant Bob Atkinson and Flight Sergeant Eric Byrnes

Flying Officer J. Allen Langley, Flying Officer Charles Gordon, Warrant Officer Jack Stevens and Flight Sergeant John Mathews

Flying Officer John N. Caddy, Warrant Officer I.M. Adamson, Warrant Officer Don Anderson and Warrant Officer T. Clem Martin

Warrant Officer Harry Fennell, Flying Officer Norm 'Strop' Owens, Flight Sergeant E. 'Ted' Bassett and Flight Sergeant C.T. 'Bob' Lee

Pilot Officer Wal Lukeis, Flying Officer W. Bill Gardner, Flight Sergeant John McCutcheon and Flight Sergeant 'Shorty' Owen E. Carrick

Flight Lieutenant Eric Gogler, Flying Officer E. 'Bill' Lawrence, Warrant Officer L. 'Nobby' Breen and Warrant Officer Don Milligan

Flying Officer W.J.M. 'Bill' Scott, Flight Lieutenant W. Lamb, Flying Officer M.P. de Verteuil and Flight Sergeant W. D'Arcy

Flying Officer F.V. 'Dutch' Holland, Flying Officer E.H. 'Lucky' Anscombe, Flying Officer P.A. Goodwin and Warrant Officer J.H. 'Frank' French

Squadron Leader George H. Charlesworth, Flying Officer S. Ivan White and Flight Lieutenant Jim Dean

Flight Sergeant Bill Henderson, J.A. 'Mac' McAlpine, Flight Sergeant Ron C. Creighton and Flight Sergeant J.W. 'Flash' Dubber

ADDITIONAL AIRCREW

Pilots

Squadron Leader Ivor J. Roberts, Flight Lieutenant Bill Ashton, Flying Officer H.H.T. 'Bert' Baker, Warrant Officer 'Blue' Bale, Flight Sergeant Turner, Flight Sergeant M.C. Way, Flight Sergeant Bill 'Winker' White, Warrant Officer R.A. Ridgeway, Ian F. Beaurepaire, Flying Officer Gordon Bland, Flight Sergeant James L. 'Junior' Borbidge, Flight Lieutenant C.A. Bourne, Flight Sergeant Geoff Castleden, Flight Lieutenant Les D.H. Chippendale, Flight Sergeant E. Clark, Flight Lieutenant Arthur Coulls, Flight Lieutenant C. Croker, Warrant Officer Eland, Flying Officer A. Fraser, Flight Sergeant Ken Foster, Flying Officer Lionel Green, Flying Officer

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Murray Anderson, Flying Officer G.R. 'Barry' Schlank, Squadron Leader A.B. 'Tony' Jay, Warrant Officer Johnson, Flight Lieutenant G.C. Maugher, Flying Officer Lennon, Flying Officer H.A. Nicholas, Flight Sergeant Bob Page, Flight Sergeant John J. Pressey, Sergeant A.R. 'Bob' Roberts, Flying Officer Dick Seymour, Flying Officer S.G. Sharpe, Sergeant M.G. Stannett, Sergeant Eric Stuart, Flying Officer A.H. Thompson, Flight Lieutenant G.N.R. 'Farmer' Thomas and Flight Sergeant Bert Godfrey

Navigators

Warrant Officer Ken Cox, Flying Officer E.S. 'Ted' Ingram, Warrant Officer Kirby, Flight Lieutenant R.J. Martin, Flying Officer J.R. 'Bob' Muller, Flight Lieutenant W.K. Mullett, Warrant Officer Harold Caesar O'Connor, Pilot Officer A.J. Phaff, Flying Officer C. Petzke, Flying Officer Athol C. Snook, R. Callander, Sergeant J.L. McMahon and Flight Sergeant Leo Tyrrell

Wireless/Air Gunners

Flight Sergeant Eric Bastrup, Flying Officer G.W. Bodinnar, Flying Officer Stan W. Carter, Flight Sergeant A.D. 'George' Farquhar, Flying Officer J.H. Furness, Doug Broadfoot, Flying Officer S.W.W. Jamieson, Flight Sergeant Peter McSwann, Warrant Officer Syd A. Pope, Flying Officer A.H. Tilden, Flight Sergeant Peter H. Wall, Flying Officer H.M. Wilson-Roberts and Flight Lieutenant W.R. 'Bill' Wilson

Aircrew

Flight Sergeant Albie L. Neill, Flight Sergeant Ken Scheller, Flight Sergeant Fred W. Partington, Flight Sergeant A.F.R. 'Aub' Dodd and Flight Sergeant Walter C. Williman

GROUND CREW AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL IDENTIFIED

Adjutants

Flight Lieutenant C. John Amos, Flying Officer J.H. Lovell, Flying Officer E.A. Montigue, Flight Lieutenant Joe Pryor, Flight Lieutenant J.A. Quinlan and Flight Lieutenant A.R.E. Root

Administration

Flying Officer Keith W. Bauer, Flying Officer J. Farrar (accounting), LAC E. Peter Filewood, Bill Lyle and L. Milner

Aircraft Electricians

Flight Sergeant 'Chick' Sinfield, Sergeant Jack Franklin and Sergeant L.A. Tebbutt

Armaments, Armourers and Fitter/Armourers

Sergeant J.R. Osborn, Corporal Roy Wing, Flight Sergeant Dave Marks, LAC Vince D. Mahony*, LAC Jack O'Malley, Warrant Officer George C. Sparks, LAC R.A. 'Bob' Thomsen, LAC S.E. Arthur, LAC Norm Ballard, LAC Les Bizzill, Sergeant Bob Gow, LAC H. 'Pat' Cannon, LAC Jack Branscombe, LAC N. 'Slim' Brassington, LAC L.H. Claughton, LAC Bob Dabelstein, LAC Les Donnelly, LAC H.O. Fischer, Corporal G.E. Le Feuvre, Corporal E.G. Hall, Corporal C. Johnston, LAC A. Innocenzi, LAC Lawrence Keating, LAC Cliff Lacey, LAC Jack McInerney, LAC M.H. Martin, Corporal Jim Mullaney, LAC C.P. Newton, LAC Bob Smith, LAC Jack 'Shorty' Nolan, LAC Eric Robertson, LAC Jack Spicer, Sergeant Max Schneider, LAC Rupert Thompson, LAC Hank Webster and Colin 'Whiskey' Vine

Cooks

Corporal C.H. Mills, Ken Triatt, LAC N. Jackson and LAC S. Lightfoot

Engineering

Flight Lieutenant Henry A. Hurst, Flying Officer W. 'Bowser' Greenham and Flying Officer Harry C. Clegg

Flight Mechanics

LAC Joe Adamson and LAC Les Brewer

Flight Riggers

LAC Lew Rosewarne

Fitters 2A and 2E

Flight Sergeant E.L. Watson, Flight Sergeant C.R. Watson, Flight Sergeant Syd Tucker, Flight Sergeant A. Ross Pointon*, Flight Sergeant Wally Crane, Sergeant Les G. Clarke, Sergeant Les Erskine, Sergeant Harry Phillips, Sergeant Neil Sharp, Corporal Ian Smith, Corporal R. Arch Jackson, LAC D.J. Bremner, LAC J. McD Philp, LAC Paul Kelly, LAC A. Laity, LAC Tony Booth, LAC H. Fitzgerald, LAC 'Scratch' Palmer, LAC George Emonson, LAC Jack Forbes, LAC Frank Day, LAC Neil K. Phelan and LAC W.A. 'Bill' Langtree

Instruments

Flight Sergeant Ralph Allen, Corporal Alan Kingston, LAC Eric J. Wallis* and LAC E. 'Jack' Abbott

Intelligence

Flight Lieutenant Bob Peberdy, Flying Officer Ken P. Goble, Flying Officer Jerry T. Reen and Flying Officer C.J. Stephen

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Mechanics

Bob Faull, L.N. Eccles, Ralph Davis and LAC Syd Grisbrook

Medical Officers

Flight Lieutenant Stan 'Doc' Burgess, Flight Lieutenant 'Doc' Charles Rowe and Flight Lieutenant W.A.R. Smith*

Medical Orderly

Corporal J.F. Hannah

Operations

Flight Lieutenant K. Ready, Flight Lieutenant E. De Groen, Flying Officer A. Whatmore, Flying Officer H. Cummins, Flight Sergeant F.J. Strudwick and Flight Sergeant B.R. 'Bob' Aldridge

Padres

Flight Lieutenant Chris Debenham, Flight Lieutenant Sam Ramsden, Flight Lieutenant J. Gray, Flight Lieutenant Smith, Flight Lieutenant Simpson and Flight Lieutenant Clarke

Parachutes

Corporal M. Klotz*

Photography

Sergeant C.G. Martin

Radar

Flight Lieutenant J. Turnbull and Flying Officer A.G. 'Spike' Svensen

Stores and Equipment

Flight Lieutenant G. Christie, Flight Lieutenant B. Paine, Flying Officer R.S. Ainslie, Flying Officer F.J. Dale and Flight Sergeant A. Franke

Transport

LAC L.R. Cowell and J.R. Harden

Welfare

Flying Officer W. 'Tom' Davidson, Flying Officer J.A. Cole, LAC 'Spider' Craig, C. 'Spud' Murphy and John 'Nobby' Clarke

Wireless

Flight Lieutenant R.B. Winspear, Flying Officer W.G. 'Bill' Clarke, Sergeant W. 'Bill' Jue Sue, Sergeant George Kirkegard, LAC Wally Morrison and LAC John Sherman

RANKS IDENTIFIED

Wing Commander

Ian H. Smith

Flight Lieutenant

Willie Green, Bert Jones and Jim Sheahan

Flying Officer

Gordon Hughes, G. Pearce, Bob McClelland, John McElvenny, 'Acker' Cropley and Bob Taylor

Pilot Officer

R.M. Swann and T.S. Jones

Warrant Officer

Lindsay Trewren, D.G. Milligan, D. Millen, D.J. Myers, Ian Allanson, Les Richards, A.T. Harvey and Syd Hall

Flight Sergeant

R. 'Red' Picken, L. 'John' Saunders, Harry Symonds, Jack Bennett, C.W. Wray, Vic Threader, C.H. Arkinstall, K.L. Trinnick, D. Hinds, Ted Earle, G.V. Stepto, Bill Mitchell, Jim Stevenson, Paul R. Garrett, 'Jock' Dickson, Doug Langton, Norm Smith, Don Robertson, O.R. Fosdike, R.T. Schneider, A.C. Gillies, Pete Thomas, Lou Caulfield, Haig McCann, G.R. Mauger, C.T. Garner, J.H. Simmons, B.T. 'Bert' Hannaford, R.C. Creighton, N.F. Grabbe, R. Dowell, J.C. King, I.H. Eggleston, J.W. Dubber

Sergeant

R.E. Battye, J.L. Reid, Syd Dyson, V. McPhearson, Frank Fryer, Alex Pfeffer and Sid Phillips

Corporal

P.R. Beattie, 'Bunny' Bower, Eric Clarke, A.G. Cochrane, C. Marshall, J. Masters, J. McLeod, C.H. Mills, A.T. Nichols, J.W. Sandercock and G. Weller

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

LAC

A.J. Albon, A. Alsop, Roy Butler, G.W. Cook*, 'Snow' Collins, A.M. Connolly, W. Ellard, L. Finerty, C. Fisher, P.S. Fowler, C. Green, Reg Harewood, S. Haynes, R. Hortin, C. Kerr, C. Lister, J. Lyons, V. Maides, Pat Matier, Mick McFarlane, Ken McKay, W.F. Myers, E. Peters, 'Darky' Roberts, Doug Shine, Roy Smith, C.G. Standen, Don Taylor, A.H. Thompson, Edgar Waite and L. Woolgar

ACI

J.W. Bowern, A. Browne, A. Burns, T. Jones, L.F. Lowrey, D. Maloney, Allan Moore, A. Moss, D. O'Halloran, T. Phillips, E. Robinson, F. Smith and R.L. Spooner-Hart

MEMBERS NAMES RECALLED

Don A. Allan, George Archibald, Ted Ashley, Tom Bell, John Bowman, F. Deryk Bunday, Jack Campagnoni, R. 'Tiny' Canning, Eric Chaperlin, Eddy C. Clark, E. Toby Clay, Rees Crosskill, Ashley Davis*, A. 'Bill' Dunstan, Charlie Eames, Allan Easter, Alan Garland, Jack Gaukroger, George Gibbons, Les Griffin, 'Ossie' Hall, Bernie Hansen, Reg Hattersley, Jack Higgins, Alfred Hook, Royce House, Jim Inkson, Fred Kendall, Howard Kirkbright, Bill Lawry, Laurie Lott, Johnny Loundes, M. 'Bill' McMahon, Keith McGraw, John 'Butch' McQueen, 'Snowy' Mullins, W. 'Bill' Mullett, Jack Nugent, Norm Poppleton, Chas A. Price, R. 'Bill' Raye, Doug W. Rushworth, Charlie Ryman, Greg H. Sheargold, Jeff Sladden, Bill Steele, Tom Stokes, Stuart G. Stratford, Edgar Wait, 'Gunga' Walters, R.C. 'Joe' Walker, Ern W. Walton, Frank Ward, Howard Willis, Edwin F. Witt* and Eldon Young

ARMY AND NAVY LIAISON

Major Ralph E.D. Hopkins* (AIF), Captain Jones, Lieutenant Eling, Lieutenant Kilpatrick and Lieutenant Glueck* (USN)

PRISONERS OF WAR – RAAF MEMBERS IN NO 100 SQUADRON RAF

408108 Warrant Officer Keith R. Parker, 405034 Flight Sergeant Jack D. Barnes, 401060 Warrant Officer Kane-White, 101062 Warrant Officer Stanley J. Woodland and 401054 Warrant Officer Edgar South+

NO 100 SQUADRON LOSSES

*A moth-eaten rag on a worm-eaten pole,
It does not look likely to stir a man's soul.
'Tis the deeds that were done 'neath the moth-eaten rag,
When the pole was a staff, and the rag was a flag.*

Sir Edward Bruce Hamly

DATE & AIRCRAFT	LEST WE FORGET
12 Jun 1942 A9-56 (T9608)	Sergeant John Roland Pittman 407971 Sergeant Charles Douglas Hucker 400674 Sergeant Horace Evans Shying 405942 Sergeant Edward Kennion Jones 407679
27 Jun 1942 A9-52 (T9604)	Squadron Leader Charles Walter Lyndsay Sage 0255 Sergeant Douglas Wallace Desmond 405839 Flight Sergeant Charles Forbes Patterson 401048 Flying Officer Joseph Anderson Wormald 402812
12 Jul 1942 A9-64 (T9631)	Flying Officer Robert Terence Wolfden Elcoate 0712 Sergeant Dudley Merton Wehl 404520 Flight Sergeant James Robert Axon 405033 Sergeant Charles Martin Redgrave 405934
28 Sep 1942 A9-89 (T9656)	Squadron Leader Clifford Sidney Bernard 259 Flying Officer Leonard Herbert Ophel 407129 Flying Officer Colin Gardner MacDonald 411511 (Two other crew members survived)
03 Oct 1942 A9-60 (T9627)	Flight Lieutenant Donald Charles Stumm 270681 Flying Officer Kenneth Roy Hendy 408652 Sergeant Cecil Clive Hale 405679 Sergeant Arthur Adnah Walker 406907
22 Oct 1942 A9-26 (T9565)	Flying Officer George Douglas Rutherford Avery 404083 Flying Officer Douglas Crawford Bell 404031 Flying Officer Leslie Joseph Schwartz 405455 Lieutenant Glueck (Torpedo Section USN)

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

02 Dec 1942 A9-29 (T9568)	Sergeant William Herbert Rabbisch 406903 (Three other crew members survived)
09 Jan 1943 A9-8 (T9547)	Sergeant Geoffrey Stace Megaw 412051 Sergeant William Reeve Young 408901 Sergeant Lochlan James Howlett 408846 Sergeant Donald William Lay 408248
09 Jan 1943 A9-32 (T9548)	Pilot Officer Geoffrey Arnold Collins 416247 Sergeant Robert Forrest 408677 Sergeant Albert Rowland Haysom 11639 Sergeant Francis Owen Roberts 408521
25 Feb 1943 A9-197	Flying Officer Gordon Binnie Yuille 411425 Flying Officer Albert Dudley Chivers 412805 Flying Officer Alan Barton Ross 417001 Flying Officer Frederick Thomas Fromm 296689
21 May 1943 A9-188	Flying Officer David John Forrest MID 406837 Flying Officer Kenneth Gladstone Holmes 405017 Flight Sergeant Noel Loveday 405049 Flight Sergeant James Henry Hatfield 412063
12 Jul 1943 A9-225	Flying Officer John Clifton Davis 416834 Flight Sergeant Geoffrey Raymond Emmett 401932 Sergeant George Collins 420447 Sergeant Willie Thomas Brain 420130
04 Sep 1943 A9-204	Flying Officer Thomas Hessey Allanson 415106 Flying Officer Mervyn Noel Keehn 405193 Flight Sergeant Keith Grieve 405850 Flight Sergeant Denis Hamlin Webb 405458
05 Sep 1943 A9-374	Flight Lieutenant Roy Herbert Woollacott , MID 407144 Flight Sergeant James Albert Sugg 416085 Flight Sergeant Harley Joseph Williams 408311 Flight Sergeant William Theodore Pedler 416608 (Auxiliary crew member from No 2 Ambulance Unit)
05 Sep 1943 A9-183	Flying Officer Robert Barclay Anderson , MID 409070 Flight Sergeant Jeffrey Allan Heath , MID 212440 Flight Sergeant Robert Harrison , MID 410054 Flight Sergeant Lawrence Vincent McMahon , MID 409934
05 Sep 1943 A9-186	Warrant Officer Clement Batstone Wiggins 405335 Warrant Officer Russell Henry Grigg 405284 Flight Sergeant Gordon Lewis Hamilton 414022 Flight Sergeant Albert Beckett 408343

NO 100 SQUADRON LOSSES

16 Oct 1943
A9-191
Flight Sergeant Frederick Keith **Cornish** 415619
Flight Sergeant Donald Kevan **Cooper** 408253
Flying Officer John Sigvald **Rekdale** 408594
Flying Officer Frederick James **Maloney** 411248

14 Dec 1943
A9-211
Flight Sergeant John Eardley **Kenny** 415663
Flight Sergeant Thomas **Burrowes** 409504
Flight Sergeant Murray **Fairbairn** 409528
Flight Sergeant Arthur John **Davies** 427446

14 Dec 1943
A9-472
Flying Officer Wilfred **Jackson** 408522
(Flying Officer J.E. Walsh seriously wounded)

05 Mar 1944
A9-480
Flying Officer Alexander Peter **Potts** 402094
Flight Sergeant Geoffrey Leonard **Wiblin** 419411
Flight Sergeant James Sharpe **Hammersley** 415140
Flying Officer Frederick William Spencer **Easton** 429240
Corporal Bernard Leo **Duggan** 63139 (Cameraman from 71 Wing)

14 Apr 1944
Flight Sergeant Albert Ross **Pointon** 5480
LAC Eric James **Wallis** 75251
(Died as a result of a ground transport accident)

20 May 1944
A9-571
Flying Officer Lyle Manhire **McLaren** 416874
Flying Officer Sydney Louis **Anderson** 410192
Flight Sergeant Francis **Maloney** 410995
(Flying Officer R.A. Graetz survived the crash and evaded capture)

24 Jun 1944
Squadron Leader William Arthur Rushbrook **Smith** 282354
(Died as a result of ground accident)

08 Dec 1944
A9-432
Flight Lieutenant Robert Murray **Buchanan** 408622
Flying Officer Kenneth James **Hovenden** 410412
Pilot Officer Robert Thomas **Thompson** 419920
Flight Sergeant Colin Arthur Lee **Haslam** 436910
Flight Sergeant Walter James **Ellen** 431146
Corporal James Popple **Warren** 4245 (Pax 2ACS)
LAC Edward Gilbert **Willett** 410277 (Pax 25OBU)

10 Dec 1944
LAC George William **Cook** 425276
(Disappeared while crossing river near Aitape)

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

- 23 Jan 1945
A9-626
Flying Officer Hugh Sterling **Barton** 413104
Flying Officer Richard Basil **Webb** 434067
Flight Sergeant Kenneth Arthur **Pontt** 442362
Flight Sergeant Kenneth **Davis** 431015
LAC Loris Charles **Epps** 57890 (Fitter 2A from 8 Squadron)
(Collision with A9-627 over enemy target)
- 23 Jan 1945
A9-627
Flight Lieutenant Edward Manton **Christensen** 406559
Flying Officer Leslie Charles **Cooke** 413171
Flight Sergeant Bernie Edward **Buckner** 435588
LAC Kenneth Stanley **Gay** 53950 (Fitter 2A)
(Flight Sergeant John C. Chivas survived)
(Collision with A9-626 over enemy target)
- 13 Mar 1945
A9-650
Flight Lieutenant Harry John **Fowler** 415636
Flying Officer Arthur Geoffrey **Waite**, MID, 406817
Flight Lieutenant Francis Owen **Smith** 422062
Flight Lieutenant John William **Shipman** 422085
- 16 Mar 1945
A9-625
Squadron Leader Philip Alexander **Dey** 402853
Pilot Officer Stuart Lindsay **Lloyd** 416868
Flight Sergeant Clifford Newby **Tonge** 433966
Flight Sergeant Gordon Arthur **Peatfield** 433741
Major Ralph Ernest Dufton **Hopkinson** QX437947 (Aust.
Command Air Liaison Section AIF)
- 02 Apr 1945
A9-493
Flight Lieutenant Eric Ernest **Crisp** 415620
Flight Lieutenant Jack Thorpe **Hughes** 406784
Flight Lieutenant Cedric Alfred Venner **Horne** 415733
Flight Lieutenant George Laurie **Park** 418562
(Collision with A9-667)
- 02 Apr 1945
A9-667
Flight Lieutenant Ian Harris **Fielding** 409038
Flying Officer Robert John **Fletcher** 428699
Flying Officer Ernest Richard **Negus** 422872
Flight Sergeant Robert **Lambert** 442351
Flying Officer Graham Vass **Manger** 401984 (Auxiliary crew
member)
(Collision with A9-493)
- 03 Sep 1945
A9-622
Warrant Officer Cedric Ernest **Hall** 427321
Flying Officer Arthur William **Orman** 433001
Flight Sergeant John Albert **Chellew** 433893
Flight Sergeant William Henry **Halyard** 439585
- 29 Dec 1945
Flight Sergeant Edwin Frederick **Witt** 49141
(Died of illness)

24 Jan 1946 LAC Vincent Daniel **Mahony** 150526
(Explosive accident)

There were 115 aircrew and six ground crew fatalities while serving with 100 Squadron. Aircrew losses were more than 20 per cent of the total squadron aircrew members.

Data obtained from Operations Record Book sheets and Australian War Memorial Honour Roll World War II.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

HONOURS AND RECOGNITION

*Take these men as your example.
Like them, remember that prosperity can only be for the free;
That freedom is the sure possession
Of those alone who have the courage to defend it.*

Pericles (495–429 BC)
Greek General and builder of the Acropolis

FIFTH AIR FORCE IN THE SWPA

APPOINTED

Lieutenant General G.C. Kenney Commander Fifth Air Force (including Nos 9 and 10 Operational Groups)	Jul 1942
Group Captain W.H. Garing, CBE, DFC, MID Commanding No 9 Operational Group	Sep 1942
Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt, OBE Commanding No 9 Operational Group	Jan 1943
Air Commodore F.W.F. Lukis, CBE Commanding No 9 Operational Group	Nov 1943
Air Commodore F.R.W. Scherger, DSO, AFC ¹⁴¹ Commanding No 10 Operational Group	Nov 1943
Air Commodore A.H. Cobby, OBE, GM Commanding No 10 Operational Group	Aug 1944

OFFICERS COMMANDING NO 71 WING (NOS 9 AND 10 OPERATIONAL GROUPS)

APPOINTED

Wing Commander R.H. Moran ¹⁴²	June 1943
Wing Commander E.W. Cooper, AFC	October 1944
Group Captain V.E. Hancock, OBE ¹⁴³	April 1945

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

COMMANDING OFFICERS NO 100 SQUADRON	APPOINTED
Wing Commander J.R. Balmer, OBE, DFC	16 March 1942
Wing Commander J.A. Hepburn, DFC, AFC	19 April 1943
Squadron Leader I.J. Roberts	12 September 1943
Wing Commander R.H. Thompson, DFC	28 November 1943
Wing Commander J.W. Kessey, DFC	4 August 1944
Wing Commander H.A. Conaghan, DFC	5 March 1945
Squadron Leader J.S.C. Dewar	6 August 1945
Wing Commander L.R. Trewren	28 January 1946
Squadron Leader C.S. Hamblin	1 August 1946

DECORATED MEMBERS OF 100 SQUADRON

Flying Officer G.L. Bland, DFC
Flying Officer N.A. Boddington, AFM
Flight Lieutenant H.R. Bonython, DFC, AFC
Squadron Leader L.A. Douglas, DFC
Flying Officer W.V. Greenham, MBE
Flying Officer R.A. Graetz, MC
Flight Lieutenant R. Green, CGM, MID
Flight Lieutenant L.W. Hall, DFC
Warrant Officer J.C. Hoskins, DFM
Flight Lieutenant D.H. Jones, DFC
Wing Commander J.W. Kessey, DFC
Squadron Leader R. Law-Smith, AFC
Flight Lieutenant G. Mauger, DFC
Flight Lieutenant J.S. Mercer, DFC
Flying Officer A.H.K. Morton, DFC
Flight Sergeant A. Nash, DFM
Squadron Leader L.E.H. Parsons, DFC, MID
Squadron Leader H.C. Plenty, DFC and Bar
Flight Lieutenant A.G. Stuart, DFC, MID
Pilot Officer R.A.J. Temple, MBE
Flight Lieutenant C.E. Tuttelby, DFC, AFM
Flight Lieutenant K. Waters, DFC
Flight Lieutenant W.W. Wray, DFC

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES

Flying Officer R.B. Anderson	Flight Sergeant L.V. McMahon
Flying Officer J.H. Baker	Flight Sergeant C.E. Minehan
Flying Officer J.C. Birt	Sergeant E.J. Miller
Leading Aircraftman H.W. Cannon	Flying Officer T.B. Morgan
Flight Sergeant L.G. Clarke	Flight Lieutenant I. Morris
Flying Officer P.B. Creagh	Flight Sergeant C. Morrison
Flight Sergeant B. East	Corporal J.J. Mullaney
Flying Officer D.J. Forrest	Flying Officer R.G. Mullins
Flight Sergeant F.K. Foster	Flight Sergeant D.F. Nolan
Flight Sergeant C.R. Green	Flight Lieutenant L.E.H. Parsons
Flight Sergeant O.H. Griffiths	Flight Lieutenant S. Polkinghorne
Flight Sergeant R.G. Harbeck	Flying Officer R. Seymour
Flight Sergeant R. Harrison	Flying Officer E.N. Sharpe
Flight Sergeant J.A. Heath	Flying Officer J.A. Snewin
Flying Officer W.E. Henry	Warrant Officer G.C. Sparks
Flight Lieutenant H.A. Hurst	Flying Officer C.J. Stephen
Flight Sergeant J.O. Jenkins	Flight Lieutenant A.G. Stuart
Flying Officer N.G. John	Corporal L.A. Tebbutt
Flying Officer T.S. Jones	Leading Aircraftman W. Thomas
Corporal G.E. Le Feuvre	Flying Officer A.G. Waite
Flight Sergeant N.B. Mann	Flight Sergeant C.R.L. Watson
Leading Aircraftman M.H. Martin	Flying Officer G.W. Webster
Flying Officer R. Maynard	Flight Lieutenant R.H. Woollacott

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

NO 100 SQUADRON NOMINAL ROLL (1942–1946)

Abbott, E E	Arkininstall, C H	Barr, H N	Bender, R L
Abey, J D (Army)	Arkle, J W	Barr, R C	Benn, R E
Adams, H D	Armstrong, J W	Barrett, J J	Bennett, J L
Adams, H E	Armstrong, M M	Barris, M K	Bennett, W R
Adamson, I W	Arthur, S E	Bartlett, C	Bennewith, G K
Adamson, J E	Ashley, J E	Barton, H S	Bensley, L E
Adamson, K W	Ashton, W T	Barton, J E	Benton, I S
Ainslie, R S	Atkins, A S	Barwick, I N	Berlin, R J
Aitken, L G	Atkinson, A	Bashforth, J	Bernard, C S
Albon, A J	Atkinson, R W	Bassett, E H	Bernays, P C
Albright, G A	Avery, G D	Bastfield, K	Bernhardt, A
Aldridge, B R	Axon, J R	Bastian, C J	Berry, J St C
Alexander, L W	Axton, R T	Bastrup, E E	Berry, C E
Allan, D A		Batch, J T	Berry, L N
Allan, I McF	Bacon, J F	Bateman, J N	Bertram, H S
Allan, J R M	Badcock, B A	Bath, R T	Bertwhistle, V H
Allan, R J	Baddeley, C G	Bath, W M	Beutel, C
Allanson, T H	Baddersbry, C	Bathman, N E	Beven, C K
Allen, C C	Badger, D R	Batson, E	Bignall, J P
Allen, G W F	Bagnall, A R	Battye, R E	Billings, A G
Allen, H R	Bailey, F C	Bauer, K W	Binns, J K
Allen, J W O	Bailey, J G	Bauer, R A	Birch, C I
Allen, R F	Bailey, J W	Beach, W S L	Birch, C I G
Allerton, R	Bailey, P E	Bean, R R	Birks, N N
Alsop, A A	Bailey, V J M	Bean, V C	Birley, H E
Altree-Williams, W	Baker, H T	Beattie, P R	Birt, J C
Amery, J H	Baker, J H	Beaumont, D W	Birtwistle, J T
Amos, C J	Baker, M M	Beaurepaire, I F	Bishop, M
Amott, S J	Baker, S H	Beaven, J	Bissett, J
Anderson, D F	Bale, A W	Beck, H W	Bitling, A G
Anderson, J S	Bale, E J P	Beckett, A	Bizzill, L F
Anderson, M J	Bale, J I	Bedford, R H	Blackman, J
Anderson, R B	Ball, J S	Bee, C P	Blackstone, A B
Anderson, S L	Ballard, N E	Beechey, C L	Blackwell, R A
Andrew, W J	Balmer, J R	Beechey, G J	Bladin, F D
Annett, E F H	Banfield, R L	Beeck, V E	Bland, G L
Annetts, R J	Barber, H R	Beer, K	Blazley, G F
Anscombe, E H	Barbutto, V A	Beikoff, W J	Blencowe, H S
Anthony, T J	Barham, E S	Beinke, R H	Bloomfield, J
Arbery, D H	Barnard, D G	Bell, D C	Blowes, A E
Archer, P F	Barnard, K R	Bell, E R	Blowes, J A
Archer, R G	Barnes, J M	Bell, H B	Boase, B C
Archibald, G	Barnett, W C	Bell, H G	Bodinnar, G W
Ardley, J I	Barr, A J	Bell, T	Boerman, P

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Bogg, G	Broadfoot, D	Byrnes, E P	Champness, E
Boland, H M F	Brody, H J		Champness, M
Bolton, J T	Brokenshire, A D	Caddy, A B	Chandler, G V
Bolton, R V	Brokenshire, G R	Caddy, J N	Chaperlin, E J
Bond, G A	Bromley, E J	Caffin, R M	Chaplin, F W
Bondfield, J G	Brooks, G R	Cahir, J	Chapman, B A
Bonython, H R	Brooks, T F	Cahir, J T	Chapman, G
Bonython, K	Brooks, W S	Cairns, L A	Chapman, N H
Booth, E A	Broughton, C J	Caladine, C W	Chapman, W A
Booth, H E	Broughton, L	Callander, R	Charlesworth, G
Booth, W R	Brown, A G	Caller, W H	Charlett, J L
Borbidge, J L	Brown, J T	Callow, N R	Chaseling, D E
Borserini, B A	Brown, L	Cam, J A	Cheadle, W J
Boston, M P	Brown, S M	Cameron, C	Cheeseman, A G
Boswell, A	Brown, T L	Cameron, C T	Chellew, J A
Boucher, W J	Brown, T R	Cameron, C T M	Chellis, A O
Bourke, C W	Brown, T W	Cameron, H G	Cheney, R L
Bourke, L G S	Browne, A J	Cameron, H S	Chettle, A G
Bourke, R	Brownway, L	Campbell, A	Chilcott, H A C
Bourne, C A	Bruce, W B	Campbell, C A	Chin, H A
Bower, J E	Bryant, L G	Campbell, H C	Chippendale, L D H
Bowern, J W	Buchanan, A D	Campbell, N	Chisholm, A D
Bowles, R H	Buchanan, J R	Campbell, N J	Chisholm, R R
Bowman, J W	Buchanan, R M	Campbell, R A	Chivas, J C
Boxall, E	Buckley, W P	Campbell, W A	Chivers, A D
Boye, K S	Buckner, B	Canning, R K	Chown, F
Boyle, H C	Buften, W R	Cannon, H W	Christensen, E
Boynton, G V	Bullard, H	Cantwell, B P	Christie, G
Brackenreg, C	Bullough, W N	Cardow, R W	Christmas, D C
Brackenrig, P G	Bunday, F D	Carey, J L	Clark, B J
Brady, J F	Bunn, W G	Carne, A F	Clark, E C
Brain, W T	Burgeman, F W	Carpenter, E C	Clark, H F
Braithwaite, P W	Burgess, J S	Carpenter, N D	Clark, J McD
Braithwaite, R W	Burke, R L	Carr (RAN)	Clark, J R
Brame, R A	Burkin, M K	Carrick, O E	Clark, M A
Branscombe, J	Burnett, K J	Carsburg, O	Clarke, W G
Brasnett, A W	Burnett, M J	Carter, C L	Clarke, B D
Brassington, N	Burns, A G	Carter, D J	Clarke, D J
Brearley, R H	Burns, K A	Carter, H J	Clarke, E J
Bray, L H	Burns, T H	Carter, I P	Clarke, J A
Breen, L D	Burr, C A	Carter, S W	Clarke, L G
Bremner, D J	Burrowes, T	Cartwright, G	Clarris, H E
Bremner, J A	Burston, L R	Cartwright, K	Cloughton, L H
Bremner, T	Burt, L C	Casey, G J	Clay, E
Bremner, W K	Burt, M L	Casey, L L	Clayfield, E J
Brett, W R	Burton, F E	Cassell, R D	Clayton, A B
Brewer, L G	Bushnell, R C	Castleden, G A	Cleaver, H D
Brewin, R R	Butler, J O	Castledene, E J	Clegg, H C
Brewster, R F	Butler, R D	Caulfield, L	Clements, R L
Bridge, C D	Butters, L O	Center, E G A	Clisdell, P J
Briggs, G F	Butterworth, R R	Chaffey, A D	Clough, E A
Britten, M	Buzza, R D	Champion, I A C	Clydesdale, W A

NO 100 SQUADRON NOMINAL ROLL (1942-1946)

Coats, A R	Corker, C F	Dansey, D M	Dickson, L A
Cochrane, A G	Cornish, F K	Davidson, H N	Dickson, R S
Cock, A R	Cornish, S P	Davidson, J A	Dihm, J D
Cocks, B J	Cornwall, N A	Davidson, R A	Dines, V L
Coe, E R	Coulls, A K	Davidson, W J	Dingfelder, E G
Coe, R J R	Cousins, W E	Davidson, W R	Dingwall, R
Coffey, G G	Coutts, J L	Davies, A J	Dingwall, W H
Coffey, J H	Cowell, L R	Davies, A M	Diprose, T M
Colbert, R H	Cowper, D L	Davies, D L	Diss, A E
Colclough, G L	Cox, E K	Davies, H G	Ditchburn, A
Colcutt, B R	Cox, K S	Davies, J H	Dodd, A F R
Cole, J A	Cox, S G	Davies, K A	Dodson, R E
Collard, F W	Cozens, A	Davies, T J P	Doherty, F J
Collins, G	Craig, A C	Davies, W S	Dolphin, K J
Collins, G A	Craig, W R	Davis, A C	Donald, J S
Collins, H A L	Cram, R P	Davis, G K	Done, J A
Collins, H G	Crane, A G	Davis, H G	Donnelly, J C
Collins, K E	Crane, W T	Davis, J C	Donnelly, L M
Collins, R H	Crawford, A D	Davis, K	Dooley, K V
Collins, R J	Creagh, P B	Davis, R	Dooley, W B
Collishaw, K R	Creasey, R B	Davis, R A	Doran, R T
Colvin, T	Creighton, R C	Davy, R E	Douglas, C
Comans, T W	Crew, R J	Dawes, S	Douglas, L A
Compagnoni, W J	Crichton, H	Daws, G R	Dovers, E J
Conaghan, H A	Crierod, A E	Dawson, E W	Dowell, R
Condick, H P	Crisp, E E	Dawson, M	Drake, F A
Condie, R P	Crocker, C	Dawson, S W C	Drennan, G J
Condon, H M	Crook, N	Day, F M	Drew, D G
Connolly, A M	Crooks, A K	Day, J A	Driscoll, C L
Connors, C W	Cropley, A A	Day, P R	Drought, E
Conrick, P E	Crosskill, R H	De Belin, J F	Dubber, J W
Considine, L T	Crosthwaite, J R	De Bomford, S	Dubois, L G
Conway, J	Cruickshank, J	De Groen, E B	Duff, D L
Cook, A S	Cruise, G W	De Santis, R	Duffas, E A
Cook, B M	Cummings, H M	De Verteuil, M P	Dulling, K G
Cook, G W	Cummins, H N	De Witt, F S	Dumesney, R H
Cook, L	Cupit-Bowman, I J	Dean, C J	Dun, G S
Cook, W J	Curby, G S	Dean, D G	Duncan, J R
Cooke, C A	Cusack, J D	Debenham, C L	Dunlop, J J
Cooke, L C	Cuthbert, D P	Delaney, D R	Dunn, E R
Cook-King, F G	Cuthbert, H C	Dempsey, B	Dunn, J G
Coombes, G	Cuthbert, H O	Desmond, D W	Dunne, F M
Cooper, D K	Cutriss, F L	Develin, R	Dunstan, A A
Cooper, E R		Dewar, C G	Durick, S
Cooper, F W W	D'Arcy, W M	Dewar, J S C	Durkin, M K
Cooper, J M	Dabelstein, R F	Dey, D G	Dyball, A
Cooper, S E	Dale, E J P	Dey, P A	Dyson, S V
Cooper, W A	Dale, F J	Dick, A E	
Copas, P J	Dalton, R H	Dicker, C W L	Eades, R T
Corbett, L R	Damman, S P	Dickinson, E	Eades, R W
Cordingley, H	Danes, N A	Dickson, B E	Eames, C E
Cordner, A G	Dann, C McK	Dickson, D	Earl, A E

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Earner, M V	Ferguson, P W	Frampton, J T	Getson, W E G
East, B	Ferguson, W J	Francis, J	Gettins, A H
East, G V	Ferrow, J F	Franke, A F	Geue, R W
Easther, A K	Fettell, R W	Franklin, J E	Geyer, V A
Easton, F A	Fielding, I H	Fraser, A W	Geyer, W A
Easton, F W S	Fielding, W S	Fraser, G G	Gibbons, G H T
Edmonds, G R	Fietz, D K	Frazer, H C	Gibson, G R
Edmonds, W H W	Filewood, E P	Freeman, J R	Gibson, J H
Edwards, F	Finch, A H	French, F L	Gibson, T H
Edwards, G T	Finch, R F G	Freney, J T	Gilks, C J
Edwards, L	Finerty, L M	Frew, D M	Gill, D R
Edwards, L R	Finkemeyer, K	Fromm, F T	Gillies, A C
Ecles, L N	Finlay, R A	Fryer, A R	Gillzan, M J
Eggleston, I H	Finn, J O	Fryer, F E	Gilmour, A J
Elcoate, R W	Fischer, H O	Fuller, B K	Gjedsted, H (Army)
Eldridge, F A	Fisher, C D	Fuller, P D	Gledhill, N L
Elkington, T O	Fisher, C R	Fullwood, W H	Glenn, L A
Ellard, W F	Fitzgerald, B T	Fulton, J C	Goater, A L
Ellen, W J	Fitzgerald, H	Fundak, S	Goble, K P
Elliott, D C	Fitzgerald, J F	Funnell, A K	Godden, D E
Ellis, E W	Fitzgerald, J M	Furler, A N	Godfrey, A F
Ellis, J H	Fitzpatrick, J J	Furner, H E	Godfrey, L D
Elson, G	Fitzsimon, C G	Furness, J H	Gogler, E A
Eltringham, G L	Flanagan, R R	Furze, J A	Goldsworthy, L R
Emmett, G R	Fletcher, D S		Good, J
Emonson, G F	Fletcher, K	Gadd, L A	Goodall, A F
English, G	Fletcher, R J	Gainsborough, T	Goodear, W K
Errey, F E	Fletcher, N C	Gallaher, L A	Goodman, S H
Erskine, L A	Flynn, L R	Gannoni, T H	Goodsir, S B
Evans, A W	Fogarty, M J	Garbutt, G H	Goodwin, P
Evans, T W	Foley, C R	Gardiner, J	Gordon, C W
Everett, M	Foott, D W	Gardiner, W	Gordon, F P
Every, J O	Forbes, J	Gardner, A W	Gosden, C G
Ewing, R A	Forbes, R O	Gardner, W F	Gough, K C
Ewing, W J M	Forrest, D G	Gardner, W G	Goulter, K
	Forrest, J D	Garland, A D	Gover, A T
Fairbairn, M	Forrest, J H	Garner, C T	Gow, R J
Fairbairn, A	Forrest, R	Garrard, J L	Gower, W D
Fairless, A F	Forrester, W T	Garrett, A G	Grabbe, N F P
Falconbridge, W J	Forsyth, W	Garrett, P R	Grady, F C
Farquhar, A D	Forsyth, W C	Garrod, F J	Graetz, E R
Farrar, J H	Fosdike, O R	Gaudion, R J	Graetz, R A
Farrow, S A W	Foster, B	Gaukroger, J E	Graham, L F
Faulds, R	Foster, F K	Gaunt, A H	Graham, R M
Faull, S W	Foster, G A	Gay, J	Grainger, R M
Fawaz, E X	Foster, M J	Gay, K S	Grant, A H
Fayson, A R	Foster, P J	Gaze, F P	Grant, A McB
Fedderson, R J	Foubister, S R	Geer, J J	Grant-Frost, C R
Fennell, H A	Fowler, C V	Georgans, S	Gray, A J
Ferguson, A E	Fowler, H J	George, D J (RAN)	Gray, J P C
Ferguson, C H	Fowler, P S	George, W I	Grayson, R W
Ferguson, C S	Foxcroft, S	Gerdson, A A	Green, C L

NO 100 SQUADRON NOMINAL ROLL (1942-1946)

Green, C R	Hammersley, J S	Head, M A	Holmes, J A
Green, F G L	Hamond, M R	Headley, A R	Holmes, K G
Green, L G	Hamson, C N	Heagney, A R	Hook, A F J
Green, R L	Hancock, V E	Hearn, L J	Hooper, R B
Green, R S	Hannaford, B T	Heath, J A	Hooper, T C
Green, W A	Hannah, J F	Heffernan, J E	Hopgood, R W
Greenaway, L H	Hansen, A B	Hemming, S J	Horne, A C
Greene, A F	Hanson, R E	Hemway, P	Horne, C A
Greenham, W V	Harbeck, R G	Henderson, D D	Horne, C A V
Greenhill, A L	Harden, J R	Henderson, W G	Hortin, R G
Gregg, C	Harding, A R	Hendry, J A	Hoskins, J C
Gregory, J F	Harding, W	Hendy, K R	House, A R
Gregory, J L	Harding, W J	Hendy, St G E	Houston, A
Grier, W	Hardy, S A	Henry, J R	Houston, W
Grieve, K	Hardy, W H	Henry, P R	Hovenden, K J
Griffen, L C	Harewood, R E	Henry, W E	Howard, J P
Griffith, R L	Harford, F J H	Hepburn, J A	Howarth, C E
Griffiths, A H	Hargreaves, J G	Hepner, F	Howes, L J
Griffiths, H	Harling, H	Herriman, J F	Howlett, L J
Grigg, R H	Harmer, J W	Hesketh, J C	Hoyt, C
Grinblat, L	Harrington, F J	Heugh, K H	Hucker, C D
Grisbrook, S J	Harris, J S	Hewitt, G W	Hughes, C H
Grove, R T	Harris, K	Hibberd, J F	Hughes, G C
Grubb, W P	Harris, R J	Hickey, C E	Hughes, J T
Gudsell, G E	Harris, S A	Hickey, D Z	Hulse, A B
Guthrie, J C	Harris, T	Hickey, E V	Hulse, M
Guthrie, W J	Harris W A	Hickey, J H	Humble, R W
Guy, H W	Harrison, A L	Hickson, S A	Humphreys, F L
	Harrison, R	Higgins, D A	Hunt, J G
Hadgett, W I	Harrison, S R	Hill, G C	Hurst, H A
Haig, J B K	Hart, F J	Hill, J B	Hussey, T M
Hair, I D	Harvey, A T	Hill, R J	Hutchinson, C W
Hale, C C	Haslam, C A	Hills, J	Hutchinson, W A
Hale, D	Hasler, A A	Hinde, R W	Hyland, T A
Hales, G J	Hately, L V	Hindle, J	Hynes, T K
Hall, A A	Hatfield, J H	Hinds, D R	
Hall, C E	Hattersby, R C	Hinkman, P	Ignell, J T
Hall, C E W	Hattersley, R C	Hinson, E S	Iles, W
Hall, E G	Hausler, H H	Hishon, T P	Ingleton, W R
Hall, F M	Hausler, W K	Hiskins, S J C	Ingram, C A
Hall, J J L	Hawkey, A E	Hitchcock, G C	Ingram, E S
Hall, L W	Hawkins, B J	Hitchins, D W	Ingram, L A
Hall, R H	Hawkins, V	Hocking, C A	Inkson, J
Hall, R S	Hay, W W	Hockings, L	Inkson, L
Hallam, E	Hayes, A E	Hodge, S	Innocenzi, A
Halliday, R G	Hayes, W G	Hodgson, G A	Ireland, D W
Halyard, W H	Haynes, S G	Hodgson, G C	Ireland, F L
Hamblin, C B	Haysom, A R	Hokin, E W	Ireland, N M
Hamilton, G L	Hayward, R	Holden, A D	
Hamilton, H D	Hayward, R H	Holden, L	Jack, R S
Hamilton, J W	Hazelgrove, K	Holland, F V	Jackson, D C
Hamilton, S	Hazelwood, M H	Holloway, T T	Jackson, H J

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Jackson, J R	Keehn, M N	Laker, J H D	Lines, J T
Jackson, N E	Keer, C J	Lamb, W M	Linley, J
Jackson, R A	Kelly, M J	Lambert, R	Linton-Smith, T A
Jackson, W	Kelly, P R	Landrey, F	Lister, C A
Jackson, W B	Kelly, W A	Lane, C D	Lister, G H
Jacobsen, V J	Kelly, W G	Lane, C R	Lloyd, B R
Jaffer, S R	Kelly, W H	Lane, E W	Lloyd, S L
James, A T	Kendall, F S	Lange, E	Lobban, D
James, K V	Kennedy, W E	Langley, J A	Lock, L W
James, L W	Kennion, J C	Langton, D F	Lodge, J H
James, S T	Kenny, J	Langtree, W	Logue, R A
Jamieson, S W W	Kenny, J E	Lark, P J	Lonergan, D A
Jansen, R S	Kerby, J G	Latham, D S	Long, N T
Jarvis, J	Kerr, C M	Latham, D V	Lorimer, A K
Jay, A B	Kessey, J W	Latta, L	Loss, D M
Jenkin, A R	Kessing, W C	Lauer, F C	Lott, L C
Jenkins, J O	Kidd, J E	Lavender, S R	Loughran, A J
Jennings, A W	Kiem, R	Law, C S	Loundes, J S
Jepson, J C	Killen, R F	Lawnham, F X	Love, C V
John, N G	Kilvington, R J	Lawrence, E W	Love, H R
Johnson, A E	King, A A	Lawrence, R J	Love, J E
Johnson, D G	King, C M	Lawry, W A	Loveday, N
Johnson, E W	King, D H	Laws, R W	Lovell, J H
Johnson, F E	King, J C	Law-Smith, R	Lowe, J C
Johnson, H	King, R W	Lawson, B I	Lowne, R W
Johnson, J R	Kinging, H A	Lawson, J G	Lowrey, L F
Johnson, R	Kingston, A Q	Lay, D W	Lucas, G R
Johnson, R A	Kinnaird, L F	Layton, N S A	Ludlow, R P
Johnson, R J	Kirkbright, H E	Lazarus, H S	Lukeis, W A
Johnson, S J	Kirkegard, G A	Le Feuvre, G E	Luxford, C E
Johnson, W C	Kirkpatrick, B R	Leabeter, W I	Luxford, H E
Johnston, C B	Klaehn, A	Leach, G W	Lyall, G R
Johnston, H J	Kleinig, K G	Leamon, R B	Lyers, W
Johnston, L	Kleinig, T V	Leask, G A	Lyle, W A
Johnston, P A	Klintworth, H D	Lee, C T A	Lyons, J H D
Johnstone, L A	Klopper, G M	Lee, O L	Lyons, J H G
Jones, D A	Knight, H	Leehy, J H	Lyons, J V
Jones, D H	Knight, J H	Leehy, R A	
Jones, D R	Knot, V T	Lees, J W	Mackay, A M
Jones, D W	Knott, E S	Leiper, R S	Mackie, G G
Jones, E K	Knowles, J	Leith, R E	Macnaughtan, C
Jones, T S	Koerbin, W J	Leonard, J A	Macumber, D L
Jones, W B	Koy, A H	Leonard, N J	Mahoney, D M
Jordan, A	Kraetz, A C	Lester, P	Mahoney, N R J
Jordan, K E	Kull, W D	Lewis, A C	Mahoney, R R
Joyce, W R	Kyle, J	Lewis, G A	Mahony, V D
Jue Sue, W L		Lewis, G H	Maiden, W H
Jury, N P	Lacey, C C	Lewis, W A	Maides, V W
	Lacey, J A	Liddell, G R	Maloney, F
Kayler-Thompson R	Lachlan, M W	Liddle, J A	Maloney, F J
Keating, L F	Laird, R K	Liddle, W T	Maloney, D H
Keays, K W	Laity, A J	Lightfoot, S M	Manchester, T A

NO 100 SQUADRON NOMINAL ROLL (1942-1946)

Manger, G V	Maybeck, R G	McIntosh, N D	Midgley, V C
Manly, R	Mayfield-Smith, N	McIvor, R	Miles, C G
Manly, T J F	Maynard, R	McKay, J A	Millar, A
Manly, W R	Mayne, C W	McKay, K R	Millar, W J
Mann, C R	Mayne, J B	McKay, R F	Millen, D R
Mann, N B	Maywood, R H	McKee, E C	Miller, A W D
Mann, N T	Mazzer, R J	McKee, T A	Miller, E J
Mann, T R		McKenzie, A E L	Miller, E L
Mannix, J S	McAlpine, J A	McKenzie, C F	Miller, J D
Marendaz, G	McAlpine, J M	McKenzie, D N	Miller, S J
Mark, J A	McArthur, W M	McKenzie, M P	Miller, W H
Marks, D	McAuliffe, A J	McKeown, A	Milligan, D G
Marks, H T	McBean, W D	McKeown, J A	Milliken, J
Marr, E G	McBride, W J	McLaren, L M	Millock, I
Mars, S J	McCann, J	McLaughlin, T E	Mills, C H
Marsden, A	McCann, J V	McLennan, J	Mills, N T
Marsh, H McL	McCann, P K	McLeod, J	Mills, T McK
Marshall, C W	McCann, J H	MacLeod, J K	Milner, L E
Marshall, D R	McCarron, F J	McLeod, N N	Minehan, C E
Marshall, E E	McCartney, W T	McMahon, J	Mitchell, C W
Marshall, M R	McClelland, R J	McMahon, J F	Mitchell, E C
Marshall, N	McConchie, E H	McMahon, J J	Mitchell, F D
Marshall, S	McConville, W W	McMahon, J L	Mitchell, J J
Marshall, W L	McCormack, W R	McMahon, K	Mitchell, R J
Martier, P	McCormick, J J	McMahon, L V	Mitchell, R T
Martin, C C	McCutcheon, J A	McMahon, M	Mitchell, T
Martin, C G	McDiarmed, D G	McMahon, V J	Mitchell, W M
Martin, F G	McDiarmed, H G	McMillan, A N	Moffatt, L K
Martin, G R	McDonald, A J	McMinn, D N	Monaghan, E J
Martin, H P	McDonald, C A	McNairney, A	Monk, J W
Martin, K L	McDonald, C G	McNairney, A P	Montgomery, K F
Martin, M H	McDonald, J	McNally, W E	Montigue, E A
Martin, R J	McDonald, R A	McNally, W T	Moodie, K
Martin, T L	McDonald, R E	McNaught, M S	Mooney, E
Martin, W G	McDowell, H F	McNee, H J	Mooney, H W
Martin, W J	McElvenny, J W	McNiven, T R J	Moore, A A
Maskell L A	McFarlane, A M	McPhee, R J	Moore, A W
Mason, F	McFarlane, M F	McPherson, V E	Moore, E K
Mason, H W	McGee, E W	McQueen, D E J	Moore, J S
Masters, J	McGill, J I	McSwann, P McD	Moore, L B
Masterton, A	MacGillicuddy, D J		Moore, W C
Mateer, J W	McGillivray, A	Meehan, M J	Moran, J
Mathers, F	MacGilvray, A R	Meek, E J	Morcom, P J
Mathews, J F	MacGilvray, D	Meek, W F	Morgan, G R
Matthews, J M	McGrath, J F	Megaw, G S	Morgan, T B
Mauchline, J B	McGraw, K E	Menzies, T K	Morris, G
Mauger, G R	McGuigan, O	Mercer, J S	Morris, I
Maugher, G C	McGuire, B	Merlin, R G	Morris, J
Maxwell, F R	McHeath, A	Merrin, M J	Morris, J V
Maxwell, G W	McHendrick, D	Messner, A D	Morris, R D
Maxwell, W A	McHugh, N J	Metcalfe, T	Morris, R L E
May, P E	McInerney, J P	Middleton, W J	Morrison, C W

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Morrison, L	Nisbet, J D	Page, R	Petzke, C
Morrison, P J	Nixon, E R	Paine, B	Pfeffer, A V
Morrow, H J	Nixon, G S	Paine, R L	Phaff, A J
Mortimer, N P	Nixon, W A	Palframan, A J	Phelan, N K
Morton, A H K	Noble, J E	Palmer, F A	Philbrook, R A
Morton, H A	Noblett, L J	Palmer, H G	Phillips, F J
Moss, A N	Nolan, A J	Palmer, L M	Phillips, L A
Moss, J R	Nolan, D F	Palmer, S H	Phillips, H J
Motteram, R	Nolan, J G	Pamment, G A	Phillips, S L
Motteran, R	Norman, J	Park, G L	Phillips, T W
Mottram, H	Norman, J E	Park, L V	Philp, J McD
Moxon, A H	Norris, G	Parker, P	Philpott, J W
Moyle, W E	Northover, J V	Parker, W	Phipps, D G
Mullaney, J J	Noy, W H	Parkhill, T V	Pickard, A H
Muller, J R	Nugent, D W	Parkinson, A N	Pickburn, P
Mullett, W K	Nugent, J A	Parkinson, J R	Picken, R A
Mullins, A J		Parmenter, G	Pickworth, K
Mullins, J	O'Brien, E J	Paroz, M L	Pierce, C F
Mullins, R G	O'Connor, H B	Parsons, L E H	Pimbott, A M
Munday, N R	O'Connor, J V	Partington, F W	Pitman, H
Munro, D G	O'Dea, D J	Pascoe, W H	Pittman, J R
Munro, R F	O'Donnell, R J	Paterson, F D L	Plenty, H C
Murdoch, G J	O'Flaherty, W	Paterson, R S	Pointon, A R
Murfitt, M G	O'Halloran, D	Paterson, W	Polkinghorne, S
Murley, K R	O'Halloran, D B	Patrick, J	Pontt, K A
Murphy, C R	O'Malley, J W	Patterson, C F	Poole, A C
Murray, D K	O'Meagher, R R	Patterson, E	Poole, C H
Murray, F R	O'Neil, J M	Patterson, H H	Poole, L V
Murray, R D	O'Neill, J R	Paull, G J R	Pope, S A
Murray, W L	O'Neill, W J	Pavlakis, J	Poppleton, N H
Murton, W J	O'Regan, L C	Payne, A C	Postle, W T
Musselwhite, H	O'Reilly, O O	Payten, M R	Potts, A P
Myers, D J	O'Rourke, F P	Peacock, N A	Poulton, C G
Myers, W F	O'Sullivan, L A	Pearce, G E	Powell, E W
	O'Toole, J H	Pearce, H A	Powell, G A
Nash, M	Odlum, D	Pearce, J B	Power, R J
Nee, C P	Ogilvie, R	Pearson, A N	Power, W A
Negus, E R	Ogilvie, W J	Peat, W V	Pratt, A S
Neill, A L	Ophel, L H	Peatfield, G A	Pratt, T R
Neilson, A W D	Orman, A W	Peberdy, R	Preco, G A
Nelson, J W	Ormerod, A E	Pederson, R C	Prentice, G J
Newberry, C N	Osborn J R	Pepper, F	Pressey, J J
Newsome, J J	Osborn, B S	Perkins, C P O	Pressey, J T
Newton, C P	Osborne, T W	Perkins, L E	Pretty, L
Nicholas, H A	Osborne, W H	Perry, A D	Price, C A
Nicholas, K W	Overland, A H	Perry, C R J	Prince, V I
Nichols, A T	Owens, N F	Perry, I A	Pritchard, G R
Nicholson, A T		Perry, J H	Proebst, M E
Nicholson, C E	Packer, S E	Peters, D	Proudfoot, J P
Nicholson, R H	Padroth, F	Peters, D E	Pruster, R F
Nielsen, R M	Page, J E	Peterson, W	Pryor, J A
Nightingale, K	Page, L I	Petty, R D	Purdey, F M

NO 100 SQUADRON NOMINAL ROLL (1942-1946)

Quayle, G P	Roberts, E C	Ryder, S W	Sharp, E H
Quinlan, J A	Roberts, F O	Ryman, C J	Sharp, R H
Quinlan, M	Roberts, G W		Sharp, S G
Quinn, A R M	Roberts, I J	Sach, R B	Sharpe, S G
	Roberts, W J	Saddler, P A	Shaw, F J
Rabbisch, W A	Robertson, A McC	Sadgett, W I	Shaw, G R
Radford, E S	Robertson, D	Sage, C W	Shaw, J G
Radmore, E A	Robertson, E	Saggers, A J	Shaw, N L
Ramsden, S R	Robins, J H	Sampson, A W	Sheahan, J
Randle, F D	Robinson, A K	Sampson, J B	Sheargold, G H
Rapley, L H	Robinson, B A	Samson, G H	Shelton, A H
Rawson, E A	Robinson, D	Sandercock, J W	Shepherd, C G
Raye, R R	Robinson, D A	Sanders, T J	Shepherd, R
Ready, K B	Robinson, G L	Sanderson, H G	Shepley, K M
Ready, K R	Robinson, G N	Sandford, C N	Sheridan, J
Reardon, H F	Robinson, G S	Sandow, R D	Sheridan, M B
Redgrave, C M	Robinson, J R	Santon, W A	Sherman, J
Redman, J H	Roche, W	Sapwell, R L	Sheriffs, S
Reed, R H	Rodger, W P	Satchwell, C	Shetliffe, D F
Reedman, K	Rolfe, J A	Saunders, L M G	Shine, D J
Reen, J T	Rollinghoff, J	Saunders, L N	Shipman, J W
Reid, A J	Rollings, W J	Saville, F A	Shipway, E W
Reid, A O	Root, A R E	Sawyer, G R	Short, A J
Reid, B J	Rose, V H	Saxon, K M	Shorthouse, J W
Reid, E C	Rosewarne, D G	Sayce, G H	Shyling, H E
Reid, J L	Rosewarne, L H	Sayers, D W	Simmonds, H A
Reid, T G	Rosman, D	Schelbach, R C F	Simmonds, S
Reilly, J A	Ross, A	Scheller, K A	Simmons, J H
Rekdale, J S	Ross, A B	Schereck, D M	Simpson, E
Rempfrey, R W	Ross, H G	Schlank, G R	Simpson, J R
Renouf, H E	Ross, H M	Schloeffel, K E	Simpson, R L C
Ribbett, W A	Ross, W L	Schneider, R M	Sinclair, M C
Richards, A C	Rounsevell, J M	Schneider, R T	Sinclair, R D
Richards, D	Rowan, J T	Schneider, W	Sinfield, C G
Richards, L G	Rowe, C	Schofield, E G	Sing, S A
Richards, R	Rowe, O M	Schofield, J C	Singleton, A W
Richards, R G	Rowell, W J E	Schulze, A B	Skelton, T J
Richards, S	Rowland, O A	Schwartz, L J	Skinner, E L
Richards, W B	Rowley, E F	Scott, A W	Sladden, J D
Richards, W I	Roy, W C	Scott, C	Slater, A R
Richardson, A E	Rull, W D	Scott, E J	Sleeman, W C
Richardson, J	Rundell, C L	Scott, W J M	Slingo, J K
Richardson, R	Ruschmeyer, W O	Scott, W R	Smedley, J W
Richmond, D C	Rushton, L	Scouller, R B	Smibert, J A
Ridgway, R A	Rushworth, D W	Scully, J W	Smiddy, G W
Rigg, H E	Russell, H C	Scully, T L	Smith, A
Ripley, K S	Russell, R H	Seaton, E	Smith, B G
Rivett, A R	Ryan, J B	Seiway, A J	Smith, D
Roberts I J	Ryan, J P	Seldon, M H	Smith, D C
Roberts, A R	Ryan, L D	Selig, L J	Smith, E H
Roberts, B C	Ryan, M J	Seymour, R	Smith, F A
	Ryder, S	Seymour, R H	Smith, F O

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Smith, F R K	Stehn, N	Sweeney, P	Thorpe, A J
Smith, G A	Stephan, C J	Sweetnam, E W	Threader, V M
Smith, G N	Stephen, C J	Swinton, R J	Tierney, W J
Smith, H	Stephens, F J	Sylvia, G McG	Tilden, A H
Smith, H A	Stephenson, D K	Symonds, A F	Tisdall, A S
Smith, I	Stephenson, W	Symonds, H A	Tobiasen, A S
Smith, I H	Stepto, G V D		Tolcher, F E
Smith, I J	Sterndale, J T	Taggart, A K	Tomkins, J S
Smith, J E	Stevens, F E	Taggart, N J	Tomkinson, E J
Smith, J L	Stevens, J W	Taggato, M J	Tonge, C N
Smith, N C	Stevens, M J	Tait, R	Toohey, C H
Smith, N E	Stevenson, J McK	Talbot, R J	Toohey, J P
Smith, P R	Steward, R G	Tarrant, A G	Toohey, L J
Smith, R M	Stewart, G	Tarry, F G R	Torney, H J
Smith, S V	Stewart, J G	Taskis, W K	Tracey, J F
Smith, T M	Stewart, R G	Tassell, R J	Traill, R J
Smith, W A R	Stiles, R H	Tate, G C	Treasure, R J
Smyth, H D	Stirling, A	Tate, K A	Treloar, H C
Sneddon, D	Stokes, I M	Taylor, A	Trenouth, H V
Snewin, J A	Stokes, T M O	Taylor, A A	Treverton, G
Snook, A C E	Stolz, R W	Taylor, D H	Triatt, K M
Solomon, A E	Stone, R L	Taylor, E J	Trinnick, K L
Solomon, R L	Stone, V	Taylor, H M	Trompf, P A
Sommerfield, L W	Storey, H S	Taylor, J K	Tucker, H E
Sommers, J L	Strahan, C S	Taylor, J R	Tucker, S R
Soumilas, P	Straker, T H	Taylor, R	Tucker, V N
Spalding, R R	Strang, R W	Taylor, W	Tulk, F E
Sparkes, W J T	Stratford, S G	Taylor, W H	Turk, E J
Sparks, G C	Strauss, W E	Taylor, W L	Turnbull, J D
Spencer, R	Strong, W	Tealby, A R	Turner, D W
Spicer, J A	Strudwick, F J	Tebbutt, L A	Turner, E C
Spong, R R	Stuart, A G	Teys, H C	Turner, G J
Spooner - Hart, R L	Stuart, E	Thomas, D W	Turner, L A
Spooner, A H	Stubbs, R J B	Thomas, G N	Turner, L C
Spowart, R A	Stubbs, S A	Thomas, H	Turner, L G
Spriggins, L F	Stuchberry, H W	Thomas, H J	Turner, O E
St Clair, J V	Stuckings, W	Thompson, A H	Tuttleby, C E
Stacey, H G	Stumm, D C	Thompson, A J	Twigg, H L
Stack, J E	Styles, R	Thompson, C	Tyler, R G
Stafford, A B	Sudholz, W A	Thompson, E A	Tyrrell, L T
Staib, A L	Sugg, J	Thompson, E C	
Stalley, W R	Sullivan, F J	Thompson, G	Uebel, R A
Standen, C G	Sullivan, R G	Thompson, H F	Unwin, C A
Standfield, J T	Sultanis, E	Thompson, N D	
Stanfield, J T	Summerell, W	Thompson, P D	Veal, J H
Stanley, B M	Surman, J E	Thompson, R H	Vernon, E D
Stannett, M G	Suter, E D	Thompson, R T	Vesey, A J
Stanway, I H	Sutherland, R	Thompson, T	Vick, H W
Stead, H H	Svensen, A G	Thompson, T A	Vickers, N C
Steel, P T	Swalling, J N	Thomsen, R A	Vine, C L
Steele, L H	Swaney, J T	Thorn, J W	Virgo, W J
Steele, W J	Swann, R M	Thornhill, J A	Vonarx, T W

NO 100 SQUADRON NOMINAL ROLL (1942-1946)

Waddy, B C	Webster, B G	Williams, L W	Young, D A
Wade, S T	Webster, G W L	Williams, N G	Young, E T
Wagland, E T	Webster, H	Williams, N R	Young, J B
Wagner, A P	Wedlake, R	Williams, R A	Young, R K
Wait, E	Wehl, D M	Williams, V D	Young, R P
Waite, A G	Weir, M G	Williamson, H J	Young, W R
Wake, R B	Weller, G B	Williman, W C	Yuille, G B
Wales, E G	Wellington, C C	Willis, J A	
Walker, A A	Wellington, L C	Willis, L B	Zaglas, C C
Walker, A E	Wendon, J R	Willis, N L	Ziersch, T G
Walker, A R H	West, G F A	Willis, W	
Walker, P R C	Western, W K	Willox, H R	
Walker, R C	Westphalen, F J	Wills, W T	
Wall, P H	Wetherall A	Wilsch, V A	
Wallace, D C	Whalan, R A	Wilson, G W	
Wallis, E J	Whatmore, A R	Wilson, K G	
Walsh, C S	Wheatley, F W	Wilson, N D	
Walsh, J E	Wheatley, V R	Wilson, W R	
Walsh, J T	Wheeler, J V	Wilson-Roberts, H M	
Walters, C H	Whelan, K P	Wing, R D	
Walters, C J	White, B C	Winspear, R B	
Walters, F W C	White, D W	Wippell, J R	
Walton, E W	White, G A	Witham, R J	
Walton, H O	White, S I	Witt, E F	
Ward, F	White, S N	Wood, A H	
Ward, P F	White, W C	Wood, A T	
Warden, B M	Whitehouse, F	Wood, D A	
Warne, A E A	Whiteman, J	Wood, E E	
Warren, H	Whitford, R O	Wood, J A	
Warren, J M	Whittall, R P	Wood, J H T	
Warren, R J	Whitty, A V	Wood, R H	
Waterhouse, E	Whyte, D	Woodcock, J	
Waterman, E	Wiblin, G L	Woodhead, R M	
Waters, J J	Wicker, W L	Woodman, S J	
Waters, J L	Wiggins, C B	Wookey, R C	
Waters, K N	Wigham, C G	Woollacott, R H	
Watkins, N R	Wilcock, K G	Woolgar, L	
Watson, C R	Wiley, R F	Wormald, J A	
Watson, E L	Wilkinson, A A S	Wray, C W	
Watson, K	Wilkinson, H	Wray, C W W	
Watts, K E	Wilkinson, H T	Wren, A	
Waugh, N O	Wilkinson, J A	Wright, A J	
Way, M C	Wilkinson, N T	Wright, A N	
Weakley, V R	Wilkson, V A	Wright, F W	
Weaver, R J	Willcock, A V	Wright, K	
Webb, D H	Williams, A J	Wright, M M	
Webb, L H	Williams, C	Wright, P L	
Webb, R B	Williams, G V	Wright, R F	
Webb, V S	Williams, H C	Wright, S J C	
Webber, S E	Williams, H J		
Weber, S D	Williams, J D	Yabsley, A W	
	Williams, J R	Yeatman, J S	

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

MEMORIALS

*The very right to work, the right to play,
To live and love and hope, the right to pray,
To keep secure the greatest of all joys –
The carefree laughter of their girls and boys;
They asked no more.*

VX116298, *Hidden Battlefields – New Guinea*¹⁴⁴

We remember those who died in war for this country; those whom we know and whose memory we treasure.

Some known memorials where 100 Squadron members are commemorated are listed below, but we remember departed comrades, not so much in the symbol of the monument, but in our hearts and minds.

RABAU, NEW BRITAIN

The Rabaul Memorial is located in Bita Paka War Cemetery, which is situated about 50 kilometres south of Rabaul and five kilometres south-west of Kokopo. This memorial commemorates more than 1200 Australians, and New Guinea and Papuan forces, who lost their lives in New Britain and New Ireland.

The Rabaul Memorial takes the form of an avenue of stone pylons leading from the entrance of the cemetery to the Cross of Sacrifice. Bronze panels bearing the names of the fallen are affixed to the faces of the pylons. A central stone lectern at the start of the avenue carries a bronze plaque with the following inscription:

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

IN THIS PLACE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF OFFICERS AND
MEN OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS WHO
DIED DURING THE 1939–1945 WAR IN THE NEW BRITAIN
AREA, ON LAND, AT SEA AND IN THE AIR, BUT TO WHOM THE
FORTUNES OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND HONOURED
BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH.



Gasmata Plaques at Rabaul

The names listed on the Honour Tablets include some of the aircrews of 30 and 100 Squadrons lost over Gasmata

PORT MORESBY, PNG

The impressive Bomana War Cemetery is located 19 kilometres north of Port Moresby on the road to Nine Mile airport, and is approached from the main road by a short side road called Pilgrims Way. The Port Moresby Memorial, located behind the cemetery, records the names of over 700 officers and men of the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Australian Merchant Navy, and the Papua and New Guinea local forces who lost their lives in operations in Papua and who have no known graves. The memorial consists of a rotunda of cylindrical pillars enclosing a circle of square pillars. Bronze panels, upon which the names are engraved, are affixed to the inside faces of the square pillars.

Three tablets of black marble show the names in gold of RAAF members who perished in action over Gasmata. The names listed include some, but not all, of the aircrews of 30 and 100 Squadrons lost over Gasmata.

MILNE BAY AND GOODENOUGH ISLAND

Brass plaques at Milne Bay and Goodenough Island have replaced the original white wooden crosses to show the last resting places for a number of 100 Squadron personnel.

A poem, *War Cemetery*, by C.M. Theile of the RAAF, captures the scene and significance of the rows and rows of graves:

A thousandth time that white and wooden cross sprouts from the waste,
 Unfolds its rigid arms like frozen petals from a deathly flower in cold remorse.
 A thousand thousandth loss pours gall on life-blood,
 Seals with bitter psalms an aeon in the compass of an hour,
 Imprisons love, the sanctity of mirth,
 In this pocked remnant of the blasted earth.

And yet behold! A richer earth shall grow
 Where this great heart-beat of a nation lies,
 And in resurgence from each serried row
 A newer symbol for mankind arise
 To ring the world, and shatter yet the deep
 Eternal silence of this terrible sleep.

WEWAK, PNG

The Australian War Memorial situated at Cape Wom commemorates Army and Air Force members, who lost their lives in the Aitape to Wewak campaign. The cemetery includes 38 members of 100 Squadron.

CANBERRA, ACT

The Wall of Remembrance at the Australian War Memorial holds the names of members of the ten Beaufort Squadrons and Units who lost their lives while serving their country. There are 121 names of members of 100 Squadron recorded.

A Beaufort Plaque at the Australian War Memorial is situated adjacent to the Western Courtyard. It was unveiled on 24 April 2001 by Air Commodore Keith Parsons, CBE, DSO, DFC, AFC (Ret'd). The memorial plaque is dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives in the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons and Support Groups. 'We treasure their memory and revere them for their deeds and sacrifices.'

A restored Beaufort bomber A9-557, was presented for viewing in the ANZAC Hall at the Australian War Memorial on 28 March 2003. This aircraft forms part of Australia's aviation history. As Sir John Storey said, 'It was one of Australia's greatest achievements'.



**Len and Keith Parsons, ANZAC Day 2001
Taken the day following the unveiling of the Beaufort Plaque in the
Western Courtyard of the Australian War Memorial**

A9-557 has been preserved for posterity as a symbol of the dedication and skill of those who made them and serviced them, and of the valour of the RAAF aircrews who flew them. We remember too, that over 20 per cent of trained Beaufort aircrews did not survive World War II.

A plaque dedicated to the Beaufort Squadrons, units and support personnel was funded and installed by Qantas Airways in the Sculpture Gardens on 24 April 2000.



Beaufort A9-557 at Australian War Memorial, Canberra

POINT COOK, VICTORIA

A 100 Squadron plaque, dedicated to the memory of all who served in the squadron, is located in the RAAF Museum at Point Cook. A 1/24th scale model of Beaufort A9-625 QH-D is also on display at the Museum, courtesy of Alan Gardner, who served in 100 Squadron.

BAIRNSDALE, VICTORIA

The Beaufort Memorial Gardens on Hospital Hill in Bairnsdale were dedicated by Archdeacon E. Gibson, and a plaque was unveiled by Air Commodore W.H. Garing, CBE, DFC, MID, DSC (USA), in 1990. The Monument in the Beaufort Gardens was opened on Sunday 14 November 1993 by Air Commodore D.J.S. Riding, AM, DFC. The memorial, containing an Honour Roll, is dedicated to the 191 lives lost during operational training in East Gippsland. There were 91 fatalities in Beauforts at No 1 Operational Training Unit and four more in a visiting 100 Squadron aircraft.



Beaufort Memorial Gardens, Bairnsdale
Situated on Hospital Hill, the Beaufort Gardens Monument records the 91 fatalities in Beauforts that occurred during training at No 1 Operational Training Unit

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

A brass plaque, mounted on a stone base, which is dedicated to all Beaufort Squadrons and support units, is located in the Shrine of Remembrance Gardens in Melbourne. The plaque is a stone's throw away from the Shrine. It is situated at the base of a tree, east of the flag poles, and about 15 paces from the statue of Simpson and his donkey.



Brass Plaque, Melbourne
Situated in the Shrine of Remembrance Gardens

NOWRA, NSW

The Lady Denman Heritage Museum at Huskisson displays a Beaufort propeller beside a Roll of Honour. This Memorial Wall is in memory of all RAAF, RAN and RN service personnel, who lost their lives whilst training at Jervis Bay.

Following its dedication on 23 April 1991, the RAAF Beaufort Squadrons Association, NSW, added the following endorsement:

RAAF Beaufort Memorial Propeller and Wall of Remembrance Honour Roll.
 Dedicated Official War Memorial to the RAAF Beaufort crews who gave their lives for their country during their training at No 6 Operational Training Unit, Nowra.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

RICHMOND, NSW

A stained glass window in the All Saints Chapel at RAAF Base Richmond was dedicated on 18 April 1993 to commemorate the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. The 100 Squadron insignia is incorporated in the design of the window.

BRISBANE, QLD

A brass plaque depicting a Beaufort bomber, together with a list of all Beaufort squadrons and units, and where they served, is located in the RSL Crypt. The Crypt is located opposite the Eternal Flame of Remembrance in Anzac Park.

When unveiled on 25 November 1996, the plaque was dedicated with full Air Force ceremony to the memory of all who served in Beaufort squadrons and units.

AMBERLEY, QLD

A brass plaque, similar in all respects to the plaque in the Brisbane RSL Crypt, is mounted on a sandstone panel situated in the Memorial Garden at RAAF Base Amberley.



Brass Plaque, RAAF Base Amberley
Situated near the Canberra bomber shell at the entrance to the RAAF Base

The plaque was dedicated to all who served with Beauforts, at the F-111's 30th Anniversary Commemorative Service on 1 June 2003.

MAREEBA, QLD

A plaque at the Mareeba aerodrome was unveiled on 25 June 1992 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the day that 100 Squadron sent the first flight of Australian Beauforts to bomb and strafe enemy targets in New Guinea.

Mr Phil Harrison, President of 100 RAAF Beaufort Squadron Association, and Mr Bill McMahon, Secretary of the Association at that time, were in attendance to address the gathering.

PERTH, WA

The RAAF Association has a section devoted to Beauforts in their Aviation Museum at Bull Creek.

ADELAIDE, SA

A Beaufort memorial stained glass window was dedicated on Anzac Day 1992 to those who served in Beaufort squadrons and units. It adjoins windows dedicated to various Army and Navy units in the Anglican Chapel of the Repatriation General Hospital at Daw Park.

A Beaufort plaque of brass set in stone is situated a short distance from the Adelaide Airport building complex. The plaque was unveiled and dedicated on 8 November 1981.

A painting by Drew Harrison of torpedo bombers, entitled 'Combined Strike', is on display in the Adelaide Aviation Museum, Port Adelaide. The painting belongs to Kym Bonython, whose aircraft is discernible in the scene. The painting depicts two waves of three bombers from 100 Squadron attacking a Japanese naval force out from Milne Bay on 7 September 1942 (see page 54).



Adelaide Airport Plaque

Situated a short walk from the airport building complex towards West Beach

FOR THE FALLEN

by Laurence Binyon

They went with songs to the battle,
They were young
Straight of limb, true of eye,
Steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end,
And against odds uncouraged,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old
As we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn;
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning,
We will remember them.

As the stars that shall be bright,
When we are dust,
Moving in marches upon
The heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry
In the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end they remain.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

NOSE ART ON 100 SQUADRON BEAUFORTS



A9-654 – ‘Dorothy II Punching Panther’

Flown mainly by Bob Maynard and crew



A9-54 – ‘Malay Mascot’

A winged dog and Malay statement *Kita Bikin Ayer Sama Tojo* (We piss on the Japs) – flown by ‘Smoky’ Douglas and crew



A9-212 – ‘Huey, Dewey and Louie’

Donald Duck’s nephews – perhaps associated with crew members’ names



A9-633 – ‘Cheetah’

A stylised cheetah holding two bombs – flown mainly by John Kessey and crew



A9-488 – ‘Hughie the Ghost’

Let it go Hughie – flown mainly by Colin Macnaughtan and crew



A9-655 – ‘Wanda’

A glamorous female – flown regularly by Stan Damman and crew

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS



A9-321 – ‘Tom’
A tomcat riding a bomb



A9-478 – ‘Donald Duck’
A duck casting a bomb – flown mainly by
Barry Fuller and crew



A9-46 – ‘White Elephant’
‘Sam’ Balmer’s aircraft



A9-190 – ‘Eagle Spying’
An eagle with a telescope dropping a bomb
from its talons – flown mainly by
S.G. Sharpe and crew





APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

AUTHOR'S COMMENTS AND NOTES

BRAVERY

Bravery, to some, is understood as the act of displaying courage; to others, it is the achievement of overcoming fear. All facing danger on active service are expected to be brave. However, there are various reasons for acting bravely. Some men may perhaps be fearless! Some fear for the loss of their lives, while others act bravely for fear of otherwise disgracing themselves. Most of us wish to be thought well of by our peers.

It is a wonderful feeling to discover that you are not as afraid as you thought you would be. The knot in the pit of your stomach might be there, but your duties can still be carried out effectively. In a combat situation, each crew member realises how much he depends on the others—one man's failure to do his job properly can kill them all.

When a crew survives particularly dangerous situations together, there is a closer bonding with each other—a feeling of gratitude and trust for each other. Aircrew members, because of their particular circumstances, share a special relationship.

FATE

An attitude of fatalism seemed to be prevalent in most returned aircrew. Fate was no respecter of persons. *Her* behaviour was random. *She* could never be understood, only accepted. All aircrews had many close calls, but no-one really knew when he was closest to losing his life. Was it during some training flight? Was it during a torpedo attack, a bombing or strafing raid, or an exchange of gunfire? Was it during some lonely night reconnaissance or sea patrol? Was it during take-off or when landing? Was it during a violent electrical storm? Was it while flying in thick cloud? Was it when someone else took your place, or when you took someone else's place? Was it when some inexplicable thing happened in the air (a phenomenon we referred to as the 'gremlins' at work)? There were so many opportunities for the fickle finger of fate to touch you. It is one of those things we sometimes think about, but rarely speak about, because it was a psychic experience.

GREMLINS

Every flyer in the RAAF knew about the devilish tricks of the ‘gremlins’. Usually these rascally creatures were invisible when causing some unusual noise or movement of aircraft controls. Occasionally they were seen as a bluish glow on the propeller tips to alter their pitch, or as a flash of light when taking a drift sight. They clogged the hydraulics, vaporised the fuel, altered the radio settings, jammed the guns, and caused all sorts of mysterious happenings. After long hours in the air, some flyers claimed to have even seen the little imps at work!

SABOTAGE

On landing from a training exercise at East Sale, one WAG was tossing the clip-on parachutes from the plane to a catcher on the ground. One chute was caught by its shiny handle, and burst open. Out fell two folded blankets! The discovery of this act of thieving and sabotage caused quite a stir! One can barely imagine what horrors this craven sabotage could cause—all for the sake of a few yards of silk.

Bill Stephens, another WAG, had a similar experience while flying back to Darwin, September 1943: ‘The gunner had been badly wounded. I thought I’d make a bed for him so I pulled a couple of parachutes. I pulled one—there were two blankets in it. I pulled another one and there were two blankets in it. I pulled the third one—there were two blankets in it. I went to the first aid kit to get some morphine. That too had been knocked off!’

NICKNAMES

Australians have always invented rather witty nicknames for their mates, and the RAAF, and especially 100 Squadron, had some that are worth mentioning.

First there were the pseudonyms referring to physical appearance—‘Tiny’ Sterndale, ‘Tiny’ Elliott, ‘Lofty’ Wray, ‘Shorty’ Carrick and ‘Shorty’ Arthur. One WAG, who was not only tall but also exceedingly thin, was called ‘Pull-through’. A much smaller WAG was ‘Kitch’ Philpott. There was also ‘Poppa’ Crisp, ‘Big Mac’ McLennan, ‘Spike’ Svensen, ‘Blue’ Bale, ‘Snow’ Collins, ‘Snowy’ Mullins and ‘Darky’ Roberts.

Sobriquets referring to behavioural characteristics included ‘Spider’ Murphy, ‘Nuts’ Boddington, ‘Mandrake’ Webster, ‘Argus’ Laird, ‘Smoky’ Douglas, ‘Happy’ Garrett, ‘Winker’ White, ‘Lucky’ Reed, ‘Lucky’ Anscombe, ‘Pluto’ Ryan, ‘Scratch’ Palmer and ‘Pranger’ Harrison.

Association with well-known surnames also invited a nickname, such as Ron ‘Darby’ Munro and Hilary ‘Tex’ Morton.

APPENDIX 1: AUTHOR'S COMMENTS AND NOTES

Then there were the puns on surnames—I.P. Carter was 'Ippy' Carter, W.A.R. Smith became 'Battle' Smith, and F.V. Holland was known as 'Dutch' Holland.

Others need no explanation—'Grassy' Green and 'Scotty' Ireland from 100 Squadron, and 'Rusty' Steele, 'Moth' Eaton, 'Angel' Gabriel and 'Rigor' Mortis from other squadrons.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

APPENDIX 2

AIRCRAFT OPERATING IN THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC AREA

ALLIED AIRCRAFT

RAAF Designation	American Designation	Name of Aircraft
		Walrus (retained RAF code and serial Nos.)
A8		DAP Beaufighter
A9		DAP Beaufort
A11		Auster Mk III
A16		Lockheed Hudson
A17		De Havilland Tiger Moth
A19		Bristol Beaufighter
A20		CAC Wirraway
A24	PBY	Consolidated Catalina
A26		Short Sunderland Transport
A27		Vultee Vengeance
A28	A-20	Douglas Boston
A29	P-40	Curtis Kittyhawk
A46		CAC Boomerang
A47	B-25	North American Mitchell
A52		De Havilland Mosquito
A58		Supermarine Spitfire
A59		Lockheed Ventura
A65	C-47	Douglas Dakota
A67		Lockheed Lodestar
A70	PBM3	Martin Mariner Transport
A72	B-24	Consolidated Liberator
	A-20G	Boston II
	DC-3	Douglas Transport
	PB4Y	US Navy Liberator
	B-17	Flying Fortress

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B-26	Marauder
SBD	Dauntless
P-38	Lockheed Lightning
P-39	Bell Airacobra fighter
P-47	Republic Thunderbolt
F-4F	Grumman Wildcat
F-6F	Grumman Hellcat
	Chance Vought Corsair
	Grumman Avenger (RNZAF)

JAPANESE AIRCRAFT

Mitsubishi	G4M	Betty	Navy twin-engine bomber/torpedo
Mitsubishi	Ki-46	Dinah	Navy/Army twin-engine armed reconnaissance
Kawanishi	H8K	Emily	Navy four-engine flying boat bomber (crew 10)
Yokosuka	E14Y	Glen	A small float plane launched from submarines
Nakajima Donryu	Ki-49	Helen	Army twin-engine bomber
Nakajima Gekko	J1N	Irving	Twin-engine fighter and reconnaissance
Aichi	E13A	Jake	Navy seaplane for reconnaissance
Yokosuka	D4Y	Judy	Navy bomber (crew 2)
Nakajima	B5N	Kate	Torpedo bomber
Kawasaki Toryu	Ki-45	Nick	Early Army twin-engine fighter (crew 2)
Nakajima	Ki-43	Oscar	Army single-engine long-range fighter
Mitsubishi	F1M	Pete	Navy single-engine float plane
Kawasaki Hien	Ki-61	Tony	Fighter, similar to German ME-109
Aichi	D3A	Val	Navy dive-bomber
Mitsubishi Reisen	A6M	Zeke	Navy fighter

APPENDIX 3 RAAF BEAUFORT SQUADRONS AND UNITS

Eventually there were ten RAAF Beaufort Squadrons, three Local Air Supply Units and nine Communication Units equipped or re-equipped with Beauforts for operations. Several other training and special units were also equipped with Beauforts.

SQUADRON OR UNIT	CODE	EQUIPPED WITH BEAUFORTS:	
		LOCATION	DATE
100 Squadron	QH	Richmond, NSW	Feb 1942
1 Squadron	NA	Menangle, NSW	Dec 1943
2 Squadron	KO	Darwin, NT	Jan 1944
6 Squadron	FX	Milne Bay, PNG	Sep 1943
7 Squadron	KT	Nowra, NSW	Oct 1942
8 Squadron	UV	Canberra, ACT	Mar 1943
13 Squadron	SF	Canberra, ACT	Jul 1943
14 Squadron	PN	Pearce, WA	May 1943
15 Squadron	DD	Camden, NSW	Jan 1944
32 Squadron	JM	Camden, NSW	Apr 1943
9 Local Air Supply Unit		Lae, PNG	Mar 1945
10 Local Air Supply Unit		Torikina, PNG	Mar 1945
12 Local Air Supply Unit		Tadji, PNG	Jun 1945
3 Communication Unit		Mascot, NSW	May 1945
4 Communication Unit		Archerfield, QLD	Jan 1943
5 Communication Unit		Garbutt, QLD	Jun 1945
6 Communication Unit		Batchelor, NT	Jan 1945
7 Communication Unit		Dunreath, WA	Jul 1944
8 Communication Unit		Vivigani, PNG	Jan 1944
9 Communication Unit		Lae, PNG	Sep 1944
10 Communication Unit		Cairns, QLD	Oct 1944
11 Communication Unit		Morotai, Moluccas	Apr 1945

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APPENDIX 4

OPERATIONAL ATTIRE FOR BEAUFORT AIRCREW

Individual aircrew adopted more comfortable and more serviceable dress than the standard Air Force issue, while still complying with RAAF health and safety requirements. As 100 Squadron was operating as part of the Fifth Air Force in the South-West Pacific Area, alternative clothing was readily available from the American PX (Post Exchange) store.

Boots	Rubber-soled American issue—no socks needed when amply sprinkled with powder. These replaced the standard issue Army-type black boots, which were suitable for walking home after a crash, but very slippery in a Beaufort, with its metal flooring.
Gaiters	Some airmen wore the standard Army-issue gaiters, which had straps and buckles that tended to catch on projecting aircraft parts. Other airmen preferred the American lace-up type, which were modified by shortening and hemming.
Combat overalls	The RAAF standard issue overalls were only suitable for fighter pilots. Beaufort crews preferred the olive green American overalls, because they had more useful pockets, and were far more comfortable.
Trousers and shirt	American khaki or jungle green. Preferred to the summer issue overalls. Shirts were worn open-necked, sleeves rolled up in the daytime, and trousers supported by a woven webbing belt (also American).
Cap/hat	Standard issue field service cap, dress cap or felt hat. Personal preference as to which was worn.
Flying helmet	Standard leather helmets were too hot to wear in the heat of New Guinea. Cotton towelling helmets were a cooler replacement, but never worn; caps preferred instead.
Life jacket	Mae West, so called because, when inflated, it reminded us of the famous well-endowed film star of the same name.
Machete	Army issue in leather sheath, strapped to the outside lower right leg.

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Webbing belt	RAAF issue woven webbing belt, with pouches to hold bullets in a packet, matches, first aid kit, mirror and revolver in holster.
Matches	One tin each of Bell's wax matches.
First aid kit	A package containing a simple bandage, sterilised dressing, safety pins, triangular bandage, antiseptic ointment and small scissors.
Revolver	Smith & Wesson .38 calibre revolver in holster carried on the hip in a canvas holster (looking like Jessie James).
Mirror	Steel mirror with attached cord, for heliograph signalling.
Wristwatch	Navigator's RAAF issue 'Longines'. Other crew had privately owned wristwatches.
Water bottle	RAAF issue metal water bottle in a fabric casing, and with a shoulder strap.
Sunglasses	American 'Robson' polarised sunglasses were preferred.
ID tags	Metal identification tags on metal chain, worn around the neck. Two tags issued—one to identify the wearer and one for your coffin.
Headphones	Together with throat microphones for intercommunications.
Rescue card	Identity/rescue card for communicating with the natives in Pidgin.

APPENDIX 5

DOCUMENTS AND MATERIAL FOR OPERATIONAL AIRCREW

Documents	Documents carried onto the aircraft depended on the type of mission involved—torpedo attack, high-level bombing, coordinated strikes with the Army, reconnaissance, shipping surveillance or searches.
Flying logs	Logs were required from the navigator and wireless operator for all mission activities.
Note pads	For pilot, navigator and wireless operator during operations.
Briefing data	Expected weather condition en route, known ack-ack positions, enemy activities, associated Allied activities, navigational data and W/T data.
Navigational data	Available D/F stations, radar beacons and geographical features, alternative airstrips and alternative targets.
W/T data	Operating frequencies for the mission and alternative control tower frequencies.
Maps and charts	Six-figure coordinate area map. Chart for plotting bearings.
Star table and almanac	As required, usually on long-distance flights—Norrie's star table and current almanac for astro navigation.
Code book	AP1927 with lead-weighted cover for jettisoning if ditching.
Shipping data	Allied shipping data, together with registered signal letter for the area.
Timetables	Japanese merchant shipping timetables.
Silhouette tables	For Allied and Japanese naval ships.
ID lists	Identification lists for the day.
W/T handbook	As required, for reference material.
Additional crystals	As required, to facilitate communications with Allied Navy, Army or Air Force units.

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Syko card	As required, to encode and decode W/T messages.
Aircrew parachute	Parachute and harness. Taken into aircraft when on long-distance and high-level operations, but not on low-altitude operations such as coordinated bombings and strafing.
Binoculars	Essential for reconnaissance and standard flying duties.

APPENDIX 6

SQUADRON SONGS AND POEMS

100 SQUADRON SONG

(To the tune *Three Little Fishes*, Anon)

The Beaufort bombers and the Wing Commander too,
Set out from Milne Bay to see what they could do.
Fly, said the Wing Commander, fly formation tight.
And they flew and they flew, out into the night.

Chorus:

Zoom, zoom, loop, spin, bank and roll,
Zoom, zoom, loop, spin, bank and roll,
Zoom, zoom, loop, spin, bank and roll,
And they flew and they flew, out into the night.

On 'till Tulagi came into view,
Saw ten destroyers and a heavy cruiser too,
Attacked with torpedoes, armed with Shorty's light,
And they flew and they flew back into the night.

Chorus

Ten Beaufort bombers off for home, alas,
Opened up the throttles and ran out of gas,
Landed in the drink, what a sorry plight,
The great Beaufort bombers were no longer in flight.

Chorus

Ten yellow dinghies, floating in a line,
Forty frightened aircrew tossing in the brine,
Paddle says the Wing Commander, paddle and pray,
And they headed and pushed on into the day.

Chorus

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Back at Operations, wondering where they're at,
Sat Mr Drakeford in his new tin hat,
'Where are my Beauforts, Oh! Where can they be?
Have the blighters gone in, down into the sea?'

Chorus

Out upon the ocean, far across the sea,
On a coral atoll, lives a colony,
Forty carefree aircrew, what a happy sight.
No more Blanky Beauforts to fly into the night.

Chorus

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

(To the tune *Where the Coolabah Grows*, H.M. Cummings)

I'll sing you a song of the Beauforts,
Australian-built bombers you know;
And they're Aussie-manned, too,
Everyone of the crew,
With the whole lot just rarin' to go.

I'll sing you a song of the Beauforts,
From the mainland they flew to Papua,
To get close to the Nips,
With their scrap metal ships,
And they're out for a scrap, nothing truer.

I'll sing you a song of the Beauforts,
How they gleefully sweep on the foe,
Leaving Japanese corpses
Just riddled with torpses,
To say naught of a cruiser or two.

I'll sing you a song of the Beauforts,
They drop bombs now and then,
For a change;
Ack-ack fire there is none,
As they come on their run,
With the bomb-aimer getting the range.

I'll sing you the song of the Beauforts,
Such a mission is simply child's play;
An occasional burst shows
They've done their worst,
Though whatever it is none can say.

I'll sing you a song of the Beauforts,
They come down in the drink or they burn.
But the crews that don't crash
Get a grip on their cash,
And go south again, ne'er to return.

FADING AWAY

(To the tune *There is a Happy Land*, Anon)

There is a squadron here at Aitape
Where we get bully and beans
Three times a day,
Ham and eggs we never see,
Doc puts bromide in our tea,
And we are gradually fading away.

SONG OF THE GREMLINS

(Poem by Bert Klemm – Adapted for the SWPA)

When you're flying in cloud stuffed with mountains,
It's a hell of an awesome place;
And the lightning strikes are all blinding,
Making it hard to hold course back to base.

It's there that you find the gremlins,
Blue ones, and gamboge, and gold;
Male and female and neuter,
Gremlins, both young and old.

White ones will waggle your wing tips,
Females will muddle your maps,
Green ones will guzzle your petrol,
And male ones will mess up your flaps.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Pink ones will perch on your perspex
And dance pirouettes on your prop,
And a spherical middle-aged gremlin
Will spin on your stick like a top.

Gremlins with axes and hammers
Will bash at your spark plugs for fun,
And tormenting toddling young gremlins
Will pour concrete into each gun.

Oh, they'll gnaw and they'll gnash and they'll batter
And bite through your aileron wires.
Then when you're about to pancake,
Stick toasting forks into your tyres.

That is the song of the gremlins,
As told by veteran aircrew;
Believed by few, not many,
Yet nevertheless, it's true.

WHERE'S OUR MAIL

(Poem, 100 Squadron, Anon)

Maybe it's on the ocean,
Tossed by wind and hail,
Maybe it's with old Davy Jones!
Where's our ruddy mail?
We can do without tobacco,
We can do without our ale,
In blinding tears we're asking,
Where's our ruddy mail?

MILNE BAY BLUES

(To the tune *Bless 'em All*, Anon)

They say there's a Hudson
Just leaving Milne Bay
Bound for the Seven Mile,
Heavily laden with time-expired men,
Who've been there a flaming long while.
They're shit-scared and frightened,
And brassed off as well,
Officers and airmen and all.
And they haven't a notion
In which flaming ocean,
They'll be doing the breast stroke or crawl.

Bless 'em all, bless 'em all,
From Waga right up to Rabaul.
Bless the instructors, who taught us to fly,
Bless the CO and the old CFI,
For we're saying goodbye to them all,
As up to the Air Board they crawl,
As we haven't a notion
In which flaming ocean,
We'll be doing the breast stroke or crawl.

They say that the Japs
Have a very smart kite,
Of that we're no longer in doubt,
But when a Zero gets on your tail,
This is the way to get out:
Be calm and be careful, be cautious, sedate,
And don't let your Aussie blood boil,
But don't hesitate, shove her right
Through the gate,
And blind the poor bastard with oil.

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

Yes, in oil, engine oil,
From Waga right up to Rabaul.
Bless the instructors, who taught us to fly,
Bless the CO and the old CFI,
For we're saying goodbye to them all,
As up to the Air Board they crawl,
As we haven't a notion
In which flaming ocean,
We'll be doing the breast stroke or crawl.

MILNE BAY

(100 Squadron Theme Song – Probably written by
Will Handley of the 5th Division Concert Party)

Chorus:

(Sung at beginning, then after each verse)

There is a place not far from Aussie's shores,
It is the last place on earth it is true,
Where the tropical sun burns a hole in your head
And the comforts of life they are few.

On the shores of Milne Bay
Where you sink in the mud to your chest
And you can't sleep at night for a hundred and one different pests.
I've been bit on the navel, the back and the chest
I've been bit on the place the girls like the best
On the shores of Milne Bay
Where the jungle rolls down to the sea.

Chorus

On the shores of Milne Bay
Fair dinkum I've never felt worse.
I've had every complaint from dermo to dying of thirst.
But I don't go to the MO in case he should say
'Jump on the *Manunda* she's leaving today'.
From the shores of Milne Bay
Where the jungle rolls down to the sea.

Chorus

APPENDIX 6: SQUADRON SONGS AND POEMS

On the shores of Milne Bay
Where for six months we haven't seen beer.
But the boys brew their own, one charge and you stand on your ear,
This jungle juice acts like a time bomb, they say,
You drink it tonight and explode the next day
On the shores of Milne Bay
Where the jungle rolls down to the sea.

Chorus

On the shores of Milne Bay
Where the sheilas wear string and grass skirts
But you're not in the race, pom pom pom, if they see you first.
Now all you wives and sweethearts should know
It's not hard for an airman to keep self control
On the shores of Milne Bay
Where the jungle rolls down to the sea.

Chorus

On the shores of Milne Bay
How I long for those bright city lights,
Or a day on the spree with a good sort to cuddle at nights
Oh, I wish they'd clothes on the sheilas round here,
For when I look at them, Boy! I feel queer
On the shores of Milne Bay
Where the jungle rolls down to the sea.

Chorus

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE FOR THE 'DO'

(Poem, *Milne Bay*, LAC S. Williams)

In the bright moonlight nights of New Guinea,
When the sirens go screaming at ten,
You think of the WAAAFs back at Sandgate
And wish you were with them again.
As you crouch in your trench with your tin hat,
Inhaling a 'dope stick' or two,
A chap quietly says in the darkness,
'You should have been here for the "Do"'.

I tell him weird tales about Melbourne,
Of Brisbane and places I've been,
Of things that have happened at Moresby
That not every person has seen;
How the ack-ack would bring down the Zeros
And Bombers from out of the blue;
But he says to me, 'Sport, you've seen nothin'
You should have been here for the 'Do"'.

We talk about south of the border,
Good times we're to have again soon.
Then he switches back to New Guinea,
How a bomb fell beside him last moon.
So I counter-attack with a 'goodie'
That I'd heard back at Woolloomooloo,
But he treats that like nothing by saying,
'You should have been here for the "Do"'.

I've seen the bright lights of the city,
And been in tough spots since a kid.
I've worked on the cane-fields of Queensland
And I've often been pushed for a quid.
Now I don't wish to boast about hardships,
I'll admit I've put up with a few,
But I'm satisfied now I've seen nothing –
I should have been here for the 'Do'.

SONGS AND POEMS GLOSSARY

Tulagi Island	in the Solomon Islands
the drink	the ocean
scrap metal ships	a reference to Australia selling pig-iron to Japan
bully	bully beef – tinned meat
bromide	medication to reduce sexual desires
gamboge	yellow-orange colour
pancake	smooth landing
Davy Jones [locker]	the ocean bed
Waga	village at Milne Bay
dermo	dermatitis rash
jungle juice	illicit alcohol
dope stick	cigarette
'Do'	an unforgettable event

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

AC	Aircraftman
AC	Companion of the Order of Australia
AC1	Aircraftman 1
AC2	Aircraftman 2 (Aircrew Trainee)
ack-ack	anti-aircraft gunfire
AFC	Air Force Cross
AFM	Air Force Medal
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
AMF	Australian Military Forces
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
AOS	Air Observer School
ASV	Air-to-Surface Vessel [radar]
AVM	Air Vice-Marshal
AWA	Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd
axle grease	tropical butter
BAGS	Bombing and Gunnery School
bash	sortie
BTU	Base Torpedo Unit
bully [beef]	tinned meat
CB	Companion of the Order of the Bath
CBE	Commander of the Order of the British Empire
CGI	Chief Ground Instructor
CGM	Conspicuous Gallantry Medal
CO	Commanding Officer
Cpl	Corporal
Craps	a betting game with dice
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (in 1949, CSIR was renamed CSIRO)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAP	Department of Aircraft Production
D Day	planned date for an important advance on the enemy
D/F	Direction Finding
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
dicey	risky or dangerous
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EATS	Empire Air Training Scheme
EFTS	Elementary Flying Training School
flak	heavy anti-aircraft fire
F/Lt	Flight Lieutenant
F/Sgt	Flight Sergeant
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GP	General Purpose
gutser	bellylanding
HF	High Frequency
HMAS	His Majesty's Australian Ship
HQ	Headquarters
IFF	Identification Friend or Foe
IOU	Written acknowledgement of a debt, containing the expression 'IOU' (I owe you)
ITA	Initial Training School
Japs	Japanese (see also Nips)
KBE	Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire
LAC	Leading Aircraftman
LACW	Leading Aircraftwoman
Lt	Lieutenant
MBE	Member of the Order of the British Empire
MC	Military Cross
MID	Mentioned in Despatches
MM	Military Medal
MO	Medical Officer
MV	Motor Vessel
MVO	Member of the Royal Victorian Order
Nav	navigator
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
Nips	Nipponese (see also Japs)
OAM	Medal of the Order of Australia
OBE	Officer of the Order of the British Empire
OBU	Operational Base Unit
OTU	Operational Training Unit
PA	public address [system]
piece of cake	pleasant, easy to handle
P/O	Pilot Officer

prang	to crash an aircraft
PT boat	motor torpedo boat (hull classification 'PT' for 'Patrol Torpedo')
PX	[US] Post Exchange
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RSU	Repair and Salvage Unit
R/T	radio telegraphy
Salvos	Salvation Army
S/Ldr	Squadron Leader
SPA	South Pacific Area
spinebash	lie supine
SS	Steamship
stuffed cloud	cloud concealing a mountain
SWPA	South-West Pacific Area
swy	See 'two-up'
TAA	Trans Australia Airlines
two-up	betting game with two coins (also known as 'swy')
UK	United Kingdom
U/S	unserviceable
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USN	United States Navy
VC	Victoria Cross
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
WAG	wireless/air gunner
WAGS	Wireless Air Gunners School
W/Cdr	Wing Commander
W/T	Wireless Telegraphy
Yank	American

SONG OF THE BEAUFORTS

UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

Imperial measurements have been quoted, as used in the 1940s, to retain the historic sequence.

1 mile	1.61 kilometres
1 nautical mile	1.15 miles
1 knot	1 nautical mile per hour
1000 feet	305 metres (approx)
1 pound (lb)	454 grams (approx)
2000 pounds	907 kilograms (approx)
1 gallon	4.55 litres (approx)
1 gallon	1.2 American gallons

AUSTRALIAN CURRENCY

Prior to 1966, the imperial system of monetary units, with pounds, shillings and pence, was in use. One pound was valued at 20 shillings or 240 pence.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Now the Office of Air Force History.
- ² The DAP took over from the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty Ltd, which was established in 1936, and had produced the first Wirraway on 27 March 1939.
- ³ Squadron Leader Peter J. Gibbs, MVO, DFC, AFC.
- ⁴ Later a leading light in Butler Airways.
- ⁵ Also spelt as Surabaja.
- ⁶ See map of Malay Peninsula.
- ⁷ In his book, *Challenge*, Sir Valston Hancock writes that he was in the RAAF War Room, Melbourne, when the signal came through: *Nos morituri te salutamus!*
- ⁸ Also spelt as Kupang.
- ⁹ Nos 1, 2, 8 and 13 Hudson Squadrons were later to re-equip with Beauforts.
- ¹⁰ Because the Japanese had a system for designating their military aircraft which was complex and incomprehensible to most Westerners, the Allies applied their own identifying names to each type. Under this system, the Nakajima Ki-49 was known as “Helen” and the Mitsubishi G4M became “Betty”. Both were twin-engine medium bombers.
- ¹¹ William E. Hart, the holder of the first ‘Flying Machine’ Licence in 1912 said, ‘Ham Common [forming part of Richmond] was “the finest site in Australia for an airfield”’. In 1925, Richmond became a major RAAF base, along with Laverton in Victoria.
- ¹² See also chapter titled ‘Personnel Profiles’, page 321.
- ¹³ Later, Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger, KBE, CB, DSO, AFC.
- ¹⁴ The Australian cruisers were the HMAS *Australia* and HMAS *Hobart*.
- ¹⁵ The stores were stacked where the Coral Sea Memorial Rock Pool now stands at Kissing Point Headland. Later, Townsville harbour did experience three nuisance-bombing raids but they were of little consequence.
- ¹⁶ See chapter titled ‘Flying Coffins – The Trim Tab Problem’, page 293.
- ¹⁷ From Tulagi, the Japanese would soon land troops at Guadalcanal.
- ¹⁸ Later there were to be six separate airstrips at Port Moresby.
- ¹⁹ ‘Lend-lease’ was a plan developed by the USA early in World War II to aid the countries which were fighting the Axis powers. Land was leased to the USA in return for the supply of war materials.
- ²⁰ Later to be named Durand Aerodrome.
- ²¹ Later called Jackson airfield to honour the late Squadron Leader John Jackson, DFC.
- ²² A phenomenon involving a discharge of atmospheric electricity.
- ²³ The name of the ship *Tenyo* is debatable. There were many similarly named vessels of the same proportions as the one that 100 Squadron sank operating in that area.
- ²⁴ See chapter titled ‘Flying Coffins – The Trim Tab Problem’, page 293.
- ²⁵ Details of the Glen appear in ‘Appendix 2 – Aircraft Operating in the South-West Pacific Area’, page 418.
- ²⁶ Perhaps the Japanese did not have a large submarine fleet early in the war, and failed to give the same priority to submarine production as did the Germans.

- ²⁷ Later, Air Commodore Garing, CBE, DSC, DFC. See chapter titled ‘Personnel Profiles’, page 332.
- ²⁸ Later, this strip would be named Turnbull after Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull, DFC, killed on 28 August 1942.
- ²⁹ Later, Air Commodore Kingwell, CBE, DSO.
- ³⁰ See map of South-West Pacific Area at page 28.
- ³¹ Also spelt as Wehurea.
- ³² Post-war, General Adachi reported that, when the Australians cut the Japanese defensive line beyond Kokoda on 9 November, 1942, the retreating Japanese attempted to escape down the swiftly flowing Kumusi River—1500 soldiers were drowned, including General Horii.
- ³³ The Office of Australian War Graves has erected a trekkers’ hut at Isurava to accommodate visitors to the Isurava Memorial.
- ³⁴ Bonython is pronounced ‘Bon-eye-thon’. See chapter titled ‘Personnel Profiles’, page 325.
- ³⁵ In 1944, the *Anshun* was salvaged, repaired and renamed *Culcairn*.
- ³⁶ This was a common term associated with ‘not seriously injured’. It did not take into account any mental stress factor.
- ³⁷ George Odgers, *Air War Against Japan 1943–45*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1957, p. 16.
- ³⁸ A radio beacon back at the base airstrip was turned on only 20 minutes before the first aircraft was expected to return.
- ³⁹ Today we know that, while a lightning strike produces a powerful static charge on the metal surface of a plane caught in a storm, the effect is unlikely to harm the aircraft or occupants. The excessive static charge wears off, and the static discharge wicks, trailing from the wings of modern aircraft, are designed to aid the wearing-off process.
- ⁴⁰ Gerald Haynes, DSO was a very experienced officer in torpedo warfare. He entered the Naval College at Jervis Bay in 1924 at the age of 13, and became the first Australian to command a Fleet Air Arm Squadron.
- ⁴¹ Later, Group Captain Parker led No 21 Squadron Liberators.
- ⁴² Rolled and tied in a manner for quick and easy release.
- ⁴³ See ‘Appendix 6 – Squadron Songs and Poems’, page 425.
- ⁴⁴ The last two figures indicate the date, so in this instance 0413Z/24 means 0413 hours GMT (or 2.13 pm local time) on 24 November.
- ⁴⁵ Atebrin, and Atabrine, were trade names for quinacrine, an antimalarial drug first synthesised in the early 1930s (also known as Mepacrine). Atebrin did not cure the disease, but kept it at bay while taking the tablet. The day of requiring treatment for the disease often came some months after the influence of the tablet wore off.
- ⁴⁶ Later, Wing Commander Colquhoun, DFC, AFC.
- ⁴⁷ Early European settlers had erected a wire bridge across the Kumusi River ravine, and the natives had succinctly called the place Wairopi—pronounced ‘wire ropey’!
- ⁴⁸ Alex Stuart, DFC, MID, flew on 93 strikes and 85 other operational sorties during three operational tours.
- ⁴⁹ The nearest alternate airport was Port Moresby, another three hours’ flying time.
- ⁵⁰ MV *Myoko Maru* of 4103 tons.

- ⁵¹ In line astern, with each aircraft holding a fixed distance from the left-hand wing of the aircraft ahead.
- ⁵² The pilot was 'blind flying', requiring him to fly solely by instruments. Pilots were taught 'blind flying' but it was still a great strain. Though the instruments show that the pilot is flying straight and level, there is a tendency for the body to feel that it is tilted in a sideways turn, called the 'leans'. The pilot has to ignore the feeling and believe the instruments.
- ⁵³ Irrespective of rank, the pilot was always the captain of an aircraft.
- ⁵⁴ Neither the aircraft nor aircrew was ever found.
- ⁵⁵ Photographs held in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
- ⁵⁶ No 100 Squadron was the only torpedo squadron operating in the SWPA at that time, and the USAAF resented the use of Australian aircraft for that purpose.
- ⁵⁷ Legend has it that Phil Harrison flew underneath the enemy squadron on a reciprocal course!
- ⁵⁸ A Japanese dive-bomber sent a bomb into the after hatch of the vessel, before crashing into the sea.
- ⁵⁹ By this time, there were other squadrons and units also equipped with Beauforts. See 'Appendix 3 – RAAF Beaufort Squadrons and Units', page 419.
- ⁶⁰ *Khaki and Green, with the Australian Army at Home and Overseas 1943*, Chapter 11, 'Campaign in Papua', published for the Australian Military Forces by the Australian War Memorial, 1943, <http://www.diggerhistory2.info/army/1943/chapter11.htm>.
- ⁶¹ Later, Bonython also earned an AFC.
- ⁶² Japanese cargo vessel, considerably larger than a landing craft and similar in construction to an ordinary ship, and used for the transport of freight.
- ⁶³ PB4Y was the US Navy version of the B-24 Liberator aircraft.
- ⁶⁴ With the Gasmata strip unserviceable, Japanese fighters could not use the airstrip to attack our ground forces.
- ⁶⁵ The official title of such units was Repair and Salvage Unit, but some airmen at the time referred to them loosely as Repair Unit, Service Unit or Repair and Service Unit.
- ⁶⁶ With regard to the bombing of ships at sea, American postwar statistics reveal that the percentage of bomb hits on moving vessels was about one per cent. In Ronald H. Spector's book, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*, Random House Inc, New York, 1985, p. 207, we read, 'Between August and November [1942], B-17s had dropped 828 bombs on some sixty enemy ships and sank only four'.
- ⁶⁷ Comparatively, fighters and fighter-bombers, having greater speed, could get away with low-level attacks more successfully than the bombers.
- ⁶⁸ As a Squadron Leader, Hewitt had served on the seaplane carrier HMAS *Albatross*.
- ⁶⁹ Price was Mentioned in Despatches. However, his exploit was matching in all respects to that of a RAF Beaufort pilot, Flying Officer K. Campbell, who carried out a low-level torpedo attack, in a narrow twisting approach through heavy ack-ack, on shipping in Brest Harbour in April 1941. Campbell and his crew were shot down during the torpedo attack. Campbell was awarded a Victoria Cross and his observer a Distinguished Flying Medal.
- ⁷⁰ A9-217 was found at Kawa Island, near Kiriwina, and the crew was buried with full military honours in May 2001.
- ⁷¹ An inspection later revealed a short circuit in the gun firing circuit.
- ⁷² Although the pilot, Squadron Leader Noel Quinn, DFC, suffered at the hands of the

- Japanese, he survived in a prisoner-of-war camp in Japan. His navigator, Pilot Officer Robert O'Loughlen, was not so lucky. He drowned when the ship transporting him to Japan was sunk.
- ⁷³ A9-472 had only been ferried from Port Moresby by John Baker two weeks earlier, on 30 November 1943.
- ⁷⁴ Later, Pilot Officer Jack Walsh had his left leg amputated.
- ⁷⁵ Each aircrew was interrogated by the Intelligence, Navigation, Engineering, Meteorological, Radio, Radar, Gunnery and Armaments, and Medical Officers; also by the Army Liaison Officer and photographic NCO as required.
- ⁷⁶ MacArthur's *Elkton Plan* of February 1943 was basically to seize and occupy areas of New Britain, New Ireland and New Guinea to neutralise Rabaul and Wewak.
- ⁷⁷ Hollandia is now known as Djajapura (also spelt Jayapura).
- ⁷⁸ See the cartoon on following page, depicting two birds flying in alarm out of some palm trees with a Beaufort bearing down on them. The caption reads, 'Scramble fellers! It's Treverton!'
- ⁷⁹ Later, Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger, KBE, CB, DSO, AFC.
- ⁸⁰ Now known as Djajapura (also spelt Jayapura).
- ⁸¹ Vertical photos, taken by a camera in a fixed position in the floor of the aircraft, gave a plan view where the same scale applied for the whole photo. This allowed distances to be measured, and an estimated size of features to be determined. Oblique photos, taken by a hand-held camera, gave a good idea of the height and shape of features, but background features were hidden.
- ⁸² Radio call sign of the control tower at Tadjir airfield.
- ⁸³ The 'Goldfish Club'—'gold' for the value of life and 'fish' for the sea—was formed in the UK in November 1942. Membership is only available to airmen, who survived a wartime ditching. The badge shows a white-winged goldfish flying over two symbolic blue waves.
- ⁸⁴ A life saving inflatable vest, which was named after the buxom film star, Mae West.
- ⁸⁵ Also spelt as Tomleo.
- ⁸⁶ Later, Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock, KBE, CB, DFC.
- ⁸⁷ Later in his RAAF career, David was elevated to Air Commodore.
- ⁸⁸ Flight Lieutenant Chas 'Farmer' Thomas was 'B' Flight Leader.
- ⁸⁹ Atabrine, and Atebrin, were trade names for quinacrine, an antimalarial drug first synthesised in the early 1930s (also known as Mepacrine).
- ⁹⁰ George Odgers, *Air War Against Japan 1943–45*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1957, p. 329.
- ⁹¹ A succession of war loans was conducted in Australia, which raised more than half the funds for war requirements. Interest paid on maturity of these loans was three per cent.
- ⁹² A description of the H2S and Oboe radar systems appears in the chapter titled 'Radio and Radar', page 308.
- ⁹³ The Australian War Memorial in Canberra subsequently acquired the A9-557 wreck and in March 2003 the restored Beaufort was placed on display in the Memorial as an example of Australia's first all-metal bomber aircraft, and as a memorial to those who built them, maintained them and flew in them.
- ⁹⁴ The 'Haus Tambaran', or Spirit House, was traditionally a meeting place for the elders in the villages.

- ⁹⁵ Details of the consultation and experiment may be found in Sir Valston Hancock's book, *Challenge*.
- ⁹⁶ It is believed that Crisp's aircraft may have become uncontrollable due to a failed trim tab mechanism. See chapter titled 'Flying Coffins – The Trim Tab Problem', page 293.
- ⁹⁷ The intensity of the bombing caused landslides, which buried enemy soldiers in the tunnels.
- ⁹⁸ See newspaper report at page 244, 'RAAF Doing Fine Job in Islands'.
- ⁹⁹ Legend has it that while Group Captain Hancock was resting in the shadow of his aircraft, prior to going on his next strike, two fitters approached on the sunny side and observed two jagged holes in the wing. Not realising that the pilot was on the other side of the aircraft, one fitter said to the other, 'I bet the old bastard was flying too low and caught some of the bomb blast'. Much to their consternation, Val Hancock replied, 'No I wasn't'.
- ¹⁰⁰ Next morning a flight of Beauforts destroyed the gun.
- ¹⁰¹ Kreer Village at map reference W302001.
- ¹⁰² Allied leaders met in Potsdam to arrange a peace treaty, and to give Japan an ultimatum to surrender.
- ¹⁰³ Australian Broadcasting Commission, now the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
- ¹⁰⁴ The standby aircraft had been A9-666, QH-R, but Caddy preferred to take A9-680, QH-Z, which Wal Lukeis had flown on the Kiarivu raid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Within the ensuing days of the month, the Japanese forces in all theatres of the war surrendered.
- ¹⁰⁶ Hiroshima—an estimated 90 000 killed and 37 000 injured. Nagasaki—an estimated 40 000 killed and 6000 injured.
- ¹⁰⁷ As the imminent defeat of the Japanese became apparent, the prisoners believed rightly that their captors would kill them all. In Johore on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, for instance, the prisoners were forced to dig tunnels, in which they knew they were to be entombed. The sudden and spectacular end to the war undoubtedly saved their lives.
- ¹⁰⁸ Atebrin, and Atabrine, were trade names for quinacrine, an antimalarial drug first synthesised in the early 1930s (also known as Mepacrine).
- ¹⁰⁹ A9-744 was one of 46 Beauforts that had been modified for use as communication or supply aircraft. The turret was removed, the fuselage was streamlined, and four seats were fitted where the turret used to be. The aircraft was much faster than the bomber and cruised about as fast as a Beaufighter.
- ¹¹⁰ There were Local Air Supply Units, Nos 9, 10 and 12, Communication Units, Nos 3–11, and other special units equipped with modified Beauforts.
- ¹¹¹ Jack continued in the Air Force and retired with the rank of Wing Commander.
- ¹¹² Aviation oil.
- ¹¹³ Aircraft performance fell off rapidly in the tropics.
- ¹¹⁴ Other switches included cockpit lighting, navigation and formation lights, landing light, pitot head, fire extinguishers, and feathering of the propellers.
- ¹¹⁵ The operator applied correction for quadrantal error, which was caused by the aircraft structure.
- ¹¹⁶ Two microphone buttons were strapped on either side of the larynx.
- ¹¹⁷ The IFF contained a detonator to be fired from the pilot position if there was a possibility of the aircraft falling into enemy hands.

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- ¹¹⁸ The operator in the aircraft would send 'OE OE OE' in morse code to issue a challenge. The ship's crew was expected to respond with the ship's identification letters, either by signal lamp or with flags. It was up to the ship's crew to respond, or face the consequences.
- ¹¹⁹ The tail wheel was locked down in some of the Mk II Beauforts to prevent tail wheel shimmy and could not be retracted.
- ¹²⁰ Colloquial term for a toilet or sanitary can.
- ¹²¹ Colloquial term for a toilet, especially a sanitary can.
- ¹²² Aptitude tests were also introduced in April 1941.
- ¹²³ After August 1941 aircrew trainees, AC2s, wore a distinctive white blaze in the front of the forage cap.
- ¹²⁴ Sir Francis Chichester describes the method of running down a position line in his book, *Alone Over the Tasman*. The method was used by the Air Force until satellite navigation became available.
- ¹²⁵ Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, KBE, CB, DSO, reports in his book, *These are Facts*, that commissioning a percentage of trainees at each training course was an anomaly in the Ottawa Agreement on training. The Canadians ignored the agreement, and commissioned all graduating trainees who were considered suitable for a commission.
- ¹²⁶ DR – dead reckoning.
- ¹²⁷ CSIR was established in 1926. In 1949, CSIR was renamed CSIRO, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
- ¹²⁸ Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force.
- ¹²⁹ The two wingmen were Flight Lieutenant K. Hewitt in A9-343 and Flying Officer K.W.D. Kelly in A9-331. The erratic behaviour of A9-346 was symptomatic of the trim control fault. Fortunately, Learmonth had time to warn his wingmen, thus avoiding a midair collision. Research reveals that a faulty trim control also may have caused A9-493 to collide with A9-667 (see page 234–235).
- ¹³⁰ For every hour the earth rotates west to east, the difference is 15 degrees of longitude.
- ¹³¹ A mechanical device, using cog settings in three or more stages, to scramble and re-scramble the alphabet.
- ¹³² *Katakana Man*, an account of Jack Brown's life as a RAAF katakana wireless operator in World War II, won the 2005 RAAF Heritage Award for Literature. The book was published by the RAAF Air Power Development Centre in 2006: A. Jack Brown, *Katakana Man*, Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2006.
- ¹³³ The Coastwatch network used a simple version of the Playfair Code, which apparently the Japanese were unable to break. The Playfair Code was created by the British physicist Sir Charles Wheatstone in 1854, and named after his friend, Lyon Playfair.
- ¹³⁴ CSIR was established in 1926 and, in 1949, it was renamed CSIRO.
- ¹³⁵ Air Commodore Pither made significant contributions to the development of radar and its support organisations during World War II, and he is considered as the 'Father of RAAF Radar'.
- ¹³⁶ A fully preserved LW/AW station is on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.
- ¹³⁷ The Dickin Medal is a British award for military related animal bravery.
- ¹³⁸ An engine fitter, for instance, explains that he could tell if oil was leaking into one of an engine's cylinders by simply pushing the propeller by hand through one revolution. A

liquid cannot be compressed—if there was no oil leaking into any of the cylinders, the propeller would turn, otherwise it would tend to lock. This often became evident when pulling a motor through, which involved turning the propellers over a few times. The fitter would also drain a little petrol via the drain cocks and let the petrol run into the mechanic's hand to see if water was present.

¹³⁹ The turret guns were focused so that bullets fired from each gun would meet with maximum firepower at 300 yards.

¹⁴⁰ Insert the detonators and firing pins.

¹⁴¹ Later, Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger, KBE, CB, DSO, AFC.

¹⁴² Later, Group Captain Moran.

¹⁴³ Later, Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock, KBE, CB, DFC.

¹⁴⁴ From *Jungle Warfare (1944)*, <http://www.diggerhistory2.info/army/1944/chapter04.htm>.

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